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Fulfilling The Purpose Of Education: Voices Of North Dakota Graduates Pertaining To Curriculum And Graduation Requirements

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FULFILLING THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION: VOICES OF NORTH DAKOTA GRADUATES PERTAINING TO CURRICULUM AND GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

by

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This dissertation, submitted by Sarah Jean Ricks in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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PERMISSION

Title	Fulfilling the Purpose of Education: Voices of North Dakota Graduates Pertaining to Curriculum and Graduation Requirements
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Sarah Ricks
November 29, 2021

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing this dissertation and completing my doctoral degree whilst working full-time and raising five children is, perhaps, the most difficult feat I have ever accomplished. However, I am acutely aware that this accomplishment is not mine alone. I have leaned on, stood on, and cried on many shoulders. I would be remiss if I did not thank those who have helped me on this arduous journey.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my children—Gabriel, Elijah, David John, Benjamin, and Tobias—who give my work meaning.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation was twofold: to determine how graduates of North Dakota high schools perceived their educational experiences in relation to preparing them for their adult lives, and to determine how curriculum and graduation requirements at the time of this study in North Dakota Century Code (NDCC) 15.1-21, titled "Curriculum and Testing," fulfilled the purpose of education in North Dakota. This study used a mixed-methods research design and includes a literature review and an online survey of 81 North Dakota high school graduates in the Dickinson area regarding the readiness of students who have graduated from North Dakota high schools for prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement in adult life. The survey instrument included both closed quantitative questions and open qualitative questions. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data was coded and analyzed for themes.

Research results suggested students had positive perceptions regarding the readiness of graduates for adult life. Results also indicated educational experiences do influence the prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement of North Dakota graduates, but many influential elements of the educational system were not required or measured in North Dakota educational policy in place at the time of this study.

Key Words: curriculum, graduation requirements, North Dakota, policy

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Origin of Study

According to the University of North Dakota Educational Leadership Cohort #8 (personal communication, March 3, 2021):

> The purpose of the educational system in North Dakota, according to Article VIII of the Constitution of North Dakota, is to preserve democratic government and to provide for the "prosperity and happiness of the people" (N.D. Const. art. VIII, § 1). The writers of the state constitution believed that this required students to have, "a high degree of intelligence, patriotism, integrity, and morality" (N.D. Const. art. VIII, § 1). It is the responsibility of educators to uphold these values while recognizing that the educational system and its stakeholders continue to change. Preparing students to be prosperous and fulfilled citizens in a world that is ever-changing means that educational systems must also evolve to meet those changing needs.
>
> Education in North Dakota is guided by the North Dakota Century Code (NDCC) 15.1 statutes with the North Dakota Legislative Interim Education Policy Committee evaluating their effectiveness. As inferred by Chairman David Monson in the minutes of the Education Policy Committee meeting on October 2, 2019, it is time "to recommend changes to any laws found to be irrelevant,

duplicative, inconsistent, or unclear" (Assel, 2019, p. 4). Following this Interim Education Committee meeting, the need to review, revise, and make recommendations to NDCC statutes was brought to the University of North Dakota Educational Leadership Doctoral Cohort #8. While conversations in the committee meeting had taken place regarding hiring an outside group or organization to do this work, the cohort believed the knowledge and experience within the group would be a natural fit for this task.

We are a doctoral cohort of nine, all currently working in North Dakota public education (see Appendix A). Together, we form a diverse group of educators with experience in numerous states across the country. In our cohort, we have one teacher, one behavior specialist, one special education administrator, five principals, and one superintendent. Geographically, our representation spans across the state, including rural and urban public schools. Together, we offer a rich tapestry of experiences, knowledge, and expertise in the field of public education.

Significance of Study

This topic is important, because if current requirements are ineffective in reaching the stated goals of the constitution of the people of North Dakota, then statutes may need to be changed. In this study, relevant literature regarding competencies that students need to be prosperous, happy, democratic citizens in the modern age was reviewed. Further, I investigated perceptions of students who have graduated from North Dakota high schools and what elements of their education they believed were most helpful to their prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement. I did this by surveying persons who graduated

from North Dakota high schools who were living in the Dickinson area at the time of this study. Based on this information, recommendations were made for policy makers including possible deletions, amendments, and additions to North Dakota Century Code, Chapter 15.1-21, Curriculum and Testing (N.D. Cent. Code, n.d., Chapter 15.1-21). Recommendations were also made for educational practitioners and for future research.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of my study was to determine how graduates of North Dakota high schools perceived their educational experiences in relation to preparing them for their adult lives and to determine how the curriculum and graduation requirements in Chapter 15.1-21 of the NDCC (at the time of this study) fulfilled the purpose of education in North Dakota. Specifically, within Chapter 15.1-21, entitled "Curriculum and Testing," I reviewed sections regarding curricular areas for elementary, middle, and secondary students as well as graduation requirements for high school students.

Some of the sections in Chapter 15.1-21 of North Dakota's Century Code have not changed at all in the last 20 years, while others have been amended as many as nine times in the same time period. When viewing the NDCC Chapter 15.1-21 statute, there do indeed appear to be parts which are "duplicative, inconsistent, or unclear" (Assel, 2019, p. 4), which is understandable given the way educational policy has changed or been added to in a very piecemeal fashion. While recommendations on consolidations or clarifications might be made, the primary focus of this study was to examine how curriculum and graduation requirements fulfilled the purpose of education as stated in the constitution of North Dakota, namely, to provide for prosperity, happiness, and the continuance of democratic government (N.D. Const. art. VIII, § 1).

Research Questions

Research questions that guided this study are:

1. What are the perceptions of North Dakota high school graduates regarding their elementary and secondary education and preparation for adult life?
2. How do the curricular and graduation requirements outlined in NDCC 15.1-21 fulfill the purposes of education described in the Constitution of North Dakota, namely, to ensure the continuance of our democracy and provide for the "prosperity and happiness" of its citizens (N.D. Const. art. VIII, § 1)?

Approach to Study

To answer my research questions, I used a concurrent mixed methods approach. This consisted of a literature review, development of a survey instrument with both quantitative and qualitative questions, and data analysis including descriptive statistics and open coding. A concurrent mixed methods approach was chosen because of the multifaceted nature of the research questions and the needs of the target audience—primarily policy-makers and educators. Using more than one kind of data helps to illuminate the complex relationship between weighty concepts such as prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement and the legal requirements for curriculum and graduation in North Dakota's K-12 educational system.

Conceptual Framework

Because North Dakota identifies three purposes for education, namely providing for the prosperity of its citizens, providing for the happiness of its citizens, and preserving democracy, that is, "government by the people" (N.D. Const. art. VIII, §§ 1, 3), multiple concepts must be considered when determining how a set of curricular and graduation

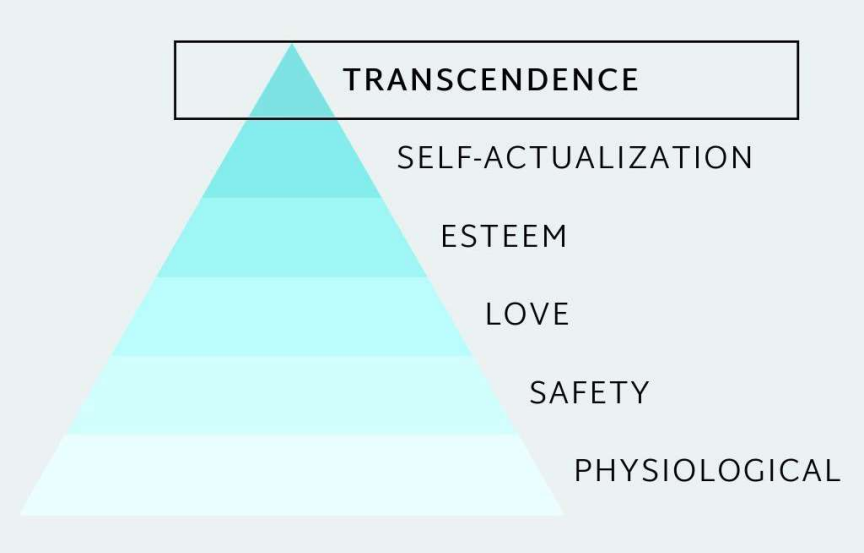
requirements fulfill that purpose. These three purposes build on each other, so they will be addressed in the order they tend to occur—first prosperity, then happiness, and then democratic citizenship.

Prosperity and Hierarchy of Needs

One expectation for our public education system is that it will provide for the "prosperity" of the people of North Dakota (N.D. Const. art. VIII, § 1). This can be a difficult concept to define. The Cambridge Dictionary definition reads, "the state of being successful and having a lot of money" (Cambridge University Press, n.d.b, para. 1). This definition still leaves much to the imagination. What is "a lot" of money? What is success? There is also the issue of keeping prosperity separate from happiness. While some research suggests there is a tie between wealth and happiness (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2008), other research suggests there isn't or that there is at least a saturation point (Easterlin et al., 2010; Jebb et al., 2018). Having a lot of money is relative to where you live and how much you can buy with the money you have and how well off the people around you are (Alderson & Katz-Gerro, 2016). All of these variables contribute to whether or not an individual might be considered to be successful or have a lot of money. In order to simplify this complex idea, and in order to make it separate from happiness, this research defines prosperity as having enough money to consistently meet basic needs as outlined by Maslow (1943). Maslow envisioned a veritable pyramid of needs with the more basic needs requiring fulfillment before other, more complex, needs can be met. This pyramid of needs is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Maslow's Pyramid of Needs



From "What is Transcendence? The True Top of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs," by K. Kowalski, n.d., SLOWW [website], para. 1. (https://www.sloww.co/transcendence-maslow/). Copyright 2021 by SLOWW. Reprinted with permission.

"Prosperity" or financial well-being fits nicely into the bottom two tiers of the pyramid. Having enough money provides for many of one's physiological needs: clean water, food, shelter, and clothing. Having enough money also provides for many safety needs: safe methods of transportation, employment, health care, personal property, etc. If one has the means to consistently pay for the needs represented by these bottom two tiers of the pyramid, then one might be considered to be prosperous because one would have been successful in providing the foundation for a good life. "Prosperity" for the people of North Dakota then, might look like everyone being able to provide for their own basic needs through gainful employment.

Happiness, Eudaimonics, and Self-Determination Theory

The second expectation of the public school system in North Dakota is to provide for the "happiness of the people" (N.D. Const. art. VIII, § 1). Like prosperity, happiness can be difficult to define. However, in keeping with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, happiness can be found when one experiences the next three tiers of the pyramid: love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. These ideas are confirmed by eudaimonic constructs and self-determination theory. A eudaimonic theory of happiness views happiness as the outcome of living well. Other words used to describe this state are "flourishing" or "self-realization" (Waterman, 2008). A eudaimonic outlook is not concerned with the momentary flame of pleasure, but with the long-lasting satisfaction of life well-lived. This "self-realization" is akin to "self-actualization" and closely tied to the concept of "daimon" from which eudaimonic takes its name, becoming one's best and true self. Self-determination theory suggests there are three components necessary to well-being and happiness—competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Ryan et al., 2008). These components echo Maslow's ideas with autonomy being tied to self-actualization, competence to esteem, and relatedness to love and belonging. All three lenses identify intrinsic motivation, personal growth, and deep relationships as necessary to happiness.

Democratic Engagement

The idea that humans have a responsibility to improve their situation is a theme found in the larger theory of critical inquiry and specifically in the work of Paulo Freire. He believed that true freedom lay in the ability of human beings to see the world not just for what it is, but for what it can be and to work towards that better future (Crotty, 1998). In our democratic society, the primary vehicle which humans use to change their situation

is the election of and participation in democratic government. It is not surprising, then, that the final requirement of our education system in North Dakota is that it provides for the "continuance of government" (N.D. Const. art. VIII, § 1). North Dakota's government is a representative democracy. Thus, our educational system needs to provide students with the ability to perpetuate and participate in a representative democracy. The skills needed might vary greatly depending on what the expectation is regarding perpetuating a democratic government. If one need only to show up and vote on election day, then the only skills needed are reading, writing, and driving to the polling place. However, if participation means more than that, then further skills are needed and different questions need to be asked within the scope of this study.

Democratic engagement can be found at every level of Maslow's hierarchy. Sometimes, democratic participation is driven by the basic needs in the bottom two tiers. Voting for leaders who can change policy to increase one's prosperity is one way to be a democratic citizen. One might participate in ways which reflect the values of happiness and the next three tiers of the hierarchy of needs. Certainly, participating in government by running for office, volunteering for a campaign, or using one's skills for policy research would increase relatedness, competency, and help one to become one's best self. Maslow suggested that there should be a sixth tier—self-transcendence—before he died in 1970 (Venter, 2016). Self-transcendence goes beyond becoming one's best self to becoming committed to a cause greater than oneself and seeking to better the world (Venter, 2016). This tier is the ideal of democratic societies—that leaders and participants would be truly committed to doing what is best for the communities in which they serve and live. Democratic engagement at this level would involve service and advocacy.

A helpful framework for different kinds of democratic engagement is provided by Westheimer and Kahne (2004). They identify three genres of democratic involvement: personally responsible citizen, participatory citizen, and justice oriented citizen (Table 1).

Table 1

Kinds of Citizens

	PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE	**PARTICIPATORY**	**JUSTICE-ORIENTED**
Description	Acts responsibly in his/her community Works and pays taxes Obeys laws Recycles, gives blood Volunteers to lend a hand in times of crisis	Active member of community organizations and/or improvement efforts Organizes community efforts to care for those in need, promote economic development, or clean up environment Knows how government agencies work Knows strategies for accomplishing collective tasks	Critically assesses social, political, and economic structures to see beyond surface causes Seeks out and addresses areas of injustice Knows about democratic social movements and how to effect systemic change
Sample Action	Contributes food to a food drive	Helps to organize a food drive	Explores why people are hungry and acts to solve root causes
Core Assumptions	Citizens must have good character; they must be honest, responsible, and law-abiding	Citizens must actively participate and take leadership positions within community	Citizens must question, debate, and change established systems and structures

Adapted from "What Kind of Citizen? The Politics of Educating for Democracy," by J. Westheimer and J. Kahne, 2004, *American Educational Research Journal*, *41*(2), p. 240 (https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312041002237). Copyright 2004 by the American Educational Research Association.

This research focuses on skills needed for the latter two categories: participatory citizen and justice-oriented citizen. The rationale is that for a government to continue, citizens must not just be personally responsible, but they must participate in the government itself, even running for office. Additionally, the writers of the North Dakota constitution stated an assumption that voters must have, "a high degree of intelligence, patriotism, integrity and morality" (N.D. Const. art. VIII, § 1). This suggests that those who established our public education system wanted more than just participation, they wanted people to take action, to think through and resolve societal ills. This would be more of a social-justice orientation. Therefore, this study included skills and actions related both to participatory citizenship and justice-oriented citizenship within the umbrella of democratic engagement.

Taken together, these three concepts of prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement formed the backbone of my study. They define the purpose of education, and arguably, success in adult life. If the curriculum and graduation requirements put in place by NDCC 15.1-21 help students succeed in these three areas, then those curriculum and graduation requirements are fulfilling the purpose of education. For this reason, the survey instrument for this study focused on prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement.

By using survey questions that were both quantitative and qualitative; objective and subjective, my research was able to provide some insight into how individuals have been doing regarding their prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement, and how they perceived their educational experiences contributed to their success in those three

areas. Quantitative data provided the "what" of the study, while concurrent qualitative data provided some answers regarding "why" and "how."

Delimitations and Assumptions

The study was conducted within North Dakota and focused on North Dakota Century Code Title 15.1, Elementary and Secondary Education statute(s); therefore, it was based solely upon North Dakota's educational needs. Another delimitation within this research is the focus on public education within the state of North Dakota; private education and home education were not included. It was assumed all respondents answered honestly when responding to survey questions. It was also assumed that the historical record regarding NDCC Title 15.1 was accurate at the time of this study and that sources used in this research were honest in their reporting.

Definitions and Acronyms

Career and Technical Education (CTE) – is career training provided by North Dakota schools in which students "learn by doing, and gain real world skills" (North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education, n.d., para. 2).

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) – This is an organization providing knowledge and resources to educators about evidence-based social and emotional learning (CASEL, n.d.a).

Competency-Based Education – is an education system in which proficiency in a set of standards determines student progression rather than time spent in a certain course or grade level (Marzano et al., 2018).

Constructivism – is a theory of learning in which people learn through experience (Elliott et al., 2000).

Curriculum – includes various content areas required by the state to be taught and/or offered to students such as math, reading, science, etc.

Democracy – For purposes of this study, democracy is a system of government in which power is held by representatives elected by the people (Cambridge University Press, n.d.a; Macey, 1993).

Education Policy Committee – This is "an interim committee of the North Dakota Legislature tasked with reviewing educational policy at the state level" (University of North Dakota Educational Leadership Cohort #8, personal communication, March 3, 2021).

English Language Arts (ELA) – is the curricular area comprised of reading, writing, and oral language.

Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB) – This is a government body in North Dakota which determines the rules for and issues teacher licenses.

High Reliability Schools (HRS) – refers to an educational framework created by Marzano Resources with an end-goal of competency-based education (Marzano et al., 2018).

Humanism – is a theory of education in which the end goal is full autonomy or self-actualization of the student (K12 Academics, n.d.).

Middle School – is a school where children in Grades 6-8 are taught.

North Dakota Century Code (NDCC) – contains North Dakota state laws (North Dakota Legislative Branch, n.d.).

North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders (NDCEL) – is a professional organization for public school administrators.

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) – This is a regulatory body which creates administrative rules based on state statutes and holds public schools accountable.

North Dakota School Boards Association (NDSBA) – is a statewide organization for school board members which provides training, suggested policies, and legal counsel.

Prosperity – For this study, prosperity refers to consistently having enough resources to meet your basic needs of safety, shelter, food, etc. without having to rely on the government or other assistance programs.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) – is:

> the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. (CASEL, n.d.b, para. 2)

Transferrable Skills – are skills that are useful across many different academic and vocational disciplines. Transferrable skills are often cognitive in nature.

Researcher's Background

I have experienced educational systems in a variety of locations and from a variety of viewpoints. I experienced a K-12 public educational system where I grew up in Ohio. I have received a bachelor's degree in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, a certificate in Special Education, and a master's degree in Educational Leadership. I have worked in school systems as a para-educator, teacher, school board member, school

board president, and administrator. I have taught in three different states including Utah, Maryland, and North Dakota. My teaching experiences have been both private and public. I have taught at all age levels from preschool to high school. My students have varied widely in ability ranging from students with profound disabilities to students identified as gifted and talented. I have experienced educational systems as a parent of five children.

These experiences inform my research because I have a wealth of background knowledge to draw on and because I know what kind of research would have best helped me in some of my previous roles. I am also motivated to help the educational system in North Dakota continue to improve as my children and I are a part of that system.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter I was an introduction into the need for the study, the purpose of the study, the research questions, delimitations and assumptions, definition of terms, the researcher's background, and the organization of the study. Chapter II includes a literature review highlighting current research in the field of elementary and secondary education. Chapter III contains the methodology for the study including methods for gathering and analyzing data. Chapter IV includes the results of the survey with some analyses. Chapter V contains a discussion of the data and how it answers the research questions. Chapter V also includes recommendations and implications for future research, educational practice, and policy. This dissertation will conclude with Appendices A-C and a list of cited references.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter II restates the purpose of this study and research questions followed by a review of related literature and research. The literature review includes background on the purpose of education in North Dakota, research supporting the study's theoretical underpinnings, and a review of curriculum and graduation requirements over the last 20 years. Chapter II also includes research about what factors contribute to the prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement of individuals as well as research regarding competencies important to the 21st century and how to measure those competencies.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this part of a larger study reviewing parts of Title 15.1 of the North Dakota Century Code is twofold, to determine how the current curriculum and graduation requirements in NDCC 15.1-21 fulfill the purpose of education in North Dakota and to determine how graduates of North Dakota high schools perceived their educational experiences in relation to preparing them for their adult lives.

Research Questions

Research questions that guided this study are:

1. What are the perceptions of North Dakota high school graduates regarding their elementary and secondary education and preparation for adult life?

2. How do the curricular and graduation requirements outlined in NDCC 15.1-21 fulfill the purposes of education described in the Constitution of North Dakota, namely, to ensure the continuance of our democracy and provide for the "prosperity and happiness" of its citizens (N.D. Const. art. VIII, § 1)?

Literature Review

Purpose of Education in North Dakota

The purpose of education in North Dakota is clearly outlined in the Constitution of North Dakota, Article VIII, entitled "Education." Section 1 states:

> A high degree of intelligence, patriotism, integrity, and morality on the part of every voter in a government by the people being necessary in order to insure the continuance of that government and the prosperity and happiness of the people, the legislative assembly shall make provision for the establishment and maintenance of a system of public schools which shall be open to all children of the state of North Dakota and free from sectarian control.

The first purpose stated in Article VIII, Section 1, is the continuance of government by the people—in other words perpetuating a democratic system of government. The second purpose stated is to ensure the prosperity of the people, and the third purpose to ensure the happiness of the people. These are lofty and somewhat abstract goals which might require some definition to make clear and concrete.

A democracy is simply a system of government in which power is held by representatives elected by the people (Cambridge University Press, n.d.a; Macey, 1993). According to Macey, for a democracy to continue to serve the needs of its people, the populace must be able to judge their representatives and remove those who are self-

serving or serving a narrow view. This aligns with the North Dakota constitution which suggests that the populace must be intelligent to ensure the continuance of government. Other attributes necessary to continuing government that are listed include: patriotism, integrity, and morality. This suggests a view towards serving the state and country as a whole instead of individual interests. With this in mind, we would also need individuals to run for office who possess the skills necessary to write policy that benefit the state and country. Education's role then in perpetuating democratic government is preparing citizens who can effectively judge their representatives and also preparing individuals who would make good representatives.

Prosperity can be a difficult concept to define. The Cambridge dictionary gives it this definition, "the state of being successful and having a lot of money" (Cambridge University Press, n.d.b, para. 1). This definition is still too vague- what does "being successful" or "having a lot of money" look like? Instead, it might be helpful to think of what prosperity is not. If one does not have a lot of money, then it is difficult to make ends meet, to provide for yourself and your family, etc. Therefore, the working definition of prosperity for this research is defined as consistently having enough to meet your basic needs of safety, shelter, food, etc. without having to rely on the government or other assistance programs. This definition allows us to be able to determine some rough estimates of what kind of education would be needed to be able to earn enough money to be comfortable in North Dakota based on costs of living within the state. The idea that prosperity includes not relying on the government for basic needs would also help ensure the perpetuation of democratic government since a government cannot continue if there are too many people who rely on it and not enough who contribute to it. Education's role

in prosperity is teaching necessary skills that allow for gainful employment at a high enough level to comfortably provide for an individual's basic needs.

Happiness is yet another murky word with many different meanings. For happiness researchers, happiness is often viewed through one of two lenses, a hedonic lens or a eudaimonic lens. Hedonic happiness is a more traditional sense of the word: the presence of good feelings, euphoria, etc. and the absence of bad feelings. While hedonic happiness is enjoyable, it can also be fleeting and somewhat self-serving. It takes little skill to experience hedonism other than to give into the enjoyment of a moment. Indeed, Levit (2013) classified hedonism as satisfying the "lower pleasures" (p. 578) of food and sex.

Eudaimonic happiness, however, is more about general well-being (Ryan et al., 2008). This kind of happiness takes more effort and skill and can be more controlled than the hedonic variety. Because authors of the North Dakota constitution indicated it required intelligence to provide for the happiness of its citizens, they were likely referring to the eudaimonic happiness of well-being. This kind of happiness is also associated with becoming one's unique self (Levit, 2013). The working definition of happiness for this research is based on eudaimonic concepts and self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan et al., 2008). For this research, happiness is defined as feeling you are able to be your true self with goals and activities that reflect who you are (autonomy), feeling confident in your ability to care for yourself and be successful (competence), and having positive relationships with individuals or organizations in which you feel loved and accepted (relatedness). Education's role in happiness is providing both an appropriate

environment and appropriate instruction to help students develop attributes necessary for competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Chapter I already laid out the theoretical backbone of this study with Maslow's hierarchy of needs as its spine. However, I wanted to just layer a few other educational thinkers onto this framework and make clear some connections.

As previously discussed, Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a pyramid in which, once man has satisfied the needs of one tier, he begins to desire the needs from the next tier until he has reached transcendence (Maslow, 1943; Venter, 2016). In the same vein, higher needs or goals cannot be met until lower needs or goals have been met. Chapter I explained how the three purposes of education as described in North Dakota's constitution correspond to certain tiers or goals within Maslow's hierarchy of needs with prosperity being the bottom two (physiological & safety), happiness being the next three (love, esteem, self-actualization), and democratic engagement being the highest (transcendence) with ties to all other levels as well.

It might be easy to assume that the order in which skills should be taught might mirror this pyramid—that skills necessary for prosperity need to be mastered first, followed by those necessary for happiness, etc. However, children come to our school systems not as autonomous adults, but as members of families. Depending on their familial and school environment, children may not be motivated to reach for the skills of prosperity because, for the time being, they are already prosperous. They are fed, sheltered, and safe. They might also feel loved by their parents, siblings, and teachers. They often come with a great deal of esteem and a positive self-image. Children may, in

fact, come prepared to do the work of self-actualization or even transcendence. As children develop, they may begin to lose their esteem, or experience social rejection. This then would create a need, and the motivation, to learn skills for lower levels of the pyramid. A child may not be motivated to master skills for prosperity until they are close to graduation because they do not consider the need to provide for their own food and shelter until they must be able to do so.

Levit (2013) developed a person-oriented conception of happiness (POCH) model which brings together the work of Freud, Jung, and Maslow. In this model, once physiological needs are met (Level 1), the work of developing happiness is done through self-development, self-realization, and self-regulation (Level 2). These skills are then applied in social contexts (Level 3). This sounds like the work of education—developing skills in a controlled environment that are then applied in the real world, but instead of focusing on what is needed to get a job, this focus is what is needed to be a happy person. The levels in the POCH model correlate with parts of Maslow's hierarchy, but is not a pyramid shape because this model allows for more interaction between the levels. Levit suggested skills developed in Level 2 of the POCH model (self-development, realization, and regulation) positively impact the individual at Level 1 (physiological needs) and at Level 3 (social interaction).

In essence, Maslow's (1943) pyramid idea still works regarding motivations and needs, but once skills are acquired at higher levels on the pyramid, they benefit all levels of the pyramid in a virtuous cycle. Therefore, skills do not have to be taught in the prioritized order of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, but rather in response to the needs a child is experiencing in their current phase of life. Acquired skills will then make skills

needed in other levels easier to master. For example, self-determination theory suggests that the three elements of happiness—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—must all exist for intrinsic motivation and well-being to occur (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation is needed to perform at a high level in one's career. Thus, skills related to happiness have a positive impact on one's prosperity as well.

True democratic engagement, as described in Chapter I, is related to the top level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs—transcendence. An ability to consider the interests of others and to work for a greater good are ideals embedded within democracy. Dewey (1938/2015) believed that education was necessary to the continuance of a democratic society. In Dewey's writings, he expressed the opinion that education is experience and experience is necessary to education. In his book, *Experience and Education*, he discussed the idea that rigid structures, meant to prepare children for a factory floor, restrict intellectual freedom. Dewey would rather have prepared students for floors of congress, putting the skills of democratic engagement above those of prosperity (Gibboney, 2006). This is not illogical because, as discussed in Chapter I, democratic engagement has ties to all levels of Maslow's pyramid. So, skills needed for democratic engagement could also increase one's prosperity and happiness.

Curriculum Requirements in North Dakota

Elementary and Middle School Required Instruction

My review of curriculum requirements began with the year 2001. At that time, curricular requirements for elementary and middle schools was as follows:

> **15.1-21-01. Education of students – Requirements.** The superintendent of public instruction shall ensure that students receive education in:

1. English language arts, including reading, composition, creative writing, English grammar, and spelling.
2. Mathematics.
3. Social studies, including the United States Constitution, and United States history, geography, and government.
4. Science, including agriculture.
5. Physical education.
6. Health, including physiology, hygiene, disease control, and the nature and effects of alcohol, tobacco, and narcotics.

(North Dakota H.B. 1045, 2001, Chapter 181, Section 8, p. 123)

Changes were not made to these curriculum requirements until 2007. At this time, the wording was changed to specifically indicate that these rules were for elementary and middle schools. The law was also applied to nonpublic schools that wished to be approved by the state superintendent, and the phrase "shall ensure that students receive education" was changed to "shall provide to students instruction." One additional curricular requirement was added which was "North Dakota studies, with an emphasis on the geography, history, and agriculture of this state, in the fourth and eighth grades" (North Dakota H.B. 1172, 2007, Chapter 174, Section 1 § 15.1-21-01, p. 768).

In 2021, North Dakota's legislature added a new section to curriculum requirements (North Dakota Century Code 15.1-21-12.1) detailing the nature of reading curriculum that must be provided in Grades K-3. At the time of this study, this new section required reading curriculum in early grade levels be scientific, research-based, and evidence-based. The reading curriculum was to be focused on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. At the time of this report, this new section to the NDCC had not necessarily created any change, but directed school

administrators to provide data to the legislature about the kinds of reading programs being used in the state. Schools were instructed to begin reporting this information to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) in the year 2022 (North Dakota H.B. 1388, 2021, Chapter 141, Section 9).

Overall, requirements for elementary and middle school curriculum have changed very little in the past 20 years (at the time of this review) despite a rapidly changing world and society. However, in addition to the new reading curriculum requirements described in the previous paragraph, new legislation has been passed which will impact elementary and middle school curriculum in the future. In fact, two bills were passed that will impact all curriculum and graduation requirements moving forward. The first bill is Senate Bill 2196 (North Dakota S.B. 2196, 2021). This bill allows the State Board of Public School Education to "establish and certify a North Dakota learning continuum to allow a district-approved, mastery framework policy to award units . . . and to waive unit instructional time" (North Dakota S.B. 2196, 2021, Section 1.1.e). This means the state will create a continuum of essential skills that: (a) all students need to master, and (b) school districts can prove student mastery along the continuum in lieu of counting instructional hours to ensure students have been provided instruction in required subject areas. Work constructing that continuum began in June of 2021 with the review process to begin the Fall of 2021.

The continuum is based on four core areas: English/language arts, math, science, and social studies; and 21st century skills identified as important in the North Dakota profile of a graduate (*Summary Report for: Portrait of a Graduate*, 2020). At the time of this report, it was unclear whether 21st century skills would become a requirement for

graduation, or whether core subject areas in the continuum would replace core subject areas in curriculum requirements. At the time of this literature review, there were no physical education or health criteria included in the proposed learning continuum.

The second bill passed into law which impacts curriculum and graduation requirements is House Bill 1478 (North Dakota H.B. 1478, 2021). This bill allows for activities completed outside the school environment, but which meet course content standards, to count towards a child's instruction. Examples listed in the bill include work-based learning, apprenticeships, internships, and community programs. This bill only applies to students in Grades 6-12 and administrative rules for applying this legislation have not been created yet, but this certainly changes the way in which students might receive instruction and show mastery of required curricular areas (North Dakota H.B. 1478, 2021).

High School Required Curriculum

In 2001, the section of the North Dakota Century Code addressing curricular requirements for high school read as follows:

> **15.1-21-02. High schools – Required units.** In order to be approved by the superintendent of public instruction, each public and nonpublic high school shall make available to each student:
>
> 1. Four units of English.
> 2. Three units of mathematics.
> 3. Four units of science.
> 4. Three units of social studies, including one of world history and one of United States history, both of which must emphasize geography.
> 5. One unit of health and physical education.

6. One unit of music.

7. Any six units selected from business education, economics and the free enterprise system, foreign language, American sign language, and vocational courses including family and consumer sciences, agriculture, business and office technology, marketing, diversified occupations, trade and industrial education, technology education, and health careers. The vocational courses may be offered through cooperative arrangements approved by the state board for vocational and technical education.

(North Dakota H.B. 1045, 2001, Chapter 181, Section 8, pp. 123-124)

Unlike the elementary and middle school curriculum required in North Dakota, the high school required curriculum has undergone a multitude of changes in the last 20 years. In 2003, the term "vocational courses" was replaced with "career and technical education courses" (North Dakota H.B. 1183, 2003, Chapter 138, Section 65, p. 40). In the same year, the number of units of math required was increased from three to four, as was the number of units of social studies. Physical education and health were changed from one credit of a combined physical education and health class to one half credit each, every year. Two units of fine arts were now required instead of one, one of which had to be music. The law also now required two units of the same foreign language and two units of vocational education. In order to help schools meet these curricular demands, the law expanded ways in which schools might offer courses including: distance learning, interactive video, and cooperation with institutions of higher education. The law did require schools to pay for any costs resulting from making use of these alternate forms of learning including tuition and to provide transportation if needed (North Dakota S.B. 2421, 2003).

In 2005, the "during each school year" requirement for physical education and health was stricken from the law (North Dakota H.B. 1048, 2005, Chapter 165, Section 1,

p. 804). In 2007, the legislature added a requirement for a half unit of North Dakota studies to be offered at least every other year (North Dakota H.B. 1172, 2007, Section 2). They also waived these curricular requirements for the youth correctional center (North Dakota H.B. 1076, 2007), and returned physical education to an every year requirement adding that once every 4 years, the physical education unit must be a personal fitness class (North Dakota S.B. 2354, 2007).

The legislative session in 2009 brought more changes, this time with the intention of increasing the rigor of courses. Instead of general units of each subject area, more specific requirements were put into place. English/language arts offerings were to include courses in literature, composition, and speech. Offered math classes needed to include Algebra II and one math class beyond Algebra II. Science courses had to include physical science and biology as options. New social studies classes were added including either one unit of problems of democracy or a half unit of United States government plus one half unit of economics. Foreign languages could now include Native American languages. Schools were also required to offer at least one unit of an Advanced Placement (AP) or dual credit course (North Dakota H.B. 1400, 2009, Section 14).

In addition to specifying which courses within each curricular area to offer, new sections of law were written that even detailed the contents of some of those courses. A personal finance component was added, which had to be included in either the problems of democracy or economics course (North Dakota H.B. 1400, 2009, Section 26). No details were spared on what the subject matter must include. A laundry list of eight financial topics was listed including: checkbook mechanics, saving for larger purchases, credit, earning power, taxation, college costs, budgeting, and mortgages and investments.

Another section required that in either the problems of democracy or United States government class, each student must read the Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights, and the United States Constitution (North Dakota H.B. 1400, 2009, Section 27).

When additional rigor was added to general high school curriculum requirements in 2009, an optional high school curriculum was created for students who were not successful in the regular curriculum after 2 years of high school. This new optional curriculum resembled old high school curriculum requirements and included: four units of English including literature, composition, and speech; two units of math; two units of science; three units of social studies, "which may include up to one-half unit of North Dakota studies and one-half unit of multicultural studies"; "one unit of physical education" or "one-half unit of physical education and one-half unit of health"; two units of foreign languages, Native American languages, fine arts, or career and technical education courses; and any seven additional units (North Dakota H.B. 1400, 2009, Section 16).

The final change to these curricular requirements came in 2011, when specific content for health classes was added. The new section required health classes include "risks associated with adolescent sexual activity and the social, psychological, and physical health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity before and outside of marriage" (North Dakota H.B. 1229, 2011, Chapter 145, Section 1, p. 56).

In addition to listing required courses for high schools, the North Dakota Century Code also specifies instructional hours needed for courses to count as credits. This concept of instruction measured in hours is known as "seat time." In 2001, the number of hours per credit was 120. For some classes, including "natural sciences, agriculture,

business and office technology, marketing, diversified occupations, trade and industrial education, technology education, and health careers," that number was 150 hours per school calendar year (North Dakota H.B. 1045, 2001, Chapter 181, Section 8 § 15.1-21-03, p. 124).

Until 2021, only minor changes were made to these instructional hours rules. In 2003, an exception was added for schools that had block schedules which were approved by the superintendent of public instruction (North Dakota S.B. 2177, 2003). In 2019, the phrase "hours of instruction" was replaced with "hours of student engagement" (North Dakota S.B. 2265, 2019, Section 6).

Obviously, new bills regarding a learning continuum and waiving hourly class requirements if districts can prove student mastery is potentially a huge change from the traditional, Carnegie unit, system of measuring student achievement in high school. At the time of this review, it had been more than 10 years since any significant change had occurred in required course offerings in high schools, but legislation in 2021 created a potential for innovation and new opportunities for students.

Graduation Requirements

In 2001, there was no difference between courses schools were required to offer and courses students were required to take in order to graduate. In fact, nowhere in the law did it specifically say that one must complete all of a school's offered courses to graduate, just that a school district had to make certain courses available to each student. As a reminder, that list from 2001 is as follows:

15.1-21-02. High schools – Required units. In order to be approved by the superintendent of public instruction, each public and nonpublic high school shall make available to each student:

1. Four units of English.
2. Three units of mathematics.
3. Four units of science.
4. Three units of social studies, including one of world history and one of United States history, both of which must emphasize geography.
5. One unit of health and physical education.
6. One unit of music.
7. Any six units selected from business education, economics and the free enterprise system, foreign language, American sign language, and vocational courses including family and consumer sciences, agriculture, business and office technology, marketing, diversified occupations, trade and industrial education, technology education, and health careers. The vocational courses may be offered through cooperative arrangements approved by the state board for vocational and technical education.

(North Dakota H.B. 1045, 2001, Chapter 181, Section 8, pp. 123-124)

This list of required units of instruction represents a total of 22 units at between 120 and 150 instructional hours each. The North Dakota Century Code in 2001 did allow for an alternative curriculum plan in which students were required to take at least four units of high school work each year with a possible exception in their senior year provided the school board adopted an alternative plan allowing less than four credits in a senior year (North Dakota H.B. 1045, 2001).

In 2003, the North Dakota legislature added a new section to the North Dakota Century Code which specified that a student must complete at least 21 units of high school work from the list of required course offerings in order to receive their high school

diploma (North Dakota H.B. 1033, 2003). The year 2007 brought additional requirements. The number of units needed to graduate was increased to 24 (North Dakota S.B. 2309, 2007) and specific courses were required to be part of that 24 unit count including: four units of English/language arts; two units of math; two units of science; three units of social studies; one unit of physical education; and one unit of a foreign or Native language, fine arts, or career and technical education course (North Dakota S.B. 2309, 2007). This "new" (in 2007) section of the law also specified that a school district may not reduce its graduation requirements below what was stated in the North Dakota Century Code.

In 2009, the "diploma" and "graduation requirements" were united into one section of the law. The new 2009 requirements reduced the number of units needed to graduate to 22, but added more specific requirements on what classes needed to be part of that 22 credit count. The new 2009 law read as follows:

> Except as provided in section 15.1-21-02.3, before a school district, a nonpublic high school, or the center for distance education issues a high school diploma to a student, the student must have successfully completed . . . the following twenty-two units of high school coursework . . .:
>
> 1. Four units of English language arts from a sequence that includes literature, composition, and speech;
>
> 2. Three units of mathematics;
>
> 3. Three units of science, including:
>
> a. One unit of physical science;
>
> b. One unit of biology; and
>
> c. (1) One unit of any other science; or
>
> (2) Two half-units of any other science;

4. Three units of social studies, including;

   a. One unit of United States history;

   b. (1) One-half unit of United States government and one-half unit of economics; or

      (2) One unit of problems of democracy; and

   c. One unit or two one-half units of any other social studies, which may include civics, civilization, geography and history, multicultural studies, North Dakota studies, psychology, sociology, and world history;

5. a. One unit of physical education; or

   b. One-half unit of physical education and one-half unit of health;

6. Three units of:

   a. Foreign languages;

   b. Native American languages;

   c. Fine arts; or

   d. Career and technical education courses; and

7. Any five additional units.

(North Dakota H.B. 1400, 2009, Section 15)

As mentioned in the section of this dissertation on curriculum, 2009 also created an alternative curricular path to a high school diploma for those who were failing after 2 years at high school. This alternative course schedule required just 21 credits and reduced the number of math and science units needed to graduate by one each (North Dakota H.B. 1400, 2009, Section 16).

The year 2011 brought a new legislature who made several small, rapid-fire changes to graduation requirements even undoing one of their own changes. First, they

added an exception to graduation requirements for military children (North Dakota H.B. 1248, 2011, Section 3). Language was added to state that two of "five additional units" of study required to graduate may be theological studies if taught in a nonpublic school (North Dakota S.B. 2317, 2011, Section 2). In a reversal of the previous legislature, the section on requirements for a diploma and courses needed for high school graduation were separated (North Dakota S.B. 2150, 2011, Sections 9 and 10), and in a reversal of their own earlier decision, language regarding theological studies was removed (North Dakota S.B. 2317, 2011, Section 2; North Dakota S.B. 2150, 2011, Section 10).

The year 2013 was a calmer year with the only legislation passed regarding graduation requirements being a bill that maintained an exception for military children (North Dakota H.B. 1293, 2013, Section 6). The legislature in 2015 added an entirely new graduation requirement—the passing of a civics test. The civics test in question was made up of 100 questions that might be posed as part of the naturalization process for non-U.S. citizen applicants. Students were required to answer at least 60% of the questions correctly to pass and graduate from high school (North Dakota H.B. 1087, 2015). Two final tweaks to the graduation requirements were made in 2017 when computer science was added as an option for one of the math credits and chemistry was added as an option for one of the three science credits required (North Dakota S.B. 2091, 2017; North Dakota S.B. 2185, 2017).

Overall, this history of legislation on graduation requirements shows a pattern of frequent small changes with little actual impact on students or the way they have been educated. As with curriculum requirements, the potential impact to graduation requirements of legislation passed in 2021, establishing a learning continuum and

allowing outside school experiences to count towards education, is huge. Depending on administrative rules established and mastery plans created by districts, this could mark a change from measuring learning required for graduation in seat time and credits to measuring student learning by demonstration of skills and competencies.

Creating Prosperity

As mentioned in the section regarding the purpose of education, prosperity can be hard to define and measure. Because we are using a definition of consistently being able to meet one's needs without reliance on the government, we should be able to make some informed statements about what it might take to be prosperous in North Dakota.

One objective question that might be answerable is, "How much money do you need to make in order to be prosperous in North Dakota?" Since, by our definition, if you are prosperous, you can't be reliant on the government or other assistance, one way to look at this question would be to determine salary limits for being eligible for assistance. Numbers from 2020 were used as the survey for this paper was conducted in 2020.

The federal poverty guidelines for 2020 set the poverty line for one individual at an annual salary of $12,760 (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, n.d.). However, some assistance benefits are available to individuals earning a salary above the poverty line. For example, with the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) assistance program, you might be eligible for some level of assistance when earning up to 185% of the poverty line (Food and Nutrition Service, 2020). This would be an annual salary of $23,606. For North Dakota's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), an individual making as much as $25,536 annually might be eligible for assistance (North Dakota Human Services, 2021). So, roughly speaking, an individual

making $25,000 or less each year might not be considered as prosperous in North Dakota. However, many households are comprised of more than one individual. According to the 2020 Census, there were 779,094 people living in North Dakota in 318,322 households (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). This gives us an average household size of 2.45 people. Table 2 shows allowed incomes for three different government programs for households of 1, 2, and 3 people.

Table 2

Household Annual Income Guidelines for 2020 to Determine Eligibility for Assistance From Selected Government Programs

Household Size	Federal Poverty Guideline	WIC Program	ND SNAP
1	$12,760 or less	$23,606 or less	$25,536 or less
2	$17,240 or less	$31,894 or less	$34,488 or less
3	$21,720 or less	$40,182 or less	$43,440 or less

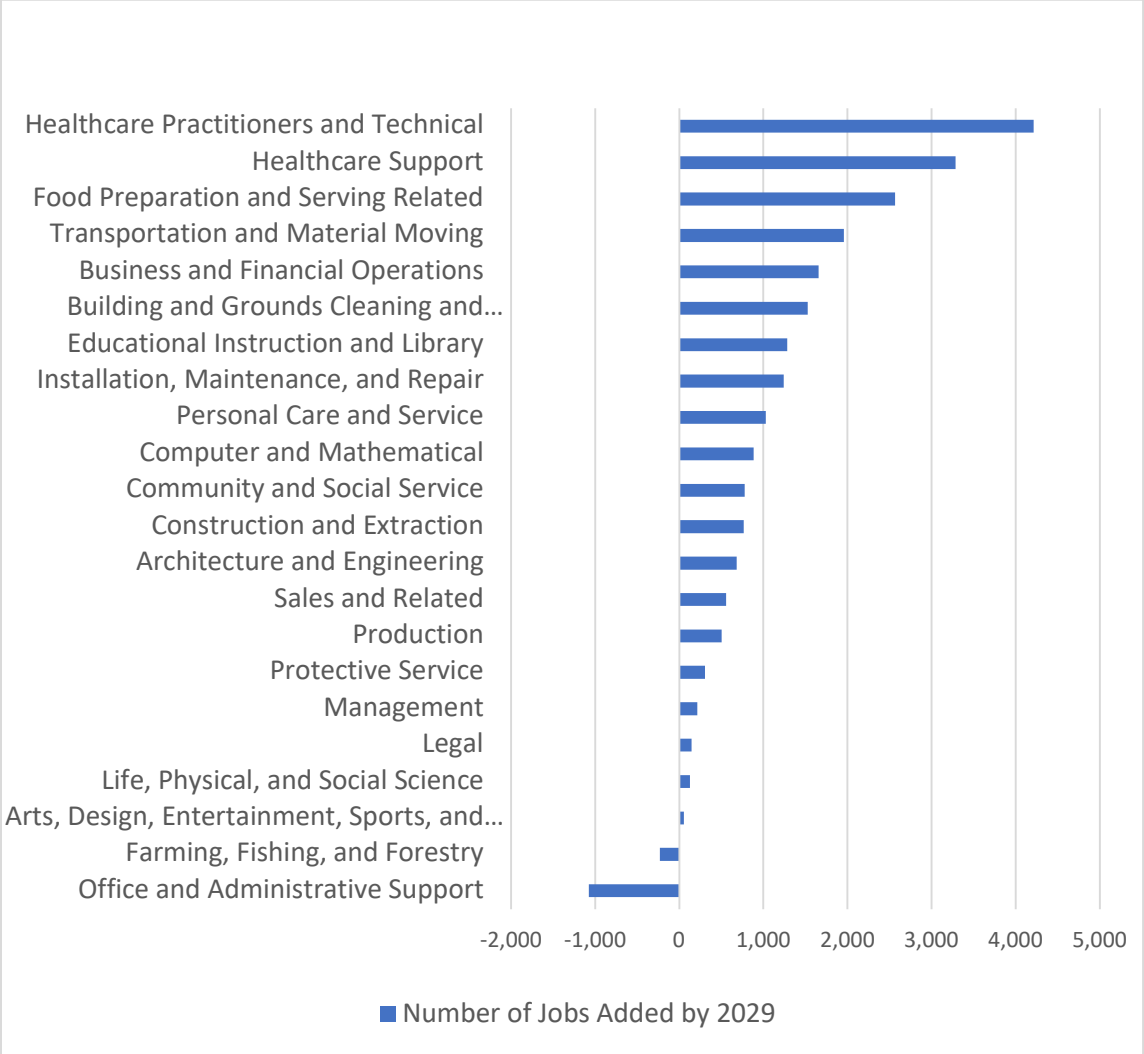
If an average household is 2.45 people, then an average family in North Dakota needs to earn around $40,000 or more annually to meet their needs without government assistance. The U.S. Census Bureau reported the most recent median household income in North Dakota to be $64,894 and the per capita income to be $36,062. These figures come from 2019 data. The percentage of individuals in poverty in the state was reported to be 10.6% (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).

At the time of this report, data suggested many people were able to meet the definition of prosperity in the state. For this to continue, educational institutions must help students graduate from high school and prepare students for jobs in the future that

will pay a prosperous wage. While there are jobs that do not require a high school diploma, Reese and Ye (2011) found that high school graduation rates correlate with local economic prosperity. North Dakota Job Service (n.d.b) keeps and provides data regarding current jobs and what they pay, projections for future needs in different employment sectors, etc. Their projections at the time of this study extended through 2029 and showed how various job sectors were expected to grow or shrink (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Job Sector Growth – 2019 to 2029



Many of these job sectors include both careers which require college degrees and careers which require vocational training, or sometimes, no training at all. Those jobs which did not require a high school degree were often below the prosperity line established earlier in this section. When reviewing average salaries for various career fields from the North Dakota Job Service 2020 dataset (North Dakota Job Service, n.d.a), jobs with the highest paying average salaries tended to be healthcare jobs, which required graduate level degrees. However, there were high-paying jobs at many levels of training, and there were definitely jobs that fell within the prosperous salary range at all levels of education and training. This tells us that preparing students for college is still important if they want to pursue a career in a field which requires a college degree and that their getting the right kind of degree can lead them to more prosperity. However, data from the job service also shows that there are a number of vocational and technical skills that can lead to prosperity, and schools may want to develop more programs to teach these skills. Health care technicians and support staff are high on the list of job growth areas which includes lab technicians, dental hygienists, CNAs, etc. Indeed, Renzulli (2019) provided a list of jobs which don't require a bachelor's degree that will earn you more than $75,000 a year and most of those jobs have been available in North Dakota.

This idea that not every student will need college is not a new one for North Dakota. The North Dakota Choice Ready framework suggests that students should either be post-secondary ready, workforce ready, or military ready when they graduate from high school (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 2021a). The Choice Ready chart shows that students need specific kinds of classes or content knowledge to be post-secondary or workforce ready. In addition to content knowledge, however, there are other

skills needed for success in college or at work. Anyone who has been to college can attest that executive functioning skills such as organization, time-management, and impulse control contribute to one's ability to complete coursework and do well in classes. Many different organizations have researched the skills most highly prized by 21st century employers. Three frequently mentioned skills include: communication, collaboration, and information communication technology literacy (Voogt & Roblin, 2012).

One area which may have been neglected both by the Choice Ready framework and by the Job Service of North Dakota is development of students who can become entrepreneurs and start their own businesses. This is key in a rapidly developing climate of social, environmental, economic, and technological change as there are new needs arising in such a society and new sectors have to be created to fill those needs. While one does not need a degree to be an entrepreneur, William Baumol, professor at New York University, believes that one does need more education than in the past to be an innovative entrepreneur. In an interview with Griffeths et al., Baumol stated:

> The reason I believe that more education will now and in the future be required for success in innovative entrepreneurship is the ever-compounding complexity of the inventions, as for example in the novel electronics of recent decades. It is the very process of innovation that cumulatively increases the complexity of innovations as time passes, and each new idea invites a more complex and sophisticated successor. (As cited in Griffeths et al., 2012, p. 617)

Baumol's teaching methods have been designed to stimulate creativity, imagination and innovation in his students and much of his course content is co-created with the students themselves. This indicates students will need both content knowledge of the sector in

which they wish to innovate, and the ability to think creatively in order to be successful entrepreneurs.

In summary, North Dakota is already doing well in providing for the prosperity of most of its citizens, at least on paper. To continue this prosperity, North Dakota schools will need to help students graduate from high school and prepare them to enter secondary programs, the workforce, or the world of innovation and entrepreneurship. This preparation might include: developing content knowledge expertise, but also, transferrable skills such as communication, collaboration, executive functioning, and creativity.

Finding Happiness

This study uses a eudaimonic view of happiness—the happiness of well-being and self-realization (Waterman, 2008). Because well-being relies, to a certain extent, on external factors such as living conditions, a great deal of research has been done to determine if happiness is largely reliant on prosperity. Some studies would indicate that this is the case. Stevenson and Wolfers (2008), for example, found a correlation between wealth and happiness with no satiation points.

However, many other studies find that happiness is dependent on prosperity in conditional ways only. A 2018 study found that there were satiation points after which increasing one's wealth did not increase one's happiness, and that these satiation points were dependent on geographical location and gender (Jebb et al., 2018). A similar finding was reported by Alderson and Katz-Gerro (2016) in their study, showing that, after basic needs were met, more wealth only increases happiness when it is an increase in

comparison with others and their lifestyles. In other words, people feel happier when they seem to have more than others around them.

Yet another study found that wealth does increase happiness, but not the eudaimonic kind of happiness. Instead, an increase in wealth might provide a boost in hedonic, short-term happiness which quickly fades (Easterlin et al., 2010) while longer-lasting changes for happiness must come from other sources such as relationships (Easterlin, 2003). Indeed, in 2012, the *World Happiness Report* stated, "A household's income counts for life satisfaction, but only in a limited way. Other things matter more: community trust, mental and physical health, and the quality of governance and rule of law" (Sachs, 2012, p. 7). Here again, we see the interconnectedness of the three purposes of education. People need prosperity to be happy, but they also need good mental health and good governance.

Because this study uses a eudaimonic view of happiness, and because the need for a certain amount of wealth is covered under the umbrella of creating prosperity, questions regarding wealth did not play a central role in understanding how North Dakotans find happiness. This idea that prosperity is the foundation to happiness and not the driver of happiness, aligns with Maslow's hierarchy of needs with the needs met by prosperity coming before the needs met by finding happiness.

As discussed in Chapter I, self-determination theory identifies three components necessary to lasting happiness which are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. For North Dakota's educational systems to produce adults who are happy, it would be important to understand what individuals need to be able to do in order to experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan et al., 2008). If we were to put these in the

same order in which they appear in the hierarchy of needs, relatedness would come first, followed by competence, and then autonomy.

Relatedness fills the need for love in our hierarchy of needs. Relatedness is somewhat unique because there are individual competencies involved in relatedness, but there is also a communal responsibility. Relatedness is feeling connected to and cared about by others (Ryan et al., 2008). Relatedness comes from meaningful relationships and having a sense of belonging within a group. To create meaningful relationships, individuals need to have emotional intelligence—the ability to understand and empathize with others, the ability to identify if a relationship is healthy or unhealthy, etc. However, individuals also need access to an accepting community where they can experience belonging—something that is not within an individual's control unless he or she creates such a community.

North Dakota recognizes the need to teach social-emotional skills. This can be seen in the inclusion of empathy as a trait in North Dakota's profile of a graduate, in the adoption of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework, and in the development of statewide social emotional learning (SEL) goals for each grade level in grades K-12 (CASEL, n.d.b; North Dakota's Multi-Tier System of Supports [NDMTSS], 2018; North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, n.d.b; *Summary Report for: Portrait of a Graduate*, 2020). Two of the areas in the CASEL framework include social awareness, and relationships skills. Schools can, and some do, spend time on these skills in the form of small group lessons with counselors and short lessons during an advisory period or morning meeting. Schools can also try to provide the kind of community where students can experience belonging, but neither of these actions

by schools are measured or show up in requirements for curriculum or graduation in the North Dakota Century Code.

Competence aligns with esteem in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Competence is feeling that you are effective in both internal and external environments (Ryan et al., 2008). Therefore, competence includes the ability to make important decisions with confidence and feeling capable of caring for oneself. This may sound similar to meeting physiological needs, but the difference is that physiological needs can be met by anyone; to have esteem or competence you must feel capable of meeting those needs yourself. The esteem of others is also often dependent on the confidence and competence of an individual. In order to be competent, then, an individual needs to develop content knowledge important to their external environments, be able to use critical thinking skills, develop daily living skills that allow self-care, and develop positive self-talk. These kinds of skills can be seen in the statewide SEL goals in the CASEL framework areas of responsible decision making and self-awareness (CASEL, n.d.b; NDMTSS, 2018).

Autonomy aligns with self-actualization in the hierarchy of needs. Having autonomy means having choice and control of one's own behavior (Ryan et al., 2008). When you have total control, you can set goals and meet them. Your actions have purpose and meaning; you decide who you want to be and enact that vision. In other words, you become your truest self. In order to have autonomy, an individual must develop the executive functioning skills of organization, goal-setting, self-regulation, etc. These kinds of skills can be found in North Dakota statewide SEL goals under the CASEL framework areas of self-management and self-awareness (CASEL, n.d.b; NDMTSS, 2018).

As with relatedness, skills for competence and autonomy in life may be taught in schools but they are not typically measured. In addition to directly teaching skills for relatedness, competence, and autonomy, schools in North Dakota can also create an environment in which competencies necessary to happiness are more likely to be developed by providing acknowledgment of feelings, choices, and opportunities for self-direction (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Creating an environment in which students learn the skills for happiness and have their needs for love and esteem met has the added advantage of increasing intrinsic motivation for students because intrinsic motivation and eudaimonic well-being are closely linked together (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Waterman, 2008). Intrinsic motivation would provide benefits in the areas of prosperity and democratic engagement as well.

This concept of creating the right environment for motivation and learning is also found in educational literature. In fact, Marzano used a diagram of Maslow's hierarchy in his book when explaining the need for a "safe, supportive, and collaborative" learning environment as foundational to engagement (Marzano et al., 2018, p. 44). Similarly, Ken Robinson compares good educational systems to organic farms that prioritize the environment over crop yields in order to grow higher quality produce (Robinson & Aronica, 2015).

Sustaining a Democratic Government

Upon leaving the Second Continental Congress in November of 1777, Benjamin Franklin was reportedly asked what kind of government the congress had created for the new nation. According to one account, Franklin's reply was "A republic, if you can keep it" (McHenry, 1787, Digital ID# us0063_02p1). As this quote suggests, a democratic

government requires effort to maintain. Writers of North Dakota's constitution certainly believed this to be true, and the continuance of government by the people was their first reason for establishing a system of public education.

Sustaining a democratic government requires: individuals participate in systems of government—voting, interacting with representatives, running for office, etc.; and individuals make intelligent choices in who they vote for and in making governing decisions as a representative or as a citizen at the ballot box. As discussed in Chapter I, this means graduates of North Dakota school systems need to be both participatory and justice-oriented citizens. The core assumptions of these two types of citizenry are that citizens must "actively participate and take leadership positions" and "debate and change established systems and structure" (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 240).

For participatory citizenship, individuals need to have a working understanding of government and also need to understand the importance of participating in governance including voting and running for office. Typically, this type of learning would happen in social studies classes, and more specifically, civics classes. Kahne and Westheimer (2003) pointed out that many schools have goals of developing democratic citizens but do little to assess those goals. The same could be said of North Dakota. At the time of this study, although social studies was a required part of the curriculum in K-12 education, and classes which address government were specifically required in high school, little had been done to assess the efficacy of this curriculum in developing citizens who participate in government. North Dakota has required schools to administer state assessments in the areas of reading, writing, math, and science but not social studies. This

is somewhat surprising given that social studies are crucial to the continuance of education in North Dakota as schools are a function of local government.

Kahne and Westheimer found successful citizenship programs have three priorities: commitment, capacity, and connection. For commitment, students need to understand that society needs to be improved and government can be a vehicle to improve it. Students also need experiences seeking solutions to society's problems. To build capacity, students need real-world projects, workshops, and simulations that teach civic skills and content knowledge. In essence, they need to practice participating in government. For connection, students need a supportive community of peers, and connections to role models who have made a difference (Kahne & Westheimer, 2003).

Hoskins et al. (2012) had similar findings in their study. They examined three variables—participation in civic experiences, meaning-making through discussion and media, and hours of instruction on civic topics. They found that hours of instruction had little impact on students' cognition of democratic institutions. Variables that made positive impacts included discussions with parents and friends, a classroom climate of open discussion on civic topics, consuming media on civic topics, and participating in student government (Hoskins et al., 2012). At the time of this report, North Dakota only measured the democratic education of students by seat time in high school social studies classes and by requiring high school seniors to pass a citizenship test with 70% accuracy.

In addition to knowledge of democratic institutions, creating justice-oriented citizens requires several transferrable skills including critical thinking and emotional intelligence. Westheimer (2008) argued, "For democracy to remain vibrant, educators must convey to students that both critical thinking and action are important components

of democratic civic life – and students must learn that they have important contributions to make" (Westheimer, 2008, p. 5). Critical thinking appears on the North Dakota Portrait of a Graduate but is not specifically mentioned or tested for within current curriculum and graduation requirements (*Summary Report for: Portrait of a Graduate*, 2020).

Competencies

Selecting and Teaching Competencies

In his book *21 Trends for the 21st Century*, Gary Marx said, "Much of what we need to know today and will need to know tomorrow is in the spaces between and among disciplines" (Marx, 2014, p. 345). As we have examined the purposes of education in North Dakota and the kinds of learning that is needed to support these purposes, much of what is necessary is not explicitly in an educational discipline or course. Furthermore, these skills are largely unassessed and unmandated at the local or state level with the exceptions, perhaps, of written communication and knowledge of democratic institutions. These transferrable skills—skills that cross disciplines and crossover from school to real life—appear on many researchers' lists of what students need to know to be successful.

Disciplinary or content knowledge is still important, especially to prosperity. Most jobs require some sort of disciplinary knowledge, but not always the kind taught in schools. Additionally, some content knowledge is foundational—meaning it is necessary to meet needs at all levels of Maslow's hierarchy. For example, in order to get a job and earn money to meet both physiological and safety needs, an individual needs to be able to read a help wanted ad, calculate if the rate of pay being offered is enough to make ends meet, and write a resume to submit to an employer. This action requires basic content knowledge in reading, mathematics, and writing. One could argue, correctly, that reading

comprehension, computation, and written communication are also transferrable skills. However, sometimes content knowledge is necessary to develop or use a transferrable skill. Some studies are finding that content knowledge in science, social studies, and other areas increases reading comprehension. Amount of background knowledge in a discipline is sometimes more predictive than reading skills of an individual's ability to comprehend a text (Core Knowledge Foundation, 2017; O'Reilly et al., 2019).

Unfortunately, while both content knowledge and transferrable skills are important, they are often painted as dichotomous; that is, an educational system must either focus on content or on skills. At the center of this debate is the figure of E. D. Hirsch, founder of the Core Knowledge Foundation (Core Knowledge Foundation, n.d.). He says in the introduction to one of his many books:

> Positive sentiments in favor of skills and understanding have been turned into negative sentiments against the teaching of important knowledge. Those who have entered the teaching profession over the past forty years have been taught to scorn important knowledge as "mere facts," and to see the imparting of this knowledge as injurious to children. (Hirsch, 1993, p. xix)

Hirsch's foundation advocates for a combination of content knowledge and content skills, but does not address transferrable skills in their Core Knowledge Sequence (Core Knowledge Foundation, 2013). Others question the wisdom of set content, arguing the need for personalization, relevance to local context, and multiculturalism (Liu, 2015).

Even for those who agree there should be some necessary content and skills standards, deciding what those will be can be difficult. In the area of math, many high schools require students take geometry and Algebra II, but some experts suggest the most

helpful mathematical topics for postsecondary life are basic math skills, linear equations, and data analysis; geometry and Algebra II might have very little application (Levitt, 2019). Similarly, most competencies or standards for literacy require students read grade-level texts when many individuals will rarely read 12th grade or higher Lexile levels in their daily lives once they exit school. Many news outlets use Lexile levels much lower than 12th grade to communicate with their audiences (Kelly, 2020). A multitude of lists have come out in recent years of what students need to know and do to be successful in the 21st century. One list comes from Gary Marx who suggested 20 educational targets, some disciplinary and some transferrable. Marx's targets are displayed in Table 3. North Dakota schools have offered some educational targets, but not all and not reliably.

Table 3

Marx's 20 Educational Targets for the 21st Century

Disciplinary Knowledge	Transferrable Skills
Science	Communication
Technology	Thinking and Reasoning
Mathematics	Imagination, Creativity, and Innovation
Engineering and Architecture	Knowledge Creation and Breakthrough Thinking
The Arts	Judgment, Ethics, and Character
Economics and Personal Finance	Civil Discourse
Social and Behavioral Science	Employability Skills
Civic Knowledge, Skills, Dispositions	Leadership and Management
Global/International Knowledge and Skills	Health, Well-Being, Life Skills
Environmental and Planetary Security	Futures Processes and Forecasting

Voogt and Roblin (2012) analyzed eight international frameworks of 21st century competencies. They identified 19 competency areas that were mentioned at least once in the eight frameworks they examined. Table 4 is compiled from their paper.

Table 4

Competencies Identified in International Frameworks

Frequency	Competencies
Mentioned in ALL frameworks	- Collaboration - Communication - Information communication technology literacy - Social and/or cultural skills, citizenship
Mentioned in MOST frameworks	- Creativity - Critical thinking - Problem-solving - Develop quality products/productivity
Mentioned in FEW frameworks	- Learning to learn - Self-direction - Planning - Flexibility and adaptability - Core subjects: mathematics, science, language, history, the arts
Mentioned in ONE framework	- Risk taking - Manage and solve conflicts - Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship - Interdisciplinary themes - Core subjects: economics, geography, government, civics

Notice that most frameworks agree on a handful of transferrable skills as crucial to 21st century learning while core subjects are not even a part of some frameworks. One such framework comprised entirely of transferrable skills is the 16 Habits of Mind. This framework was originally from a book, *Learning and Leading with Habits of Mind: 16 Essential Characteristics for Success* by Costa and Kallick (2008), but I found it in a book by Kallick and Zmuda (2017) entitled *Students at the Center: Personalized Learning with Habits of Mind.* These 16 habits of the mind are listed in Table 5.

Table 5

Sixteen Habits of Mind

Persisting	Managing impulsivity
Listening with understanding and empathy	Thinking flexibly
Thinking about your thinking (metacognition)	Striving for accuracy and precision
Questioning and problem posing	Applying past knowledge to novel situations
Creating, imagining, and innovating	Responding with wonderment and awe
Taking responsible risks	Finding humor
Thinking interdependently	Remaining open to continuous learning
Thinking and communicating with clarity and precision	Gathering data through all senses

Adapted from *Students at the Center: Personalized Learning With Habits of Mind* by B. Kallick and A. Zmuda, 2017, Alexandria, VA: ASCD, p. 10. Copyright 2008 by ASCD.

Wolff and Booth (2017) also discussed transferrable skills, but they called them employability skills. While their paper more specifically addressed institutions of higher education, it stands to reason these same skills would be needed by high school graduates entering the workforce. Wolff and Booth divided skills into three categories (Table 6).

Table 6

Employability Skills

People skills	Problem-solving skills	Professional strengths
- collaboration - teamwork - cross-cultural competence	- critical thinking - creativity - adaptability	- communication - work ethic - habits of lifelong learning

North Dakota has its own identified transferrable skills in three separate locations. It has adopted the CASEL framework for SEL learning with CASEL's given set of SEL competencies (NDMTSS, 2018), there are Career Ready rubrics developed by the state (North Dakota Career and Technical Education, 2018), and there is the Profile of a Graduate for North Dakota (*Summary Report for: Portrait of a Graduate*, 2020). Each has a set of competencies, many of them overlapping (Table 7).

Table 7

Comparison of North Dakota's Competencies

SEL Competencies	Career Ready Competencies	North Dakota's Profile of a Graduate Competencies
Self-Awareness - identifying emotions - accurate self-perception - recognizing strengths - self-confidence & efficacy Self-Management - impulse control - stress management - self-discipline - self-motivation - goal setting - organizational skills	1. Act a responsible and contributing citizen and employee 2. Apply appropriate academic and technical skills 3. Attend to personal health and financial well-being 4. Communicate clearly, effectively, and with reason 5. Consider the environment, social, and economic impacts of decisions 6. Demonstrate creativity and innovation	Critical Thinking Empathy Perseverance Communication Collaboration Adaptability Leaner's Mindset

SEL Competencies	Career Ready Competencies	North Dakota's Profile of a Graduate Competencies
Responsible Decision-Making - identifying problems - analyzing situations - solving problems - evaluating & reflecting - ethical responsibility Relationship Skills - communication - social engagement - relationship building - teamwork - conflict resolution Social Awareness - empathy & perspective taking - appreciating diversity - respect for others - help seeking	7. Employ valid and reliable research strategies 8. Utilize critical thinking to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them 9. Model integrity, ethical leadership, and effective management 10. Plan education and career path aligned to personal goals 11. Use technology to enhance productivity 12. Work productively in teams while using cultural/global competence	

It is clear that some educators and policy makers in North Dakota are aware of the importance of transferrable skills and believe them worthy of teaching and assessing at a local level. However, there seems to be a disconnect at the state level where there are no accountability measures or curricular requirements regarding these transferrable skills.

With the passing of North Dakota's Senate Bill 2196 (2021), the door is now open to districts to choose to measure competencies instead of seat time; but again, administrative rules have not yet been created and the vision of what this looks like for requiring and measuring transferrable skills is still murky. It is also unclear how existing state educational standards might fit into this new world of competencies. As mentioned previously, disciplinary knowledge is still important, and according to Gary Marx, there are additional disciplines which students may need to understand that aren't regularly taught. The question then becomes "How can we possibly teach everything that students need to know?"

Hoskins and Crick noticed that disciplinary competencies and transferrable competencies were vying for time in a crowded curricular schedule. Their research found there is overlap in skills needed for these two kinds of knowledge. For example, they looked at civic competence—the sum of learning outcomes needed to become an active citizen—and learning to learn competence—the mix of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and dispositions which supports an individual in engaging with learning over their lifespan (Hoskins & Crick, 2010). Hoskins and Crick found both required critical thinking, creativity, and values of equality and justice. So, if disciplinary content can contain transferrable skills within it, then students can be taught both at once. This appears to be the philosophy of the drafted North Dakota Learning Continuum which has

identified core competencies under the umbrellas of ELA (English/language arts), math, science, social studies, and 21st century skills (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 2021b). These core competencies are transferrable skills embedded within disciplinary content. Ideally, then, mastery of educational standards should lead to acquisition of core competencies. Marzano supported this idea that mastery of standards can lead to and overlap with mastery of transferrable skills. "A key aspect of leadership relative to cognitive and metacognitive skills is to help identify which of these skills naturally fall into the existing curriculum and instructional pursuits of different content areas" (Marzano et al., 2018, p. 119).

Gary Marx suggested other ways in which room can be found in the limited time teachers have to teach a massive curriculum of both disciplinary knowledge and transferrable skills. He suggested prioritizing learning that is "lifeworthy" (Marx, 2014, p. 341). What actually matters in real life? The idea of prioritizing learning is not new, and the North Dakota Regional Education Association (NDREA) gathered teachers in 2018 to create prioritized standards for all grade levels in reading and in math (Thompson, 2018; North Dakota Regional Education Association, n.d.). One of the criteria typically used to prioritize standards is endurance, meaning that a given standard will be relevant throughout a student's lifetime. So, ensuring competencies are "lifeworthy" is something that should already be happening in North Dakota.

Other suggestions from Marx's book are aimed at providing students with the breadth and depth of what is needed to be successful. In order to get the breadth needed, Marx suggested using a strategy of sampling. Students may need to be introduced to a variety of topics, but may not need to extensively study each one. At the same time, using

the strategy of post holing means doing a deep dive on some topics that will be most impactful for understanding big ideas and acquiring transferrable skills (Marx, 2014).

Measuring Competencies

At the time of this study, learning in North Dakota was measured by students successfully completing courses; graduation rates; choice ready rates; and standardized testing of reading, writing, math, and science. Additional measures reported on the dashboards of schools included: results of an engagement survey, attendance, finance, student discipline, and student achievement broken down by various demographics (Information Technology Department, 2021).

If one searches for information on a school on North Dakota's Insights website (https://insights.nd.gov), one can find the latest North Dakota State Assessment (NDSA) scores and ACT scores. The Information Technology Department (2021) in North Dakota has organized information on their website in a number of ways: by student growth, by comparison to state and district performance, and by comparison to previous years. This data shows the percentage of students who are "proficient" or "partially proficient" or "advanced." Also, "Choice Ready" statistics tell us what percentage of students took and passed required classes and met other criteria to be deemed choice ready (ready to face life outside school when they graduate).

There are a lot of numbers on web pages of the Insights website, and they tell part of the story of a school or district. What they don't tell is whether or not students are prepared for adult life—or prepared to be prosperous, happy, and democratically engaged. The numbers don't say anything about what competencies have been mastered,

only how a student compares overall to a set benchmark in three core subject areas. There certainly are no transferrable skills overtly measured with this data.

Knowing that both disciplinary and transferrable competencies are important to prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement, it might be wise to investigate ways in which these competencies might be measured. By passing North Dakota H.B. 1478 and North Dakota S.B. 2196 this year, North Dakota's legislature has already invited school districts to create a new mastery framework to award high school credit and to allow experiences outside of school as part of student learning (North Dakota H.B. 1478, 2021; North Dakota S.B. 2196, 2021). In order to do this, districts will likely need to shift to standards-based or competency-based grading practices. At a minimum, this change will require districts to create proficiency scales for the standards or competencies they wish to measure and define what proficiency or mastery of that standard or competency looks like (Marzano et al., 2018).

The practice of standards-based or competency-based grading is widely acknowledged as having a positive impact on student learning (Marzano et al., 2018; Patrick et al., 2020). Indeed, standards-based grading is recognized as a central tenet of personalized learning (Bishop et al., 2019). Marzano et al. also recognized standards-based grading as essential to helping a school become a "highly-reliable school," step four in a five step process. The fifth step is to have competency-based education in which students move through the curriculum at their own pace based on their mastery of identified competencies (Marzano et al., 2018).

North Dakota schools do appear to be interested in Marzano's High Reliability Schools™ (HRS) model. At the time of this study, 40 schools across 10 different districts

were certified in at least one level of Marzano's HRS (Marzano Resources, n.d.). Given this interest, it is not surprising that new legislation is opening the doors for competency-based learning. However, for true competency-based education to take place, North Dakota would likely need additional legislation that provides more flexibility in student progression through the educational system. A lack of flexibility in this area was noted in a 2017 review of state policies (Brodersen et al., 2017).

Other states are already using this type of competency assessment. Vermont is one such state. Their graduation competencies include both content area competencies and transferrable skills (State of Vermont Agency of Education, n.d.). Importantly, just as Hoskins and Crick (2010) identified that content area and transferrable competencies could both be taught at the same time, Vermont administrators have also suggested transferrable competencies be assessed within the context of content areas. The Vermont Agency of Education (2016) stated, "While it may be possible to demonstrate proficiency in the transferable skills absent content, it is more effective and relevant to assess these skills in the context of standards from the content areas" (p. 1).

Beyond proficiency scales and traditional classroom assessments, there are other ways to look at and measure competencies. Lai and Viering (2012) listed four different ways in which researchers measure competencies in transferrable skills. These include self-reports (checklists or surveys in which you rate yourself), global rating scales (respondents rate others' skills and attributes), standardized assessments (traditional multiple-choice or open ended questions), and observational measures (classroom or laboratory based). Lai and Viering recommended using multiple measures to assess these

important skills. This is in line with current educational practice, only right now most assessments are aimed at a narrow band of skills in reading, math, and science.

For districts developing their own assessments of competencies, Lai and Viering (2012) recommended they be of appropriate complexity—open-ended, meaningful and/or authentic—and should strive to make student reasoning and thinking visible. It is important to note that standardized tests do exist for a variety of transferrable skills. Zhao (2016) documented many of the available tools in his book, *Counting What Counts: Reframing Education Outcomes*.

In the end, many different types of evidence could help determine if a student has met the requirements for proficiency in a competency. Many schools who are interested in competency-based education are switching to a mastery transcript in which students curate (compile) evidence to demonstrate their mastery of required (foundational) and advanced competencies (Mastery Transcript Consortium, n.d.a). There are already seven high schools in North Dakota who are members of the Mastery Transcript Consortium, indicating that they are at least interested in such a system (Mastery Transcript Consortium, n.d.b). The Mastery Transcript Consortium may be helpful to North Dakota high schools wishing to take advantage of the new legislation to use a mastery framework for graduation requirements.

Summary

Chapter II provided a literature review of relevant sources to this study. The purposes of education in North Dakota and definitions of those purposes were reviewed and explained. Additional theoretical underpinnings of the study were explained including ways in which the purposes of education are interconnected. A history of North

Dakota legislation regarding curriculum and graduation requirements was given beginning with the year 2001. The history showed few significant changes in the past 20 years, with the exception of recent legislation from 2021. What schools might need to do to provide for prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement was examined including potential competencies students would most likely need to master. The selection and teaching of competencies was discussed along with possible measurements for those competencies. Chapter III will provide an overview of the methodology for this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter III contains a description of the methodology of this research as a concurrent mixed-methods study. The purpose of the study, research questions, research design, and researcher reflexivity are provided. The research design section contains a discussion on the selection of concurrent mixed methods and detailed research methods including a description of participants, participant selection, site selection, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and validity techniques.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of my study was to determine how graduates of North Dakota high schools perceived their educational experiences in relation to preparing them for their adult lives and to determine how the curriculum and graduation requirements in Chapter 15.1-21 of the NDCC (at the time of this study) fulfilled the purpose of education in North Dakota.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are:

1. What are the perceptions of North Dakota high school graduates regarding their elementary and secondary education and preparation for adult life?

2. How do the curricular and graduation requirements outlined in NDCC 15.1-21 fulfill the purposes of education described in the Constitution of North Dakota, namely, to ensure the continuance of our democracy and provide for the "prosperity and happiness" of its citizens (N.D. Const., art. VIII, § 1)?

Research Design

The research design for this study was a concurrent mixed methods design with both quantitative and qualitative elements. Mixed methodologies are associated with pragmatism (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) listed several characteristics of pragmatism as a research philosophy. Some of these characteristics demonstrate why pragmatism, and a mixed methodology, were appropriate to this study.

Pragmatism views knowledge as being both based in a shared reality and constructed by individuals. My research questions required the assessment of both fact and perception. Pragmatism allows for truth to change over time. This study was situated in a specific context—what might have helped fulfill the purposes of education in the past might not have been effective at the time of this study or the in the future. Pragmatism privileges action over philosophy. With an audience of educators and policy-makers, the answers to my research questions would be more valuable if they led to action rather than philosophical discussion. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) explained the pragmatic method is to "choose the combination or mixture of methods and procedures that works best for answering your research questions" (p. 17). The research questions for this study demanded both quantitative and qualitative elements of data to be answered effectively.

Quantitative and qualitative research might be thought of, reductively, as research which yields numerical data versus research which yields narrative data. In this simplistic view, my first research question might have been answered by either kind of data. The question "What are the perceptions of North Dakota high school graduates regarding their elementary and secondary education and preparation for adult life?" could either be presented in a closed manner with pre-selected answers and scales for participants to choose from or in an open manner with the opportunity for participants to answer in a narrative way. Both would answer the question, albeit with differing degrees of breadth and depth.

My second research question asks how curricular and graduation requirements fulfill the purpose of education in North Dakota. This is a relational question, one which assumes a relationship exists. Additionally, there is an assumption that the purpose of education is being fulfilled at least to some degree. These assumptions might be confirmed with numerical data, while the question of relationality is more likely to be answered with narrative data both from a review of relevant literature and from the voices of those who have experienced the educational system.

Some mixed methodologists suggest that a better way to subdivide research is to consider whether the research is confirmatory or exploratory (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Confirmatory research is akin to the traditional scientific method in which a theory or hypothesis is tested by collecting data which supports or proves false the hypothesis (Schwab & Held, 2020). Exploratory research is more akin to grounded-theory and typically deals with problems that have not been thoroughly studied. Exploratory research does not require a hypothesis and allows for more flexibility within the research design

(Schwab & Held, 2020). My research questions are exploratory in nature, seeking to explain how graduates perceive their educational experiences and how those educational experiences (specifically curriculum and graduation requirements) might fulfill the purpose of education. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques are appropriate to exploratory research. For example, quantitative data analysis, such as descriptive statistics, and qualitative data analysis, such as thematic analysis, might both help to answer exploratory questions (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005).

Beyond being appropriate to the research questions, a mixed methodology also allowed me to combine the strengths of quantitative and qualitative research methods while mitigating some of their weaknesses. Some of the strengths of quantitative analysis are that data collection and analysis is quick; it enables the study of large numbers of people, and it often has higher credibility with people in power (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). However, a weakness of using only quantitative data would be that the closed question answers I provided might not fully reflect perceptions of participants. It would also preclude idea generation and would only test my own ideas of how curriculum and graduation requirements might fulfill the purpose of education.

Qualitative research, on the other hand, is helpful when trying to describe complex relationships or phenomena, can provide a better understanding of individual viewpoints, and can "vividly demonstrate a phenomenon to the readers of a report" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 20). The downfalls of qualitative research are its time-consuming nature and the fact that sample sizes are usually very small and therefore not generalizable. By using both quantitative and qualitative methods, I was able to expand the breadth and depth of my study. I am not alone in this belief—expansion was

one of the primary purposes identified for choosing a mixed methodology by Greene et al. (1989). Having both breadth and depth was important because of my target audience and purpose.

Policy makers and educators are my primary audience and informing policy decisions is a key part of the purpose of the study. Policy makers are tasked to make decisions of import in areas in which they are not always experts. Good policy makers do research and look for reliable data to base their decisions on.

As a former school board president, I remember the pressure of being asked to make decisions which would impact many people and feeling that I had an inadequate amount of information. I often wanted two things. I wanted quantitative data that was "cut and dried" so I could numerically envision a situation, and I wanted narrative data which helped me to see the human impact of a given scenario. This combination of quantitative and qualitative data helps to holistically illuminate a situation. Indeed, Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2005) described mixed methods as a bi-focal lens, able to combine both the "macro and micro levels of a research issue" (p. 383).

In order to best inform policy makers and educators on decisions regarding curriculum and graduation requirements, I wanted to create a holistic picture of the connection between curriculum and graduation requirements for K-12 education, and the fulfillment of the mandate set forth in the North Dakota constitution to provide for the prosperity and happiness of its citizens as well as the continuance of its democratic government. While the picture I created only encompasses the experiences of North Dakota graduates living within the Dickinson area who responded to my survey, this study could be replicated in other areas of the state to provide a more encompassing data

set. However, lessons learned from this subset of North Dakota graduates should help policy makers to see the relationship between school experiences and prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement in adult life.

Participants

Participants for my study included adults in the Dickinson, North Dakota, area who graduated from a North Dakota high school. This area was chosen because of the representative qualities of the Dickinson area in terms of available post-secondary industry and opportunities. Dickinson has a 4-year university, a health care system, a public school system, multiple small and large businesses, energy sector industries, an agricultural industry, etc. The Dickinson Area Chamber of Commerce agreed to help distribute the survey to their 1,400 subscribers through their e-newsletter. The Dickinson Area Chamber of Commerce had more than 450 member businesses and those businesses included more than 5,000 employees in the area in November of 2020. Choosing a geographic area rather than limiting participants based on the year they graduated was intended to solicit participants of varying ages and from various stages of post-secondary life.

The survey was sent out in the Dickinson Area Chamber of Commerce e-newsletter on November 10, 2020. No responses were received. I asked the Chamber to send me a copy of the e-newsletter and found that some graphics and links were not working. The Chamber made some changes and sent the survey out again on November 17, 2020. This time, the survey received one response. I was concerned that business leaders who could best distribute my survey might not be noticing it in the e-newsletter, so I drafted an email to the 10 largest employers in the area letting them know that the

Chamber had put out a survey in their e-newsletter. These emails went out on November 30, 2020. Only one employer responded affirmatively that they would distribute my survey to their employees—Dickinson Public Schools. Subsequently, the survey received another 115 responses.

One hundred and sixteen (116) total responses represents only 2.3% of the potential 5,000 employees in the Dickinson Area Chamber of Commerce's reach. However, if Dickinson Public Schools was the only business to distribute the survey, then the 115 responses received after it was distributed would represent 22.8% of the district's approximately 505 employees. This figure is based on the 2019-2020 school year employee count (Institute of Education Sciences, n.d.).

Participant Selection

High school graduates self-selected themselves to participate in this study by choosing to take an online survey. Their choosing to take the survey served as their notice of consent. A copy of study information appeared on the first page of the survey instrument before participants answered any questions and can be found in Appendix B.

Site/Location

My study took place in the state of North Dakota in the Dickinson area. There was no one "site" as this was an online survey. However, as mentioned previously, I selected the Dickinson Area Chamber of Commerce as the primary distributor of the survey link. Additionally, I contacted the largest 10 employers in the area to make sure they were aware of the survey. These businesses and organizations included Dickinson Public Schools, Dickinson State University, Sanford Health, Walmart, MBI Oil and Gas, CHI St. Alexius Health, Killdeer Mountain Manufacturing, TMI Systems Corporation, and the

City of Dickinson. The survey itself was hosted in Qualtrics software accessed through the University of North Dakota (UND). Respondents had the option to send me an email to enter a drawing for an Amazon gift card upon completion of the survey. Fourteen respondents did so. Twelve of the fourteen emails came from Dickinson Public Schools email addresses. Dickinson Public Schools was also the only employer who notified me that they sent out my survey. The bulk of survey responses occurred on the day the school district sent the survey link to their employees. All of these factors suggest that many, if not most, of my respondents were from one site—Dickinson Public Schools.

Data Collection

The research for this project consisted of a literature review and survey data. Data collected from the survey consisted of both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data included demographic information, activities and attributes of participants (obtained using a checklist), and responses to questions using Likert scales. Qualitative data consisted of typed responses to open-ended questions. A survey instrument was chosen because of the ability to cover a wide range of topics quickly, a necessary feature when attempting to answer the broad question of connection between graduation requirements and prosperity, happiness, and democracy. Using a survey allowed for the concurrent collection of both quantitative and qualitative data and enabled a larger number of people to be reached as well. Survey questions can be found in Appendix C. Questions were broken into four categories: demographic data, prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement. Each section, except demographic data, has been tied to one of the purposes of education.

Within each section of the survey, questions followed a general pattern with alternating quantitative and qualitative elements. First, questions were asked to try and establish how an individual felt they were performing in each area. These were typically in the form of multiple choice, checklists, or yes/no questions. Next, participants were asked to identify what skills were important to their success in each area and then identify what experiences helped them to develop those skills. Participants were then asked to rate the level of influence school experiences and non-school experiences had on their "current" levels (at the time of this study) of prosperity, happiness, or democratic engagement. At the end of each section there was a question which invited participants to share anything they wished they had learned in their K-12 experiences to help prepare them for adulthood in the areas of prosperity, happiness, and democratic citizenship.

Of course, questions are not developed in a vacuum. Salary scales for the prosperity section of the study survey were based on poverty levels (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, n.d.), median income data for North Dakota (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.), and income thresholds related to measuring well-being (Jebb et al., 2018). Three 21st century skills related to prosperity were chosen based on a 2012 meta-analysis of 21st century skill frameworks by Voogt and Roblin. They identified four consistent categories affecting employability and thus prosperity including: collaboration, communication, information communication technology literacy, and social/cultural/citizenship skills (Voogt & Roblin, 2012). Social/cultural/citizenship skills were covered under the happiness and democratic citizenship sections of the survey, so only the first three categories—collaboration,

communication, and information communication technology literacy—were addressed under prosperity as important post-secondary employability skills.

Items in the survey relating to happiness—including autonomy, competence, and relatedness—come from a synthesis of the Self-Determination Theory and a eudaimonic well being approach to happiness. Specifically, Waterman (2008) outlined multiple tools for looking at happiness from which I derived survey statements which fit into categories of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. One tool Waterman referenced is called the Psychological Wellbeing Scale; though I didn't take any statements from this tool, it influenced me and should be mentioned (Stanford | SPARQtools, n.d.).

Statements to assess an individual's democratic citizenship including civic and community engagement were based largely on a questionnaire from Westheimer and Kahne (2004) with some additional statements added in order to gauge behaviors specifically related to the perpetuation of democratic government such as voting and running for office. All survey data were gathered with UND Qualtrics and saved in a secure cloud location.

Data Analysis

Because this is a concurrent mixed methods study, both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed at the same time. Descriptive statistics were used for quantitative data. Demographic data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Demographic groups that had eight or more respondents were used as comparison groups for other quantitative data. These groups included males and females, Class A and Class B high school graduates, high school graduates prior to 2000 and after 2000, those employed full-time, and those employed full time who were also enrolled in higher

education at the time they took the survey. Salary group comparisons were also used, although one salary band had only one respondent.

Self-rating data for each area—prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement—were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Crosstabulations with demographic groups were also run to look for trends, similarities, and differences.

Scale data for the rating of school and non-school experiences were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, means, medians, and modes. Because some respondents did not experience some items, adjusted percentages were also calculated which removed responses which rated an item as a "1" or "did not experience."

For data collected from open-ended questions, a multi-step coding process was utilized. First, responses were coded using open coding. Second, these initial codes were analyzed, and concept coded as an inductive process of discovering emergent themes in the data (Saldaña, 2016). From this process arose categories, sometimes with sub-categories, and themes. An audit trail showing how categories and themes were derived from codes can be accessed online (Ricks, 2021, Ricks Dissertation Audit Trail.xlsx). Frequencies of categories, sub-categories, and themes were also reported.

Validity

Trustworthiness and validity for this study was addressed by the researcher in several ways. First, the survey instrument was piloted with doctoral cohort peers to check for clarity of understanding, ease of use, time to complete, and consistency of data within an individual's response. Second, the survey instrument provided checks by asking for the same kind of information in different ways—providing both quantitative and qualitative data related to each research question, a method of validating data called

methodological triangulation (Robson & McCartan, 2016). For example, the survey asked respondents to rate the influence of various school and non-school experiences. Respondents were also asked to identify experiences that influenced their level of prosperity, happiness, or democratic citizenship in an open-ended question. Experiences which were identified in the open-ended question also tended to be rated more highly in the scale data. This then, is yet another validity measure called data triangulation (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The ability to triangulate data is yet another benefit of a concurrent mixed methods approach (Greene et al., 1989).

The survey instrument and overall study design provided me the advantage of studying perceptions of a population unknown to me. This allowed for a lesser degree of bias in the coding and analysis process once data were collected. A further check on possible researcher bias was provided in the form of an audit trail. This trail showed original statements received from open-ended questions on the survey, followed by the initial open coding and then concept coding. A clear record of the coding process showed logical steps made by the researcher during analysis from participant statements to research results (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

Researcher Reflexivity

I view the world through a very constructivist lens. I believe in universal truths, but also that most of the time context matters. Logically then, I believe that K-12 curriculum and graduation requirements may be more or less effective depending on the context in which they are used including: location, individual goals, individual learning differences, individual personality, and societal goals and expectations. I believe that many of these contextual factors have changed over time.

While I did not go to school in North Dakota, I did go to school. In my experience, there were elements of curriculum and other educational requirements which were helpful in my adult life, and others which were detrimental. I also have found there were many missed opportunities or other areas of important learning which went unaddressed in my school experiences that would have helped a great deal in my adult life. While I tried to bracket these experiences through memoing, I cannot guarantee that I eliminated all inherent bias throughout the data collection and analysis process.

Because I live in the same geographical area as my population, and because I work at one of the institutions that sent out my survey, I do know some of the respondents. However, I did not know who would choose to take the survey, nor do I believe that knowing me will have influenced any of their responses as I did not discuss my research or survey with my work colleagues prior to or during the time the survey window was open.

Research results suggested that some elements of K-12 curriculum and graduation requirements do indeed help individuals to meet the purposes of education stated in the North Dakota constitution, while others may not. Individuals identified different experiences as being key; this may call into question a one-size-fits-all set of requirements, a process already begun by the "Choice Ready" initiative of the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (2021a). I believe results of my research support the policy direction established by the North Dakota legislature in passing S.B. 2196 (2021) and H.B. 1478 (2021) allowing for more flexibility in the ways in which learning is measured and paving the way for competency-based education with a focus on transferrable skills.

Summary

Chapter III provided an overview of the methodology of this study. The study was a mixed methods study with both quantitative and qualitative elements. I am influenced by Freire, theories of democratic citizenship, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, eudaimonic well being, the Self-Determination Theory, and constructivism. The study used a survey as the primary data collection method and utilized both statistical analysis and multiple layers of coding to generate understanding. Chapter IV will present findings of the study, and then Chapter V will present my conclusions and recommendations based on the findings.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

Chapter IV contains a description of the findings and data retrieved through the survey instrument. Chapter IV will include the purpose of the study, research questions, and both qualitative and quantitative survey results. These results are presented in an order reflecting the logic of the survey instrument. First, demographic statistics are given. Next, quantitative data regarding participants' perceptions of their own levels of prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement are provided. Qualitative data in which participants identify skills important to prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement come next followed by qualitative data identifying what experiences were influential in developing those skills. Quantitative data consisting of ratings for how influential various school and non-school experiences have been on the purposes of education is then presented. One final qualitative section shows what respondents wish they would have learned in their K-12 education to help them be more prosperous, happy, and democratically engaged. Each section is broken into subsections of prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement. Finally, a summary data section provides an overview of all data and shows the three purposes of education in comparison with one another.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this part of a larger study reviewing parts of Title 15.1 of the North Dakota Century Code is twofold, to determine whether or not the current curriculum and graduation requirements in NDCC 15.1-21 fulfill the purpose of education in North Dakota and to determine how graduates of North Dakota high schools perceived their educational experiences in relation to preparing them for their adult lives.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are:

1. What are the perceptions of North Dakota high school graduates regarding their elementary and secondary education and preparation for adult life?
2. How do the curricular and graduation requirements outlined in NDCC 15.1-21 fulfill the purposes of education described in the Constitution of North Dakota, namely, to ensure the continuance of our democracy and provide for the "prosperity and happiness" of its citizens (N.D. Const. art. VIII, § 1)?

Findings

Demographic Data

This section presents quantitative demographic data. It provides a brief sketch of the population of individuals who responded to the survey. This is important to know as an individual's various subgroups may influence their perceptions regarding their educational experiences and levels of prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement. It also informs readers to what degree results may be generalizable to other populations.

A total of 116 participants submitted responses that were recorded by the Qualtrics software used to distribute the survey. Of those, 81 individuals reported

themselves to be graduates of a North Dakota high school while 35 were not (Question DI1). So, only 81 respondents were eligible to complete the rest of the survey but only 57 of them at least clicked through the entire survey and not all respondents answered every question. Some incomplete response data will be reported and used so frequencies will be given for: (a) total respondents (including those who completed only part of their survey), and (b) respondents who completed their entire survey.

Year of High School Graduation

In total, 27 respondents answered the question about year of high school graduation (DI2). Eleven individuals reported graduating in a year prior to 2000 while 13 individuals reported graduating after the year 2000. Three individuals mistakenly identified what high school they attended instead of the year. Of those who completed their survey, 15 respondents answered the question about high school graduation with 6 reporting a graduation year prior to 2000, 8 reporting a graduation year after 2000, and 1 individual mistakenly answering the name of their high school. Note that roughly equal numbers of respondents are graduates from before 2000 and after 2000.

High School Size

In total, 80 individuals reported whether they went to a Class A (325 or more students) or Class B (less than 325 students) high school with 40 having gone to a Class A school and 40 having gone to Class B school (Question DI3). Among those who completed the survey, 27 individuals went to Class A high schools and 30 individuals went to Class B high schools. Note that roughly equal numbers of respondents went to Class A and Class B high schools.

Gender

In total, 59 respondents identified as female, 20 identified as male, and 1 preferred not to say. Among those who completed the survey, 41 identified as female, 15 identified as male, and one respondent preferred not to say (Question DI4). Note that in both groups at least 70% of respondents were female.

Ethnicity

In total, 75 individuals identified as White, 1 individual identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, 1 individual identified as Asian, 1 individual identified as Hispanic, 2 individuals identified as other and 2 individuals preferred not to say (Question DI5). Among those who completed the survey, 59 individuals identified as White, 1 individual identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, 1 individual identified as Asian, 1 individual identified as Hispanic, 2 individuals identified as other and 1 individual preferred not to say. Note that all minority respondents completed the entire survey. Even in this smaller pool, however, minority respondents make up less than 10% of responses.

Employment

In reporting their work situation (Survey Question P1), 73 individuals reported being employed full time by someone else while 11 respondents reported being enrolled in higher education, 2 reported being employed part-time by someone else, 1 reported being an intern or apprentice to learn a trade, 1 reported being self-employed full-time, 1 reported being self-employed part-time, and 1 reported being unemployed and seeking employment. Among those who completed the survey, 52 individuals reported being employed full time by someone else while 11 respondents reported being enrolled in

higher education, 2 reported being employed part-time by someone else, 1 reported being self-employed full-time, 1 reported being self-employed part-time, and 1 reported being unemployed and seeking employment. Note that respondents who completed the survey included all respondents enrolled in higher education, and most respondents who chose something other than "employed full-time by someone else."

Salary

Regarding salary (Survey Question P2), in total, 1 individual reported making less than $15,000, 15 individuals reported making $15,000-$34,999, 16 individuals reported making $35,000-$54,000, 28 individuals reported making $55,000-$75,000, 11 individuals reported making $75,000-$95,000, and 7 individuals reported making more than $95,000. Among those who completed the survey, 1 individual reported making less than $15,000, 10 individuals reported making $15,000-$34,9999, 12 individuals reported making $35,000-$54,000, 21 individuals reported making $55,000-$75,000, 8 individuals reported making $75,000-$95,000, and 5 individuals reported making more than $95,000. Note that the distribution of salaries is almost identical between respondents who completed their survey and the total number of respondents who submitted a survey (complete or incomplete) with a maximum of 1.7% variance in each category.

Summary – Demographic Data

In all, the demographic make-up of individuals who completed their survey was very similar to the demographic make-up of the whole group of responders. Table 8 gives frequency and percentage of responses to demographic questions for all respondents who submitted a survey ($N = 81$).

Table 8

Demographic Information of North Dakota High School Graduates

	Frequency	%
Year of Graduation		
Before 2000	11	13.6
After 2000	13	16.0
Missing	57	70.4
High School Size		
Class A	40	49.4
Class B	40	49.4
Missing	1	1.2
Gender		
Female	59	72.8
Male	20	24.7
Prefer not to say	1	1.2
Missing	1	1.2
Ethnicity		
White	73	90.1
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	1.2
Other	2	2.5
Prefer not to say	2	2.5
White and Asian	1	1.2
White and Hispanic	1	1.2
Missing	1	1.2
Occupation		
Enrolled in higher education	1	1.2
Self-employed full-time	1	1.2
Employed full-time by someone else	62	76.5
Employed part-time by someone else	1	1.2
Enrolled in higher education AND employed full-time	8	9.9
Enrolled in higher education AND employed part-time	1	1.2
Enrolled in higher education AND unemployed- seeking employment	1	1.2
Intern or apprentice AND employed full-time	1	1.2
Self-employed part-time AND employed full-time	2	2.5
Missing	3	3.7

	Frequency	%
Annual Salary		
Less than $15,000	1	1.2
$15,000-$34,999	15	18.5
$35,000-$54,000	16	19.8
$55,000-$75,000	28	34.6
$75,000-$95,000	11	13.6
More than $95,000	7	8.6
Missing	3	3.7

Note. $N = 81$. Sample includes all respondents who returned a survey.

Table 9 gives frequency and percentage of responses to demographic questions for all respondents who *completed their survey* before submitting the survey ($N = 57$).

Table 9

Demographic Information of Respondents Who Completed and Submitted a Survey

	Frequency	%
Year of Graduation		
Before 2000	6	10.5
After 2000	8	14.0
Missing	43	75.4
High School Size		
Class A	27	47.4
Class B	30	52.6
Missing	0	0
Gender		
Female	41	71.9
Male	15	26.3
Prefer not to say	1	1.8
Missing	0	0
Ethnicity		
White	51	89.5
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	1.8
Other	2	3.5

	Frequency	%
Prefer not to say	1	1.8
White and Asian	1	1.8
White and Hispanic	1	1.8
Missing	0	0
Occupation		
Enrolled in higher education	1	1.8
Self-employed full-time	1	1.8
Employed full-time by someone else	43	75.4
Employed part-time by someone else	1	1.8
Enrolled in higher education AND employed full-time	8	14
Enrolled in higher education AND employed part-time	1	1.8
Enrolled in higher education AND unemployed- seeking employment	1	1.8
Intern or apprentice AND employed full-time	0	0
Self-employed part-time AND employed full-time	1	1.8
Missing	0	0
Annual Salary		
Less than $15,000	1	1.8
$15,000-$34,999	10	17.5
$35,000-$54,000	12	21.1
$55,000-$75,000	21	36.8
$75,000-$95,000	8	14.0
More than $95,000	5	8.8
Missing	0	0

Note. $N = 57$. Sample includes all respondents who returned a *completed* survey.

Participants' Levels of Prosperity, Happiness, and Democratic Engagement

This section presents quantitative data regarding how participants were doing in the areas of prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement at the time they submitted their surveys. While all data is self-reported, some data is more objective while other data is more perception based. This section partially answers Research Question 1 by showing individuals' perceptions of themselves as prosperous, happy, and democratically engaged. This section also partially answers Research Question 2 because in order to

show how curriculum and graduation requirements are fulfilling the purpose of education, we must first establish that the purpose of education is, at least to some extent, being fulfilled in the lives of individuals. This section is presented in three parts with subsections for prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement.

Prosperity – At the Time of This Study

Salary. The literature review showed, according to census data from 2019, median household and per capita incomes should position most North Dakotans to fit the definition of prosperous, being able to meet their basic needs without government assistance. Salary data from this study's survey showed most individuals who responded fit the monetary criteria for prosperity. Of 81 respondents, only 1 fell below the federal poverty line with a salary of less than $15,000. An additional 15 were in the $15,000 to $34,999 range. As shown in Chapter II, Table 2, the cut off for government assistance in North Dakota for one individual is around $24,000 depending on the government program. Some participants in that $15,000 to $34,999 range were likely making more than $24,000. Even those who made less than that may have been part of a household with additional wage earners, which would change their prosperity status. However, it is also possible that some were the only wage earner in their household and may have had additional family members dependent on them, which would put them below the monetary line for prosperity. Even if all respondents in the $15,000-$34,999 category were not prosperous, the total of 16 unprosperous individuals would still represent less than 20% of respondents. At least 80% of respondents would be considered prosperous.

Twenty-First Century Skills. In addition to reporting their salary, participants were also asked to consider their employability skills when reflecting on their prosperity.

To gauge how respondents perceived themselves in their 21st century employability skills, respondents were asked to rate themselves in three categories: collaboration, communication, and information communication technology. Respondents rated themselves as: 1 – *struggling*, 2 – *comfortable*, or 3 – *an area of strength*. Most respondents reported that each of these areas was either *comfortable* or *an area of strength* for them (Survey Question P3; see Table 10).

Table 10

Twenty-First Century Employability Skills

P3 – Three skills sets that are consistently identified as important to 21st century employability are collaboration, communication, and information communication technology skills. Please rate yourself in each area. 1 – This is an area I struggle in. *2* – I am comfortable but could improve. *3* – This is an area of strength for me.	Frequency (*n*)	Total Surveys *N* = 81 (%)	Question Responses *N* = 77 or *N* = 78 (%)
Collaboration, *N* = 77			
Struggle	1	1.2	1.3
Comfortable	25	30.9	32.5
Strength	51	63.0	66.2
Missing	4	4.9	NA
Communication, *N* = 78			
Struggle	3	3.7	3.8
Comfortable	23	28.4	29.5
Strength	52	64.2	66.7
Missing	3	3.7	NA
Information Communication Technology, *N* = 78			
Struggle	4	4.9	5.1
Comfortable	41	50.6	52.6
Strength	33	40.7	42.3
Missing	3	3.7	NA

Overall, respondents were most confident in their ability to collaborate and communicate and least confident in their ability to use information communication technology. Those who graduated after 2000 rated themselves more highly in collaboration and information communication technology than those who graduated before 2000. Means were very similar for Class A school and Class B school graduates. Female respondents showed greater confidence in their ability to communicate and utilize information communication technology while men showed greater confidence in their ability to collaborate. Differences in ethnic groups were not reported because no ethnic minority group had more than 2 individuals in it. Similarly, only two occupation groups had more than 2 individuals represented so only those participants employed full-time and those employed full-time AND enrolled in higher education are shown in a comparative table (Table 11).

Those enrolled in higher education had higher means in the areas of communication and information communication technology, but slightly lower mean scores in the area of collaboration. Means tended to trend upward along with salary in the areas of collaboration and communication, supporting the idea that these skills are important to prosperity. However, in the area of information communication technology, there was a dip in the means of some of the higher salary categories. Possible reasons for this are discussed in Chapter V.

Table 11

Twenty-First Century Employability Skills, Demographic Comparisons

	Collaboration			Comunication			Info. Comm. Tech.		
	n	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*
Total (*N* = 77 or *N* = 78)	77	2.65	.51	78	2.63	.56	78	2.37	.58
Year of Graduation									
Before 2000	11	2.55	.52	11	2.64	.50	11	2.27	.65
After 2000	12	2.83	.39	13	2.69	.48	13	2.54	.52
High School Size									
Class A	39	2.64	.49	40	2.65	.53	40	2.38	.63
Class B	38	2.66	.53	38	2.61	.59	38	2.37	.54
Gender									
Female	57	2.63	.49	58	2.67	.51	58	2.41	.59
Male	19	2.74	.56	19	2.53	.70	19	2.37	.56
Occupation									
Employed full-time by someone else	61	2.69	.47	62	2.61	.55	62	2.35	.60
Enrolled in higher education AND employed full-time	8	2.63	.52	8	2.75	.46	8	2.63	.52
Annual Salary									
$15,000-$34,999	15	2.33	.62	15	2.53	.64	15	2.27	.59
$35,000-$54,000	15	2.73	.46	16	2.69	.48	16	2.56	.51
$55,000-$75,000	28	2.68	.48	28	2.57	.57	28	2.36	.62
$75,000-$95,0000	11	2.73	.47	11	2.72	.65	11	2.18	.60
more than $95,000	7	3.00	0	7	2.71	.49	7	2.57	.53

Perceptions of Prosperity. The next question in the survey (P4) regarding prosperity asked respondents if they perceived themselves as being prosperous. Seventy-five (75) individuals responded with 65 saying “yes” and 10 saying “no.” In comparison groups, 80% of those graduating before 2000 and 91.7% of those graduating after 2000 rated themselves as prosperous. Ninety-one and nine-tenths percent (91.9%) of graduates from Class A schools rated themselves as prosperous, while only 81.6% of graduates

from Class B schools rated themselves as prosperous. Eighty-seven and one-half percent (87.5%) of female respondents rated themselves as prosperous while 83.3% of male respondents rated themselves as prosperous (see Table 12). Of those employed full-time by someone else, 89.8% rated themselves as prosperous. Of those employed full-time and enrolled in higher education, 87.5% rated themselves as prosperous.

Table 12

Perceptions of Prosperity – All Respondents and Selected Demographic Comparisons

P4- Do you perceive yourself as being prosperous?	Yes		No	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Total	65	86.7	10	13.3
Year of Graduation				
Before 2000, *n* = 10	8	80.0	2	20.0
After 2000, *n* = 12	11	91.7	1	8.3
High School Size				
Class A, *n* = 37	34	91.9	3	8.1
Class B, *n* = 38	31	81.6	7	18.4
Gender				
Female, *n* = 56	49	87.5	7	12.5
Male, *n* = 18	15	83.3	3	16.7
Occupation				
Employed full-time by someone else, *n* = 59	53	89.8	6	10.2
Enrolled in higher education AND employed full-time, *n* = 8	7	87.5	1	12.5
Annual Salary				
$15,000-$34,999, *n* = 15	9	60.0	6	40.0
$35,000-$54,000, *n* = 15	12	80.0	3	20.0
$55,000-$75,000, *n* = 26	26	100.0	0	0
$75,000-$95,0000, *n* = 11	11	100.0	0	0
more than $95,000, *n* = 7	6	85.7	1	14.3

Note. *N* = 75. Seventy-five people answered Survey Question P4.

Percentages of people rating themselves as prosperous generally went up with annual salary with a couple of outliers including one person making more than $95,000 who did not feel they were prosperous. This is surprising, given the definition of prosperous as meeting basic needs without assistance. However, I have known families who make high salaries but are drowning in debt and do end up needing assistance. The other nine individuals who reported themselves as unprosperous could qualify for government assistance in the state of North Dakota depending on their household size.

Overall, survey data showed most respondents met financial criteria for and perceived themselves as being prosperous. However, this was not the case for all respondents suggesting room for improvement. Most individuals felt communication and collaboration skills were strengths, but less than half felt information communication technology skills were strengths showing an area that may need addressing in schools.

Happiness – At the Time of This Study

To help respondents standardize their understanding of happiness and introduce some level of objectivity into a very subjective concept, 10 statements based on a eudaemonic theory of happiness and self-determination theory were presented. Respondents answered "yes" or "no" to each of the 10 statements which were broken into three categories: autonomy (Question H1), competence (H2), and relatedness (H3). Sixty-six individuals responded to these questions. Table 13 shows statements from the survey for each category and the frequency and percentage of "yes" and "no" responses.

Overall, at least 71% of individuals responded "yes" to each statement. The highest scoring statements with at least 93% positive responses include "I know who I am," "I feel capable of caring for myself and my needs," and "I am able to form positive,

meaningful, lasting relationships." The lowest scoring statements with percentages below 79% included: "I feel fulfilled by my life choices," "I have clear goals for myself," and "I belong to a group or organization in which I feel loved and accepted."

Table 13

Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness

H1, H2, H3 – According to Self-Determination Theory, three components of happiness are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Please answer "yes" or "no" for each statement regarding . . .	Yes		No	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
. . . autonomy (H1).				
I have clear goals for myself.	50	75.8	16	24.2
I feel fulfilled by my life choices.	52	78.8	14	21.2
I know who I am.	62	93.9	4	6.1
I feel the activities I am currently involved in reflect my true self.	56	84.8	10	15.2
. . . competence (H2).				
I feel confident in my ability to succeed.	57	86.4	9	13.6
I feel capable of caring for myself and my needs.	65	98.5	1	1.5
I feel competent when making important decisions.	56	84.8	10	15.2
. . . relatedness (H3).				
I have at least one friend with whom I feel deeply connected.	56	84.8	10	15.2
I am able to form positive, meaningful, lasting relationships.	62	93.9	4	6.1
I belong to a group or organization in which I feel loved and accepted.	47	71.2	19	28.8

Note. $N = 66$.

"I feel fulfilled by my life choices" and "I have clear goals for myself" are both statements about autonomy. They also seem to go together; if an individual has clear goals, then likely that individual will also feel fulfilled by their choices because those choices would have been made with purpose. Goal setting is an executive functioning skill. The fact that these statements have lower percentages suggests individuals might have benefited from developing more executive functioning in their K-12 years.

"I belong to a group or organization in which I feel loved and accepted" was the lowest scoring statement with only 71.2% of individuals responding in the affirmative. This statement is one that individuals have the least control over. However, if an individual develops positive relationships within a group, they are likely to feel loved and accepted. The development of emotional intelligence would make finding belonging in a group easier.

Each area—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—as they relate to demographic subgroups are discussed in subsections by the same names.

Autonomy. Table 14 displays a comparison of "yes" responses from selected groups to autonomy related survey questions. Note that people graduating after 2000 gave more "yes" statements on "I have clear goals for myself" and "I feel fulfilled by my life choices" than people graduating before 2000. Class A school graduates answered "yes" more often in "I feel the activities I am currently involved in reflect my true self" and "I know who I am," while Class B school graduates answered "yes" more often in the other two categories.

Table 14

Autonomy Survey Questions, Comparison of "Yes" Responses for Selected Groups

H1 - According to Self-Determination Theory, three components of happiness are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Please answer "yes" or "no" for each statement regarding autonomy.	I have clear goals for myself.		I feel fulfilled by my life choices		I know who I am		I feel the activities I am currently involved in reflect my true self.	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Total "Yes" Responses	50	75.8	52	78.8	62	93.9	56	84.8
Year of Graduation								
Before 2000, *n* = 9	6	66.7	7	77.8	9	100.0	9	100.0
After 2000, *n* = 9	8	88.9	8	88.9	9	100.0	9	100.0
High School Size								
Class A, *n* = 34	25	73.5	26	76.5	33	97.1	29	85.3
Class B, *n* = 32	25	78.1	26	81.3	29	85.3	27	84.4
Gender								
Female, *n* = 47	37	78.7	35	74.5	44	93.6	39	83.0
Male, *n* = 18	13	72.2	17	94.4	18	100.0	17	94.4
Occupation								
Employed full-time by someone else, *n* = 52	38	73.1	41	78.8	49	94.2	45	86.5
Enrolled in higher education AND employed full-time, *n* = 8	7	87.5	6	75.0	7	87.5	6	75.0
Annual Salary								
$15,000-$34,999, *n* = 11	6	54.5	5	45.4	10	90.1	8	72.3
$35,000-$54,000, *n* = 12	9	75.0	10	83.3	10	83.3	9	75.0
$55,000-$75,000, *n* = 25	19	76.0	20	76.0	24	96.0	22	88.0
$75,000-$95,0000, *n* = 11	9	81.8	10	90.9	11	100.0	10	90.9
more than $95,000, *n* = 6	6	100.0	6	100.0	6	100.0	6	100.0

Note. *N* = 66, where *N* is number of respondents who answered Survey Question H1. "Freq" refers to number of "yes" answers.

Women had more "yes" statements on "I have clear goals for myself," but men had more "yes" statements in every other category. Males had much greater percentages than females in the activities reflecting true self and feeling fulfilled by life choices categories in particular. Similarly, those "enrolled in higher education and employed full-time" had more "yes" statements on having clear goals, but those "employed full-time by someone else" (but not enrolled in higher education) were higher in every other category. Generally speaking, statements dealing with autonomy showed an increase in the percentage of "yes" responses as salary increased with the exception of "I know who I am," which seems to be independent of salary.

Competence. Table 15 shows a comparison of "yes" answers to survey questions focusing on competence by subgroups greater than two people. Note that people graduating after 2000 answered "yes" more often on "I feel confident in my ability to succeed" than people graduating before 2000. This may be because those who have been in the workforce longer may be disappointed with their progress while younger individuals are still looking to the future. This may also be related to the fact that a higher percentage of people graduating after 2000 perceived themselves as prosperous. As discussed previously, a certain level of prosperity may be a precursor to happiness.

Class A school graduates felt more competent when making important decisions than Class B school graduates. Women had more "yes" responses to feeling confident in their ability to succeed, but men had more "yes" responses in the other two categories (caring for self and feeling competent in making important decisions). This seems to relate to the gender differentiation on the autonomy statements.

Table 15

Competence Survey Questions, Comparison of "Yes" Responses for Selected Groups

H2 - According to Self-Determination Theory, three components of happiness are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Please answer "yes" or "no" for each statement regarding competence.	I feel confident in my ability to succeed.		I feel capable of caring for myself and my needs.		I feel competent when making important decisions.	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Total "Yes" Responses	57	86.4	65	98.5	56	84.5
Year of Graduation						
Before 2000, *n* = 9	6	66.7	9	100.0	7	77.8
After 2000, *n* = 9	8	88.9	9	100.0	7	77.8
High School Size						
Class A, *n* = 34	30	88.2	33	97.1	31	91.2
Class B, *n* = 32	27	84.4	32	100.0	25	78.1
Gender						
Female, *n* = 47	41	87.2	46	97.9	39	83.0
Male, *n* = 18	15	83.3	18	100.0	16	88.9
Occupation						
Employed full-time by someone else, *n* = 52	46	88.5	51	98.1	43	82.7
Enrolled in higher education AND employed full-time, *n* = 8	6	75.0	8	100.0	7	87.5
Annual Salary						
$15,000-$34,999, *n* = 11	6	54.5	11	100.0	9	81.8
$35,000-$54,000, *n* = 12	12	100.0	12	100.0	10	83.3
$55,000-$75,000, *n* = 25	23	92.0	24	96.0	21	84.0
$75,000-$95,0000, *n* = 11	9	81.8	11	100.0	9	81.8
more than $95,000, *n* = 6	6	100.0	6	100.0	6	100.0

Note. *N* = 66, where *N* is number of respondents who answered Survey Question H2.

"Freq" refers to number of "yes" answers.

Women seem to be looking to the future; they are more likely to have clear goals and to feel confident in their ability to succeed. However, men seem to have the advantage in the present, feeling their current activities reflect their true selves and feeling competent in making important decisions. This shows that there may be gender differences in the development of competencies. Based on this data, women seem to be stronger in executive functioning while men may have more self-awareness. Those "enrolled in higher education and employed full-time" showed less confidence in "ability to succeed" than those just "employed full-time by someone else." But those employed full-time and not going to school were more confident in their ability to care for themselves and make important decisions. No obvious relationship between salary and statements on competency appeared in the data except that those making less than $35,000 a year were less likely to rate themselves as confident in their ability to succeed.

Relatedness. Table 16 shows a comparison of frequencies and percentages of "yes" answers to the survey question (H3) focusing on relatedness by subgroups greater than two people. Note that two relatedness statements had the lowest positive response rate of any of the happiness statements. Also note that relatedness often requires emotional intelligence, a transferrable skill.

People graduating after 2000 selected "yes" more often to statements on feeling loved and accepted in a group or organization while graduates before 2000 had more "yes" responses on their ability to "form positive, meaningful, lasting relationships." Perhaps this speaks to the fact that those who graduated before 2000 have had longer-lasting relationships than younger respondents. Class B school graduates chose "yes" more frequently than Class A school graduates in every category.

Table 16

Relatedness Survey Questions, Comparison of "Yes" Responses for Selected Groups

H3 - According to Self-Determination Theory, three components of happiness are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Please answer "yes" or "no" for each statement regarding relatedness.	I have at least one friend with whom I feel deeply connected.		I am able to form positive, meaningful, lasting realtionships.		I belong to a group or organization in which I feel loved and accepted.	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Total "Yes" Responses	56	84.5	62	93.9	47	71.2
Year of Graduation						
Before 2000, *n* = 9	8	88.9	9	100.0	6	66.7
After 2000, *n* = 9	8	88.9	8	88.9	8	88.9
High School Size						
Class A, *n* = 34	26	76.5	31	91.2	23	67.6
Class B, *n* = 32	30	93.8	31	96.9	24	75.0
Gender						
Female, *n* = 47	42	89.4	44	93.6	34	72.3
Male, *n* = 18	13	72.2	17	94.4	12	66.7
Occupation						
Employed full-time by someone else, *n* = 52	43	82.7	49	94.2	36	69.2
Enrolled in higher education AND employed full-time, *n* = 8	8	100.0	7	87.5	6	75.0
Annual Salary						
$15,000-$34,999, *n* = 11	8	72.7	10	90.9	5	45.5
$35,000-$54,000, *n* = 12	11	91.7	11	91.7	7	58.3
$55,000-$75,000, *n* = 25	22	88.0	23	92.0	21	84.0
$75,000-$95,0000, *n* = 11	10	90.9	11	100.0	8	72.7
more than $95,000, *n* = 6	4	66.7	6	100.0	5	83.3

Note. *N* = 66, where *N* is number of respondents who answered Survey Question H3.

"Freq" refers to number of "yes" answers.

Women had more “yes” statements on having a close friend “with whom I feel deeply connected” and feeling loved and accepted in an organization, as did those enrolled in higher education. No strong relationships between annual salary and relatedness emerged from the data. There did appear to be a difference between those making less than $55,000 and those making more than $55,000 in feeling loved and accepted in an organization, with those making more than $55,000 answering “yes” to that statement more frequently than those making less. Possible reasons for this are discussed in Chapter V.

Perceptions of Happiness. The next question in the survey regarding happiness asked respondents if they perceived themselves as being happy (H4). Sixty-two individuals responded to the question with 58 saying “yes” and 4 saying “no” (Table 17). In comparison groups, 90.3% of Class A school graduates rated themselves as happy while 96.8% of Class B school graduates rated themselves as happy. Ninety and nine-tenths percent (90.9%) of female respondents rated themselves as happy while 100% of male respondents rated themselves as happy. Of those employed full-time, 93.8% rated themselves as happy while of those employed full-time and enrolled in higher education, only 87.5% rated themselves as happy. No trends were noticed when comparing year of graduation to perceptions of happiness. Percentages of people rating themselves as happy did not appear to correlate with annual salary with 100% of respondents in the $35,000-$54,000 range as well as 100% of respondents in the >$95,000 range rating themselves as happy.

Table 17

Perceptions of Happiness – All Respondents and Selected Demographic Comparisons

H4 – Given this definition of happiness, would you consider yourself to be a happy person?	Yes		No	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Total	58	93.5	4	6.5
Year of Graduation				
Before 2000, *n* = 8	7	87.5	1	12.5
After 2000, *n* = 9	8	88.9	1	11.1
High School Size				
Class A, *n* = 31	28	90.3	3	9.7
Class B, *n* = 31	30	96.8	1	3.2
Gender				
Female, *n* = 44	40	90.9	4	9.1
Male, *n* = 17	17	100.0	0	0.0
Occupation				
Employed full-time by someone else, *n* = 48	45	93.8	3	6.3
Enrolled in higher education AND employed full-time, *n* = 8	7	87.5	1	12.5
Annual Salary				
$15,000-$34,999, *n* = 11	9	81.8	2	18.2
$35,000-$54,000, *n* = 10	10	100.0	0	0.0
$55,000-$75,000, *n* = 23	22	95.7	1	4.3
$75,000-$95,0000, *n* = 11	10	90.9	1	9.1
more than $95,000, *n* = 6	6	100.0	0	0.0

Note. *N* = 62. Sixty-two people answered Survey Question H4.

Overall, this data shows most individuals in this study rated themselves as possessing qualities necessary to achieving a eudaimonic sense of happiness and also perceived themselves as being happy. The fact that relatedness is an area of relative weakness suggests that emotional intelligence may be a transferrable skill that educational systems should address.

Democratic Engagement – At the Time of This Study

To help respondents reflect on their level of democratic engagement, they were first asked to consider 11 different statements describing various democratic behaviors and check the ones which applied to them (Survey Question DE1). Sixty-three individuals participated in the checklist. Table 18 displays the frequency with which each statement was selected.

The data shows most respondents have voted in elections at all levels. Most respondents also have followed the news and feel a personal responsibility to help others. Many have a strong desire for justice. Interestingly, less than half said they were interested in politics or volunteered in their community regularly. Less than a third reported attending government meetings or knowing how to make social changes using the governmental system. Even smaller percentages reported they would consider running for public office (11%) or have run for public office (3%). This shows a population that meets criteria for personally responsible citizenship but fall short of the participatory or justice-oriented citizenship required for continuance of a healthy democracy.

Table 18

Democratic Engagement Checklist Frequencies

DE1–Please select all statements which are true of your civic and community engagement.	Frequency	%
I vote in local, state, and federal elections.	56	88.9
I only vote in major elections- like presidential elections.	7	11.1
I volunteer regularly in my community.	21	33.3
I am interested in politics.	24	38.1
I have run for public office.	2	3.2
I will consider running for public office in the future.	7	11.1
I follow local and national news.	53	84.1
I attend open government meetings.	18	28.6
I feel a personal responsibility to help others.	48	76.2
I have a strong desire for justice.	40	49.4
I know how to make social changes within our governmental systems.	13	20.6

Note. $N = 63$, where N is the number of participants who answered this question.

Table 19 shows percentages of "yes" answers to democratic engagement statements by subgroups greater than two people. Note that males were more likely than females to be engaged in or interested in civic or community activities in every category except volunteering in the community and voting solely in major elections like presidential elections.

Males were far more likely to say they would consider running for office in the future or that they had an interest in politics. Two individuals who had run for office were males who had graduated from Class B high schools.

Table 19

Democratic Engagement Survey Questions, Comparison of "Yes" Responses for Selected Groups

DE1 – Please select all statements which are true of your civic and community engagement.		Graduated		School Size		Gender		Occupation		Annual Salary				
		Before 2000	After 2000	Class A	Class B	Female	Male	Employed Full-Time (FT)	Employed FT & in Higher Education	$15,000-$34,999	$35,000-$54,000	$55,000-$75,000	$75,000-$95,000	more than $95,000
	n =	7	9	32	31	45	17	49	8	10	12	24	10	6
I vote in local, state, and federal elections.	Freq	7	9	29	27	40	16	43	7	9	11	20	10	5
	%	100.0	100.0	90.6	87.1	88.9	94.1	87.8	87.5	90.0	91.7	83.3	100.0	83.3
I only vote in major elections- like presidential elections.	Freq	0	0	6	1	6	0	6	1	2	1	2	1	1
	%	0,0	0.0	18.9	3.2	13.3	0.0	12.2	12.5	20.0	9.1	8.3	10.0	16.7
I volunteer regularly in my community.	Freq	4	5	12	9	16	5	17	1	2	1	10	5	2
	%	57.1	55.6	37.5	29.0	35.6	29.4	34.7	12.5	20.0	9.1	41.7	50.0	33.3
I am interested in politics.	Freq	4	4	12	12	12	12	19	2	3	4	8	6	3
	%	57.1	44.4	37.5	38.7	26.7	70.6	38.8	25.0	30.0	36.4	33.3	60.0	50.0
I have run for public office.	Freq	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.5	0.0	11.8	2.0	0.0	10.0	0.0	4.2	0.0	0.0
I will consider running for public office in the future.	Freq	0	1	2	5	2	5	5	0	1	1	2	2	0
	%	0.0	11.1	6.3	16.1	4.4	29.4	10.2	0.0	10.0	9.1	8.3	20.0	0.0

DE1 – Please select all statements which are true of your civic and community engagement.		Graduated		School Size		Gender		Occupation		Annual Salary				
		Before 2000	After 2000	Class A	Class B	Female	Male	Employed Full-Time (FT)	Employed FT & in Higher Education	$15,000-$34,999	$35,000-$54,000	$55,000-$75,000	$75,000-$95,000	more than $95,000
	n =	7	9	32	31	45	17	49	8	10	12	24	10	6
I follow local and national news.	Freq	6	7	25	28	36	17	39	8	9	9	19	10	5
	%	85.7	77.8	78.1	90.3	80.0	100.0	79.6	100.0	90.0	81.8	79.2	100.0	83.3
I attend open government meetings.	Freq	2	2	7	11	12	6	12	2	3	1	7	4	3
	%	28.6	22.2	21.9	35.5	26.7	35.3	24.5	25.0	30.0	9.1	29.2	40.0	50.0
I feel a personal responsibility to help others.	Freq	6	6	26	22	34	13	35	7	7	9	17	9	5
	%	85.7	66.7	81.3	71.0	75.6	76.5	71.4	87.5	70.0	81.8	70.8	90.0	83.3
I have a strong desire for justice.	Freq	6	6	21	19	25	14	32	4	5	8	13	9	4
	%	85.7	66.7	65.6	61.3	55.6	82.4	65.3	50.0	50.0	72.7	54.2	90.0	66.7
I know how to make social changes within our governmental systems.	Freq	2	2	6	7	8	5	8	1	2	3	4	3	1
	%	28.6	22.2	18.8	22.6	17.8	29.4	16.3	12.5	20.0	27.3	16.7	30.0	16.7

Note. $N = 63$, where N is number of respondents who answered Survey Question DE1. A small n refers to number of participants in a given demographic grouping who responded to Survey Question DE1. "Freq" refers to number of "yes" answers. The % symbol refers to percentage of "yes" answers.

Males and graduates from Class B high schools were more likely than females or Class A high school graduates to know how to make social changes within governmental systems. Gender differences in democratic engagement are further addressed in Chapter V.

Those enrolled in higher education showed the highest percentage for feeling a personal responsibility to help others, but the lowest percentage for having a strong desire for justice. Those enrolled in higher education also had the lowest percentage for volunteering in the community; however, given they were employed full time and enrolled in higher education at the same time, this may have been due to time constraints. Those enrolled in higher education and males were the two groups in which 100% of respondents reported following local and national news.

A few democratic statements did show a trend regarding salary. Interest in politics tended to be higher among participants with higher salaries, as did attending open government meetings, but neither trend was perfect. One salary category had the highest percentages of responses in seven out of ten categories. This category was the $75,000-$95,000 range. I checked to see if that category was mostly male respondents since males were already tending to answer "yes" to more items, but that category had six females and five males among its eleven respondents.

Perceptions of Democratic Engagement. After reflecting on their democratic behaviors (statements from Survey Question DE1), respondents were asked if they were satisfied with their level of democratic engagement at the time they submitted their survey (Survey Question DE2). Sixty-three individuals responded to the question with 52 saying "yes" and 11 saying "no" (Table 20). This is more than double the negative responses to analogous questions (Survey Questions P4 and H4) in sections on prosperity

(five individuals felt they were not prosperous) or happiness (four individuals did not perceive themselves as being happy).

Table 20

Perceptions of Democratic Engagement – All Respondents and Selected Demographic Comparisons

DE2 – After reflecting on these statements, do you feel satisfied with your current level of democratic engagement?	Yes		No	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Total, *n* = 63	52	82.5	11	17.5
Year of Graduation				
Before 2000, *n* = 7	7	100.0	0	0.0
After 2000, *n* = 8	7	87.5	1	12.5
High School Size				
Class A, *n* = 32	26	81.3	6	18.8
Class B, *n* = 31	26	83.9	5	16.1
Gender				
Female, *n* = 45	38	84.4	7	15.6
Male, *n* = 17	14	82.4	3	17.6
Occupation				
Employed full-time by someone else, n = 49	40	81.6	9	18.4
Enrolled in higher education AND employed full-time, n = 8	6	75.0	2	25.0
Annual Salary				
$15,000-$34,999, n = 10	9	90.0	1	10.0
$35,000-$54,000, n = 12	11	91.7	1	8.3
$55,000-$75,000, n = 24	19	79.2	5	20.8
$75,000-$95,0000, n = 10	8	75.0	2	25.0
more than $95,000, n = 6	4	66.7	2	33.3

Note. *N* = 63. Sixty-three people answered Survey Question DE2.

In comparison groups, 100% of graduates before 2000 were satisfied with their democratic engagement while 88.9% of graduates after 2000 were satisfied. Eighty-one and three-tenths percent (81.3%) of Class A school graduates rated themselves as satisfied with their democratic engagement while 83.9% of Class B school graduates rated themselves as satisfied. Eighty-four and two-fifths percent (84.4%) of female respondents rated themselves as satisfied with their democratic engagement while 82.4% of male respondents rated themselves as satisfied. Of those employed full-time, 81.6% rated themselves as satisfied with their democratic engagement while of those employed full-time and enrolled in higher education, only 75% rated themselves as satisfied. Satisfaction with democratic engagement did show a somewhat downward trend when compared with salary. Ninety percent (90%) of those making $15,000-$34,999 were satisfied with their democratic engagement while only 66.7% of those making more than $95,000 reported satisfaction with their democratic engagement.

Overall, the data show a population of personally responsible citizens who are satisfied with their level of democratic engagement. The fact that individuals are satisfied with a personally responsible citizenship orientation suggests that individuals may lack education or buy in regarding the importance of participatory and justice-oriented citizenship.

Skills Identified as Important to the Purposes of Education

This section presents qualitative data regarding skills, or competencies, participants identified as being important to their success in the areas of prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement. This data helped answer Research Question 2. If skills identified were skills required or measured in North Dakota's curriculum and

graduation requirements at the time of this study, then this is one way in which curriculum and graduation requirements have been fulfilling the purpose of education.

Most respondents listed a series of words in response to these questions rather than complete thoughts or sentences. These statements were coded, categorized, and organized into themes. Three consistent themes were found with a fourth theme found in prosperity only. The three consistent themes were transferrable skills, skills measured in the curriculum, and beliefs and values.

Transferrable skills are important and might even be addressed within a K-12 environment, but do not appear in curriculum described in North Dakota's education standards policies or North Dakota graduation requirements. Some of these transferrable skills might be mentioned in state standards documents, but are not directly measured.

Skills measured in curriculum encompass those skills directly addressed, measured, and accounted for in North Dakota's educational policy at the time of this study. Post-secondary skills are skills that might be taught specifically in a post-secondary setting but aren't typically taught in K-12 educational settings.

Beliefs and values aren't really skills but appear many times in responses throughout the survey. Items under their umbrella do not fall into any skills categories.

The fourth theme, unique to prosperity, was post-secondary skills. Post-secondary skills are not measured by North Dakota's K-12 educational policies but are still discipline specific. These are skills that would likely be acquired at a college or vocational school.

Initially, whole categories were put into one of the themes, but I found this was creating difficulties as within a specific category there might be both transferable and

measured skills. Some categories fit neatly into a theme while others were split to try and garner the most accurate picture of whether identified skills important to the purposes of education were skills measured in North Dakota at the time of this study, or should have been measured and were not.

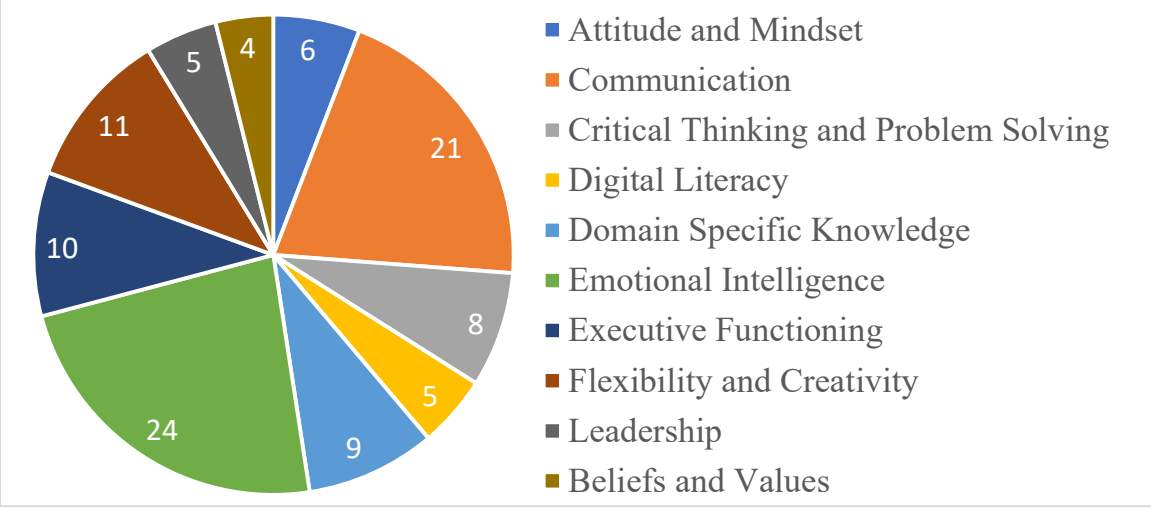
In addition to analysis by open coding, frequencies and sample words or phrases for each category have been provided. Data is presented in the three subsections of prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement.

Prosperity – Skills Identified as Important

Those who perceived themselves as prosperous were asked to identify what skills or knowledge sets were most important to their current role (Survey Question P5y) at the time they completed their survey. Fifty individuals responded. From these responses, 104 significant statements were identified, coded, and categorized into 10 categories. Those categories are identified in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Skills Identified as Important to Prosperity



The categories most frequently identified as important to respondents' role at the time they completed their survey were "emotional intelligence" (24 respondents alluded to this) and "communication" (21 respondents mentioned this). Skills individuals listed that fall under emotional intelligence include compassion, empathy, multicultural sensitivity and awareness, people skills, listening skills, collaboration, working with others, building relationships, and interpersonal skills. The category of communication is different—almost all codes were just the word "communication" or a variant such as "communicating." The skill teaching also fell under the category of communication. References to emotional intelligence including collaboration and communication support the idea that collaboration and communication are important employability skills.

"Flexibility and creativity" and "executive functioning" were the next most frequently identified categories. Flexibility was mentioned by six different respondents. Other codes that fell into this category included forward thinker, open-minded, seeing different perspectives, and adaptability. Executive functioning contained a more diverse set of codes including such items as organization, time-management, planning, goal driven, studying, following directions, and patience.

The "attitude and mindset" category included codes referring to a growth mindset, continuous learning, and work ethic. The "Leadership" category included codes like the word "leadership" as well as phrases like "empowering people" and "help others through barriers to education." "Digital literacy" contained codes comprised mostly of the words "technology" and "digital skills." Digital literacy was also an employability skill, so it is interesting that this category appeared much less frequently than collaboration or communication did in skills important to prosperity. This may be because respondents

felt less confident in their digital literacy skills and therefore did not consider them to be as important in finding prosperity.

The category "domain specific knowledge" included codes that reference knowledge specific to a certain field such as "knowledge of science and medicine," "language development," or "mechanical maintenance." Codes categorized under "critical thinking and problem solving" included items such as "ability to research," "use data to make adjustments," "troubleshooting skills," and sometimes the actual phrases "problem solving" or "critical thinking."

The final category was "beliefs and values." This category is interesting because these codes are more attributes than skills. Items in this category included caring, integrity, respect for others, and kindness.

Coded and categorized statements were sorted into four themes: transferrable skills, skills measured in curriculum, beliefs and values, and post-secondary skills. Of the 104 significant statements, 4 referred to beliefs and values, 35 referred to skills that might be measured in the curriculum, 4 referred to skills that would be taught in a post-secondary setting, and the remaining 61 referred to transferrable skills. In other words, skills being measured in North Dakota's curriculum and graduation requirements at the time of this study comprised just 34% of the skills identified as important to prosperity.

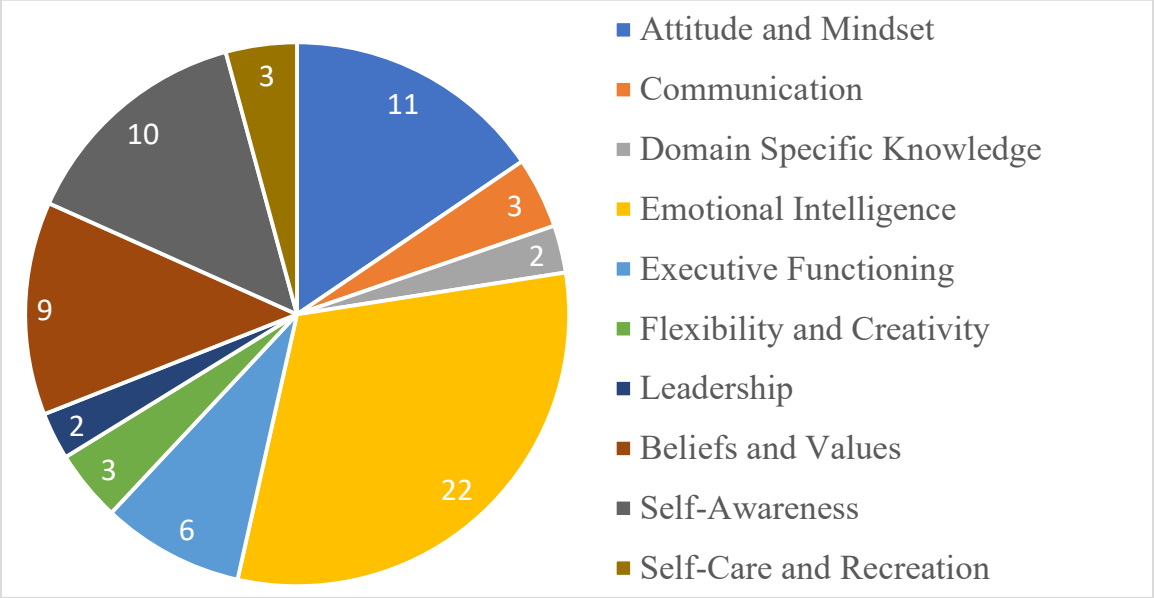
Happiness – Skills Identified as Important

Those who perceived themselves as happy were asked to identify what skills and/or knowledge sets contributed most to their ability to be happy (Survey Question H5y). Thirty-five individuals responded. From these responses, 71 significant statements were identified, coded, and categorized into 10 categories. The most frequently identified

category was overwhelmingly "emotional intelligence" (22 respondents mentioned this) followed by "attitude and mindset" (11 mentioned this), "self-awareness" (10 respondents discussed this), and "beliefs and values" (9 respondents talked about this). Beliefs and values are not really skills, as mentioned previously, but they are a theme which continued to emerge in data about what people perceive helps them in their adult lives. See Figure 4.

Figure 4

Skills Identified as Important to Happiness



Emotional intelligence skills identified as important to happiness did include some of the same codes as those identified for prosperity regarding working with other people. However, codes for happiness were overwhelmingly about relationships. Phrases included: "build relationships," "create and keep relationships," "develop relationships," "having a sense of belonging," and "seek out positive people." I found this interesting as respondents answered "yes" to relatedness statements less frequently than autonomy or

competence statements, but relatedness showed up clearly in the data regarding skills that are important to happiness.

"Attitude and mindset" was another category which featured in both prosperity and happiness. Again, there was some overlap in codes such as growth mindset, but there was a surprising number of codes related to overcoming and persevering. Some examples are "motivation to learn and improve," "accept challenges," "failed and succeeded," "engage in activities I may not be comfortable with," and "perseverance." These codes are likely related to competence. Confidence comes from having overcome and succeeded. A new element in codes for the category "attitude and mindset" for the focus on happiness was gratitude represented by "seeing the good in things," and "enjoying the little things in life." Gratitude was also included in the category of "beliefs and values" relating to happiness along with purpose, independence, compassion, and faith.

While most categories of skills were the same as those identified for prosperity, two new categories did emerge including "self-awareness" and "self-care and recreation." Self-awareness included references to controlling one's mindset, seeking out the positive, developing self-esteem and confidence, and spending time reflecting. Self-care and recreation included the code "self-care" as well as meeting basic needs and fulfilling activities.

Coded statements of skills important to happiness were sorted into three themes—transferrable skills, skills measured in the curriculum, and beliefs and values. Of the 71 significant statements, 9 referred to beliefs and values, 6 referred to skills measured in the curriculum, and the remaining 56 referred to transferrable skills. In other words, skills

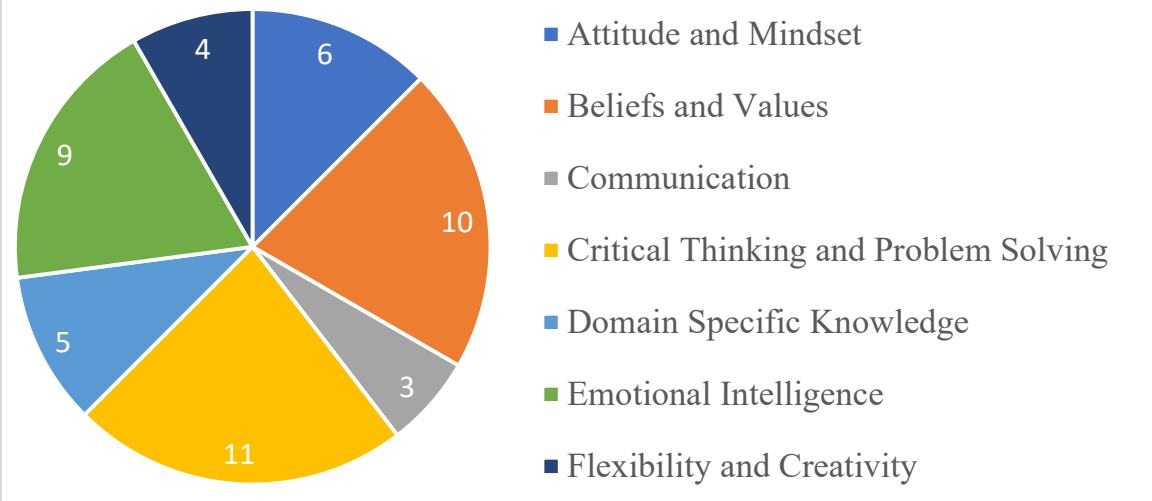
being measured in the curriculum at the time of this study comprised just 8% of the skills identified as important to happiness.

Democratic Engagement – Skills Identified as Important

Individuals satisfied with their democratic engagement were asked to identify what skills or knowledge sets contributed most to their ability to be democratically engaged (Survey Question DE3y). Thirty-two individuals responded. From these responses, 52 significant statements were identified, coded, and categorized into 10 categories. Two categories were only identified once including leadership and self-care and recreation. The category of self-awareness was only mentioned twice. The seven remaining categories and their frequencies are displayed in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Skills Identified as Important to Democratic Engagement



The most frequently identified category was “critical thinking and problem solving” (11 respondents mentioned this), followed closely by “beliefs and values” (10 mentioned this), and “emotional intelligence” (9 respondents mentioned this). While the

categories identified were the same ones used in prosperity and happiness, the emphases were different.

For the category of "critical thinking and problem solving," codes for democratic engagement primarily referred to research and information gathering. Examples included: "gather information from multiple sources," "evaluate what I read/hear," and "being informed through news media." For the category of "beliefs and values," codes featured prominently included items such as democracy, civil rights, right to vote, civic responsibility, sense of justice, family convictions, and religious beliefs. For the category of "emotional intelligence" codes (skills) listed as important to democratic engagement consisted mostly of listening, empathy, and acceptance of differing views. Similarly, codes for the category of "flexibility and creativity" all referred to being able to see other perspectives. Of the five responses relating to the category of "domain specific knowledge," four of them were related to social studies/history and three were specifically regarding government and civics. One of the codes for the "communication" category read "ability to discuss and debate with peers."

Skills listed as important to democratic engagement could be developed in an enriched social studies classroom presenting multiple perspectives and encouraging discussion and debate. However, those skills may not have been required or measured in North Dakota's K-12 educational system at the time of this study.

Coded statements were again sorted into three themes—transferrable skills, skills measured in the curriculum, and beliefs and values. Of the 52 significant statements, 10 referred to beliefs and values, 14 referred to skills measured in the curriculum, and the remaining 28 referred to transferrable skills. This time, skills that were being measured at

the time of this study comprised 27% of the skills identified as important to democratic engagement. This is less than the 34% of skills identified as important for prosperity being measured at the time of this study but significantly more than the 8% of skills identified as important for happiness being measured at the time of this study.

Experiences Identified as Influential in Fulfilling the Purposes of Education

This section presents qualitative data regarding experiences participants felt most influenced the development of skills they needed to become prosperous, happy, or democratically engaged. While some participants wrote short paragraphs explaining their influential experiences, others continued to list words or short phrases. This section helps to answer both research questions. It shows what participants perceived as influential experiences whether educationally related or not. When participants did identify educational experiences as influential, this helped answer Research Question 2 regarding the relationship between curriculum and graduation requirements and the purpose of education.

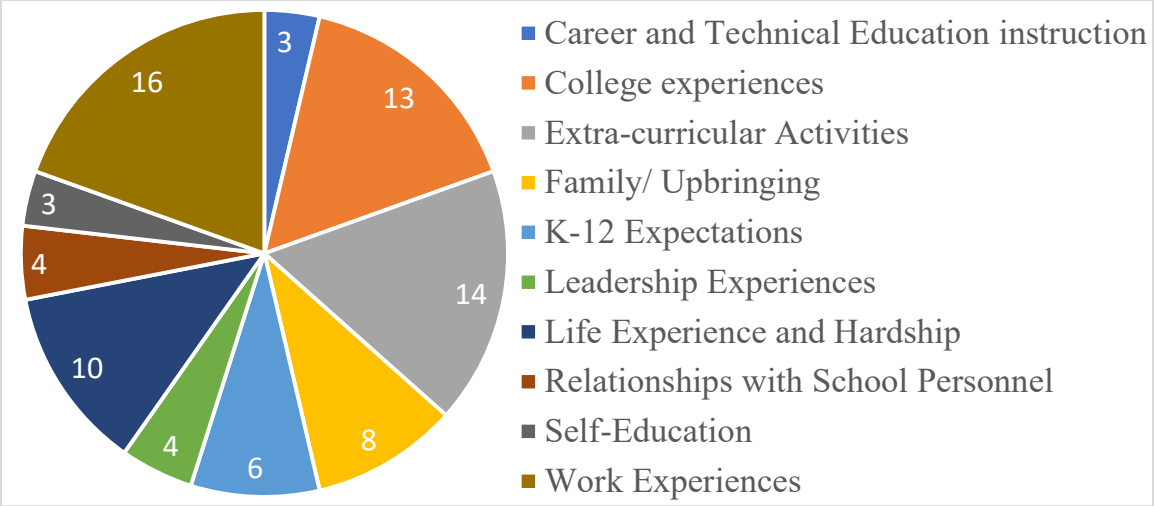
Subsections for prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement are presented. Within each subsection, coded and categorized statements are sorted into three themes—K-12 measured experiences, K-12 unmeasured experiences, and non-school experiences. K-12 measured experiences refer to experiences required by curriculum or graduation requirements, or which are measured by the Insights dashboard in North Dakota. K-12 unmeasured experiences refer to experiences that are related to K-12 education, but which are not required or tracked. Non-school experiences are those experiences that are not related to K-12 education.

Prosperity – Influential Experiences

Respondents were asked to identify what experiences helped them develop the skills they needed to be prosperous (Question P6y). Forty-five individuals provided short-answer statements. From these 45 answers, 84 significant statements were identified, coded, and categorized into 14 categories. Four of these categories were only found once in the data. These included: "art/music/drama/speech instruction," "English/language arts instruction," "community/mentor," and "friend group." The other 10 categories and their frequencies are displayed in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Experiences Identified as Influential in Developing Skills/Knowledge Needed for Prosperity



The most frequently reported experiences that helped respondents develop needed skills or knowledge were grouped into the following categories: "work experiences" (16 respondents mentioned this), "extra-curricular activities" (14 mentioned this), "college experiences" (13 respondents alluded to this), and "life experience and hardship" (10 respondents mentioned this). Respondents who listed work experiences as influential to

prosperity were generally vague with statements such as “prior job training” or “time spent in the field before starting in my current role.” However, a few others were more specific with phrases like “years teaching,” “management experience,” “previous jobs working with children,” and “over 40 years of customer service.” Respondents were also vague in referencing the category “extra-curricular activities” with phrases like “sports,” “activities in school,” or “school clubs and trips.” Speech team and FFA (Future Farmers of America) were specifically mentioned. Note that of the most frequent categories addressed relating to prosperity only “extra-curricular activities” is related to K-12 school experiences. Also note that extra-curricular activities have no bearing on curriculum or graduation requirements.

The category “college experiences” contained broad terms (codes) such as “higher education,” “college degree,” or even just “UND.” The category “life experience and hardship” contained codes yielding a few details such as “losing a parent at a young age” but were mostly generalized statements such as “hard work, failing, disappointment, practice, success.” These four largest categories make sense as places where an individual might develop communication skills, emotional intelligence, flexibility and creativity, and executive functioning.

Somewhat surprising is the lack of mention of school classes beyond one reference to speech class, one reference to ELA, and three references to Career and Technical Education classes. Speech and ELA teach communication skills directly, so I might have expected these kinds of classes to feature more prominently. However, the category “K-12 expectations” does capture some of the impact of school on prosperity. In this category, respondents did not mention a specific class, but more generally referenced

school or school expectations. Examples included: “high school behavior and work expectations,” “high expectations at school,” and “group work.”

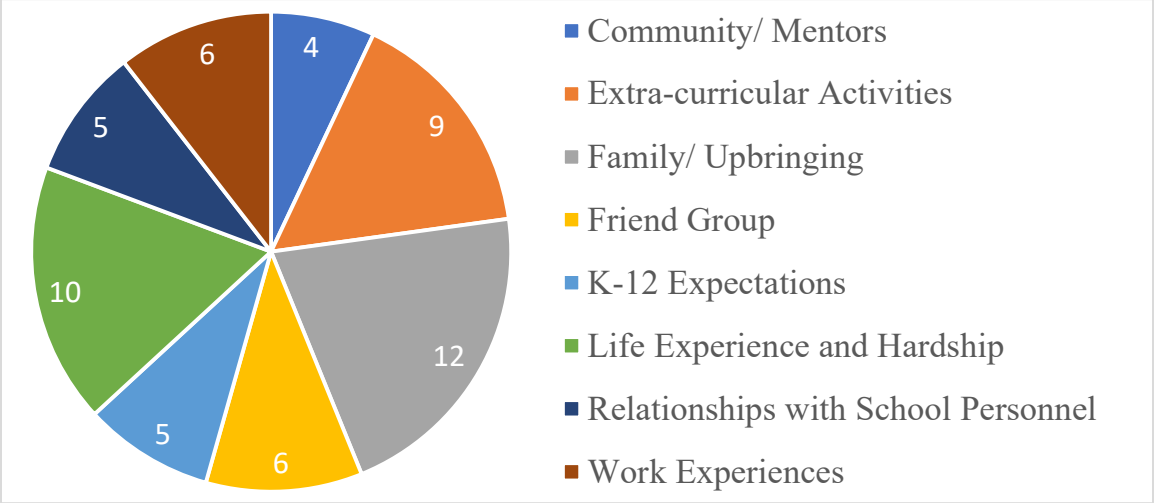
Fifty-five (55) of the significant statements referred to non-school experiences. This represents about 65% of the total statements regarding experiences influential to prosperity. Of the remaining 29 statements, 24 were unmeasured K-12 experiences and just 5 were measured K-12 experiences, around 6% of the total. While this does not mean that school experiences are not influential, it does suggest that many influential experiences occur outside of K-12 education and of those that are related to K-12 education, many of them are not measured.

Happiness – Influential Experiences

Respondents who perceived themselves as being happy were asked to identify what experiences helped them develop skills they needed to be happy (Survey Question H6y). Thirty-five (35) individuals provided short-answer statements. From these 35 answers, 69 significant statements were identified, coded, and categorized into 16 categories. Four of these categories were only found once in the data. These included: “art/music/drama/speech instruction,” “career and technical education instruction,” “leadership experiences,” and “school as detrimental.” An additional four categories only appeared twice including “clubs/sports outside of school,” “college experiences,” “exposure to diverse people/ideas” and “religion/church.” The other eight categories and their frequencies are displayed in Figure 7.

Figure 7

Experiences Identified as Influential in Developing Skills/Knowledge Needed to be Happy



The most frequently reported categories influencing happiness were "family/upbringing" (12 respondents mentioned this), "life experience and hardship" (10 mentioned this), and "extra-curricular activities" (9 respondents mentioned this). In the category "family/upbringing," some respondents just listed the word family, but others added a bit more detail such as "growing up with very open accepting parents," "self-efficacy fostered by parents," "solid foundation at home," and "strong family connections." Those respondents whose responses fit into the category "life experience and hardship" tended to focus on hardship with statements such as "trials and hardships," "being on my own, survival skills," "school of hard knocks," and "taking chances in the face of adversity." These experiences make sense when considering that skills identified as important to happiness included perseverance and overcoming.

As with prosperity, responses coded to the category "extra-curricular activities" (that influenced happiness) were vague, usually just consisting of the words

"extracurricular" or "sports." Extra-curricular activities likely contribute to relatedness skills identified as important to happiness. Note that of the most frequent categories identified as important to happiness only "extra-curricular activities" are related to K-12 school experiences. Also note that extra-curricular activities have no bearing on curriculum or graduation requirements.

Some smaller categories of note included the K-12 classes mentioned. One respondent listed "participating in the arts" as an influential experience while another mentioned "vocational classes." Four new categories were found in the happiness data. These included "community/mentors," "exposure to diverse people/ideas," "religion/church," and "school as detrimental." This category had only one statement in it that could not be sorted into a theme because it described an experience that was not influential. This participant said, "I went to a small high-school and felt very self-conscious and 'different.' I don't think there was a lot that made me happy, so I don't attribute my high school experience to my happiness."

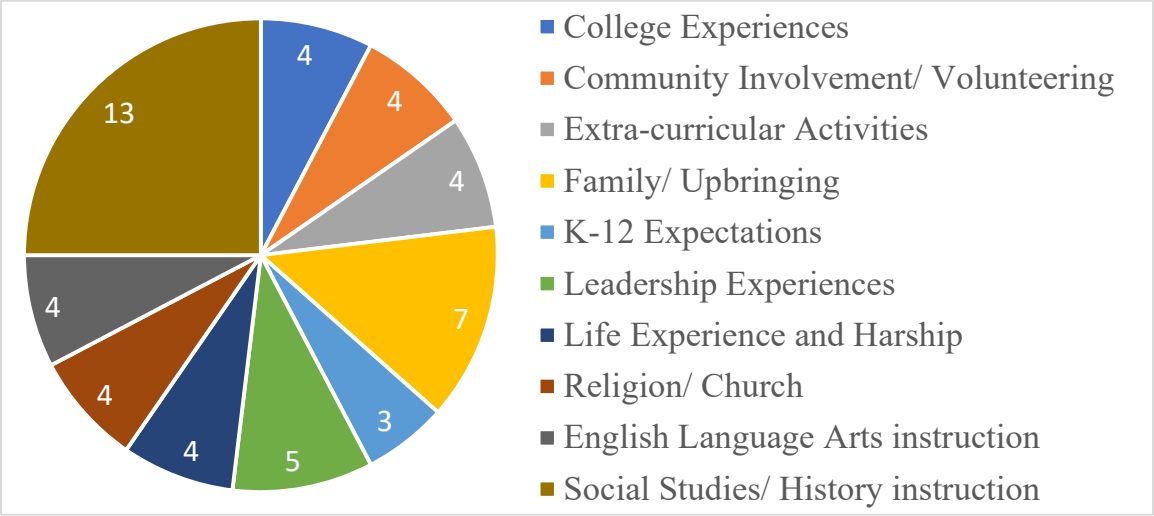
Of the 68 significant statements that could be sorted into a theme, 46 referred to non-school experiences. This represents about 68% of the total statements regarding experiences influential to happiness. Twenty (20) statements referred to unmeasured K-12 experiences while just 2 referred to measured K-12 experiences. This accounts for around 3% of the total. This data aligns with what was found for prosperity, that many influential experiences occur outside of school and that those that do occur in school are largely unmeasured.

Democratic Engagement – Influential Experiences

As with prosperity and happiness, respondents were asked to identify what experiences helped them develop skills they needed to be democratically engaged (Survey Question DE4y). Thirty-two individuals provided short-answer statements. From these 32 answers, 66 significant statements were identified, coded, and categorized into 19 categories. Four of these categories were only found once in the data. These included "community/mentors," "friend group," "mathematics instruction," and "relationships with school personnel." An additional five categories only appeared twice including: "art/music/drama/speech instruction," "clubs/sports outside of school," "self education," "exposure to diverse people/ideas," and "work experiences." The other 10 categories and their frequencies are displayed in Figure 8.

Figure 8

Experiences Identified as Important in Developing Skills/Knowledge Needed for Democratic Engagement



The most frequently reported experiences to influence democratic engagement related, by far, to the category "social studies/history instruction" (identified 13 times). Seven respondents specifically mentioned experience in government/civics classes as a sub-category to social studies/history instruction. Examples of these statements included: "learning about the systems of government," "going to the state legislature in high school," and "taking government classes." Note that social studies/history instruction is part of curriculum and graduation requirements in North Dakota and that some kind of government or civics class is also required, but these things were not measured on standardized tests at the time of this study.

The next most frequently mentioned category was "family/upbringing" (identified 7 times), followed by "leadership experiences" (identified 5 times). Leadership experiences was a category that also appeared in prosperity data. Some leadership experiences mentioned by respondents as influential to their democratic engagement included student council, holding office in school organizations, being captain of the dance team, and going to North Dakota Boys' State. Family/upbringing and leadership experiences were not part of K-12 curriculum and graduation requirements in North Dakota at all at the time of this report.

Other categories of note that emerged during data analysis were instructional areas including math, the arts, and ELA. "Community involvement/volunteering" was a category unique to democratic engagement. This aligns with research suggesting that having community ties is important to civic education. "Religion/church" appeared as a category more frequently here than in happiness or prosperity. This might be expected

given the large number of belief and value statements listed under skills important to democratic engagement.

Thirty-six (36) of 66 coded statements fell into the theme of non-school experiences. This represents about 55% of the total. Ten (10) statements were identified as K-12 unmeasured experiences, leaving 20 statements in the theme of K-12 measured experiences. These measured experiences made up about 30% of the total, a much higher percentage than in prosperity and happiness. This suggests that curriculum and graduation requirements may have had a greater impact on democratic engagement than on prosperity or happiness at the time of this study.

Influence of School Experiences on the Purposes of Education

This section presents quantitative data in which respondents rated how selected school experiences influenced individuals in helping them become prosperous, happy, or democratically engaged. This data should cooperate with the qualitative data presented in the previous section in showing how school experiences are related to the purposes of education (Research Question 2). These ratings also show how influential participants perceived their school experiences to be (Research Question 1). Subsections for prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement are provided.

Prosperity – Influence of School Experiences

When respondents were asked to rate their experiences from a list of 10 school experiences (Survey Question P7y), many school experiences were rated as being a *large influence* in helping individuals gain skills and knowledge needed to become prosperous, even though those school experiences were not mentioned in answers to Survey Question P6y (See section titled “Experiences Identified as Influential in Fulfilling the Purpose of

Education"). These ratings were done on a 4-point scale with 1 being *did not experience*, 2 being *not a factor*, 3 being a *small influence* and 4 being a *large influence*. Table 21 shows all items and their mean ratings along with other statistics.

Table 21

School Experiences' Influence on Prosperity

K-12 School Experience	*N*	Mean	Median	Mode	*SD*	Min	Max
English / Language Arts	55	3.58	4	4	.53	2	4
Math	55	3.14	3	3	.73	1	4
Science	55	3.05	3	3	.73	1	4
Social Studies / History	53	3.28	3	3	.57	2	4
Physical Education and Health	55	2.87	3	3	.82	1	4
Foreign or Native Languages	55	2.29	2	3	.88	1	4
Art / Music / Drama / Speech	55	3.13	3	4	.92	1	4
Career and Technical Education	55	2.62	3	4	1.19	1	4
Extra-Curricular Activities	55	3.29	4	4	.92	1	4
Relationships with School Personnel	55	3.47	4	4	.79	1	4

All 10 school experiences in Table 21 were rated as being a *large influence* at least once by the 55 (53 for social studies/history) individuals who answered the question. However, school experiences rated as being a *large influence* by more than half of respondents who answered this question included relationships with school personnel, English/language arts instruction, and extra-curricular activities. Note of the three most frequently and highly rated experiences, only English/language arts instruction was addressed in North Dakota's curriculum and graduation requirements at the time of this report.

Additionally, “art/music/drama/speech instruction” and “career and technical education” both had a mode response of 4, meaning of those people who had these experiences in school, most of them rated their experience as a *large influence*. Because a rating of “1” means that an individual did not have that school experience at all, a fairer way to look at the data might be to look at percentage of respondents who rated a category as a *large influence* once those who did not experience the category are removed (Table 22). Note “art, music, drama, and speech” and “career and technical education” are choices provided in North Dakota’s graduation requirements, but are not measured in any significant way.

Table 22

K-12 School Experiences Rated as a “Large Influence” on Development of Skills and/or Knowledge Needed to Achieve Prosperity

K-12 School Experience	Number of “4 = *Large Influence”* Responses	*N*	%	*n*	Adjusted %
English / Language Arts	33	55	60.0	55	60.0
Math	18	55	32.7	54	33.3
Science	15	55	27.3	54	27.8
Social Studies / History	18	53	34.0	53	34.0
Physical Education and Health	14	55	25.5	54	25.9
Foreign or Native Languages	3	55	5.5	43	7.0
Art / Music / Drama / Speech	23	55	41.8	51	45.1
Career and Technical Education	18	55	32.7	41	43.9
Extra-Curricular Activities	29	55	52.7	51	56.9
Relationships w/ School Personnel	34	55	61.8	53	64.2

Note. *N* refers to number of respondents who answered this question (Survey Question P7y). A small italicized *n* refers to the sample size after “1 = *did not experience this*” responses are removed.

Happiness – Influence of School Experiences

As with prosperity, respondents were given a list of K-12 school experiences and asked to rate how much each experience influenced their development of skills and/or knowledge which may have led to their level of happiness at the time they took their survey (Survey Question H7y). All experiences received a rating of *large influence* at least once. Table 23 shows all items and their mean ratings along with other statistics. A higher mean value indicates that respondents perceived the experience to be more influential on their happiness.

Table 23

School Experiences' Influence on Happiness

K-12 School Experience	*N*	Mean	Median	Mode	*SD*	Min	Max
English / Language Arts	55	3.02	3	3	.78	2	4
Mathematics	55	2.75	3	2	.78	2	4
Science	55	2.75	3	2	.75	2	4
Social Studies / History	55	2.93	3	3	.74	2	4
Physical Education / Health	55	2.89	3	2	.81	2	4
Foreign or Native Languages	55	2.20	2	2	.87	1	4
Art / Music / Drama / Speech	55	2.91	3	3	.99	1	4
Career and Technical Education	53	2.32	2	2	1.07	1	4
Extra-Curricular Activities	55	3.25	4	4	.93	1	4
Relationships w/ School Personnel	55	3.29	3	4	.83	1	4

Only "extra-curricular activities" were rated a *large influence* by slightly more than half the 55 respondents. "Relationships with school personnel" was close behind with almost

half of respondents rating it as a *large influence* (Table 24). This data suggests that school experiences are less influential on skills needed for happiness than for prosperity.

Table 24

K-12 School Experiences Rated as a "Large Influence" on Development of Skills and/or Knowledge Needed to Achieve Happiness

K-12 School Experience	Number of "4 = *Large Influence*" Responses	*N*	%	*n*	Adjusted %
English / Language Arts	17	55	30.9	55	30.9
Math	11	55	20.0	55	20.0
Science	10	55	18.2	55	18.2
Social Studies / History	13	55	23.6	55	23.6
Physical Education and Health	15	55	27.3	55	27.3
Foreign or Native Languages	4	55	7.3	43	9.3
Art / Music / Drama / Speech	18	55	32.7	49	36.7
Career and Technical Education	10	53	18.9	39	25.6
Extra-Curricular Activities	28	55	50.9	51	54.9
Relationships w/ School Personnel	26	55	47.3	52	50.0

Note. *N* refers to number of respondents who answered this question (Survey Question H7y). A small italicized *n* refers to the sample size after "1 = *did not experience this*" responses are removed.

Democratic Engagement – Influence of School Experiences

Once again, when respondents were given a list of K-12 school experiences (Survey Question DE5y), school experiences were rated as being: 1 (*did not experience*), 2 (*not a factor*), 3 (*small influence*), and 4 (*large influence*), and all 10 experiences received a rating of *large influence* at least once. "Social studies/history" and "relationships with school personnel" both had a mode of 4. Table 25 shows K-12 school

experiences listed on the survey and their mean ratings from respondents along with other statistics. A higher mean value indicates that respondents perceived the experience to be more influential on their ability to be democratically engaged. Only "social studies/history" was rated a *large influence* by more than half of respondents (Table 26).

Table 25

K-12 School Experiences' Influence on Democratic Engagement

K-12 School Experience	*N*	Mean	Median	Mode	*SD*	Min	Max
English / Language Arts	51	3.06	3	3	.70	2	4
Mathematics	51	2.63	3	2	.72	1	4
Science	50	2.66	3	3	.72	1	4
Social Studies / History	51	3.49	4	4	.59	2	4
Physical Education / Health	51	2.51	2	2	.70	1	4
Foreign or Native Languages	51	2.25	2	2	.77	1	4
Art / Music / Drama / Speech	51	2.73	3	3	.90	1	4
Career and Technical Education	51	2.24	2	2	.93	1	4
Extra-Curricular Activities	51	2.75	3	3	1.00	1	4
Relationships w/ School Personnel	51	3.00	3	4	.89	1	4

In Table 26, categories of note beyond "social studies/history" and "relationships with school personnel" (both with mode of 4) include "extra-curricular activities" with an adjusted percentage of 31.1%, "English/language arts" with an adjusted percentage of 27.5%, and "art/music/drama/speech" with an adjusted percentage of 21.7%. Note that, overall, K-12 educational experiences have less influence on democratic engagement than they do on happiness and prosperity with the exception of social studies/history. Note that social studies is a graduation requirement, but it is not tested or reported on district data dashboards of North Dakota schools.

Table 26

K-12 School Experiences Rated as a "Large Influence" on Development of Skills and/or Knowledge Needed to Achieve Democratic Engagement

K-12 School Experience	Number of "4 = *Large Influence*" Responses	*N*	%	*n*	Adjusted %
English / Language Arts	14	51	27.5	51	27.5
Math	6	51	11.8	50	12.0
Science	6	50	12.0	49	12.2
Social Studies / History	27	51	52.9	51	52.9
Physical Education and Health	5	51	9.8	50	10.0
Foreign or Native Languages	3	51	5.9	44	6.5
Art / Music / Drama / Speech	10	51	19.6	46	21.7
Career and Technical Education	5	51	9.8	39	12.8
Extra-Curricular Activities	14	51	27.5	45	31.1
Relationships w/ School Personnel	18	51	35.3	49	36.7

Note. *N* refers to number of respondents who answered this question (Survey Question DE5y). A small italicized *n* refers to the sample size after "1 = *did not experience this in school*" responses are removed.

Influence of Non-School Experiences on the Purposes of Education

This section presents quantitative data in which respondents rated selected school experiences on how influential those school experiences have been in helping individuals to become prosperous, happy, or democratically engaged. This data helps to answer Research Question 2 regarding the relationship of curriculum and graduation requirements to the purposes of education. By acknowledging that some skills are developed outside of school experiences, the relationship of school experiences to important skills can be more clearly understood. By using the same rating system that was used for school experiences, the relative strength of the influence of school versus

non-school experiences can also be explored. Subsections for prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement are provided.

Prosperity – Influence of Non-School Experiences

Respondents were asked to rate the level of influence non-school experiences had on their development of skills and/or knowledge that affected their prosperity (Question P8y). Once again, all six non-school experiences were rated as a *large influence* at least once by the 55 respondents who answered the question with four of those experiences being rated a *large influence* by more than half of respondents. These included family/upbringing, work experiences, college experiences, and friend group. Please see Table 27.

Table 27

Non-School Experiences Rated as a "Large Influence" on Development of Skills and/or Knowledge Needed to Achieve Prosperity

Non-School Experience	Number of "4 = *Large Influence*" Responses	*N*	%	*n*	Adjusted %
Family / Upbringing	52	55	94.5	55	94.5
Friend Group	32	55	58.2	54	59.3
Religion / Church	23	55	41.8	53	43.4
Work Experiences	41	55	74.5	55	74.5
Clubs / Sports	20	55	36.4	45	44.4
College Experiences	37	55	67.3	53	69.8

Note. *N* refers to number of respondents who answered this question (Survey Question P8y). A small italicized *n* refers to the sample size after "1 = *did not experience this*" responses are removed.

Table 28 shows mean scores for non-school items. Note that mean scores for non-school experiences still tend to be higher than mean scores for school experiences. All non-school experiences have a mode of 4 (*large influence*) whereas only "extra-curricular activities," and "relationships with school personnel" have a mode of 4 for school experiences.

Table 28

Non-School Experiences' Influence on Skills and/or Knowledge Needed for Prosperity

Non-School Experience	Mean	Median	Mode	*SD*	Min	Max
Family / Upbringing	3.93	4	4	.33	2	4
Friend Group	3.47	4	4	.72	1	4
Religion / Church	3.16	3	4	.86	1	4
Work Experiences	3.71	4	4	.53	2	4
Clubs / Sports	2.91	3	3,4	1.09	1	4
College Experiences	3.58	4	4	.71	1	4

Note. $N = 55$.

Happiness – Influence of Non-School Experiences

Similarly, when respondents were asked to rate how non-school experiences influenced development of skills and/or knowledge that may have affected their happiness (Question H8y), all six non-school experiences were rated as a *large influence* at least once by 55 respondents with four of those experiences being rated a *large influence* by more than half of respondents. These included: family/upbringing, work experiences, college experiences, and friend group (Table 29). Note that these are the same four categories identified as being a *large influence* on prosperity.

Table 29

Non-School Experiences Rated as a "Large Influence" on Development of Skills and/or Knowledge Needed to Achieve Happiness

Non-School Experience	Number of "4 = *Large Influence*" Responses	*N*	%	*n*	Adjusted %
Family / Upbringing	50	55	90.9	55	90.9
Friend Group	40	55	72.7	55	72.7
Religion / Church	24	54	44.4	51	47.1
Work Experiences	36	55	65.5	54	66.7
Clubs / Sports	21	55	38.2	44	47.7
College Experiences	34	55	61.8	54	63.0

Note. *N* refers to number of respondents who answered this question (Survey Question H8y). A small italicized *n* refers to the sample size after "1 = *did not experience this*" responses are removed.

Table 30 provides mean scores and other descriptive statistics for respondents' perceptions on how non-school experiences influence development of skills and knowledge needed to achieve happiness.

Table 30

Non-School Experiences' Influence on Skills and/or Knowledge Needed for Happiness

Non-School Experience	*N*	Mean	Median	Mode	*SD*	Min	Max
Family / Upbringing	55	3.91	4	4	.29	3	4
Friend Group	55	3.69	4	4	.54	2	4
Religion / Church	54	3.15	3	4	.92	1	4
Work Experiences	55	3.53	4	4	.74	1	4
Clubs / Sports	55	2.85	3	4	1.15	1	4
College Experiences	55	3.49	4	4	.74	1	4

Note that mean scores for non-school experiences tend to be higher than mean scores for school experiences. All non-school experiences have a mode of 4 (*large influence*) whereas only "extra-curricular activities," and "relationships with school personnel" have a mode of 4 for school experiences.

Democratic Engagement – Influence of Non-School Experiences

As with questions on prosperity and happiness, six non-school factors were rated for the intensity of their influence on democratic engagement. All non-school factors were rated as a *large influence* at least once, and all but "clubs/sports" outside of school had a mode of 4. Friend group had modes of both 3 and 4. Categories in which more than half of respondents rated it a *large influence* included "family/upbringing" and "college experiences" (see Table 31).

Table 31

Non-School Experiences' Influence on Skills and/or Knowledge Needed for Democratic Engagement

Non-School Experience	Mean	Median	Mode	*SD*	Min	Max
Family / Upbringing	3.67	4	4	.52	2	4
Friend Group	3.22	3	3,4	.78	1	4
Religion / Church	3.10	3	4	1.02	1	4
Work Experiences	3.24	3	4	.86	1	4
Clubs / Sports	2.65	3	3	1.02	1	4
College Experiences	3.27	4	4	.90	1	4

Note. $N = 51$.

Note that when adjusted percentages were used, that is, when participants who chose "1 = *did not experience* this" were removed from the data, "religion/church" was also rated as a *large influence* by more than 50% of respondents (Table 32). As with educational experiences, overall, non-educational experiences showed less influence on democratic engagement than on happiness and prosperity.

Table 32

Non-School Experiences Rated as a "Large Influence" on Democratic Engagement

Non-School Experience	Number of "4 = *Large Influence*" Responses	*N*	%	*n*	Adjusted %
Family / Upbringing	35	51	68.6	51	68.6
Friend Group	21	51	41.2	50	42.0
Religion / Church	24	51	47.1	46	52.2
Work Experiences	24	51	47.1	49	49.0
Clubs / Sports	12	51	23.5	43	27.9
College Experiences	26	51	51.0	48	54.2

Note. *N* refers to number of respondents who answered this question (Survey Question DE6y). A small italicized *n* refers to the sample size after "1 = *did not experience this*" responses are removed.

What Individuals Wished They Would Have Learned in Their K-12 Education

This section presents qualitative data regarding what respondents wish they would have learned in their K-12 educational experiences that would have helped them to become more prosperous, happy, or democratically engaged. All respondents answered this question regardless of whether they perceived themselves as prosperous, happy, or

democratically engaged. This section is broken into subsections for prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement.

Prosperity – What Individuals Wished They Would Have Learned

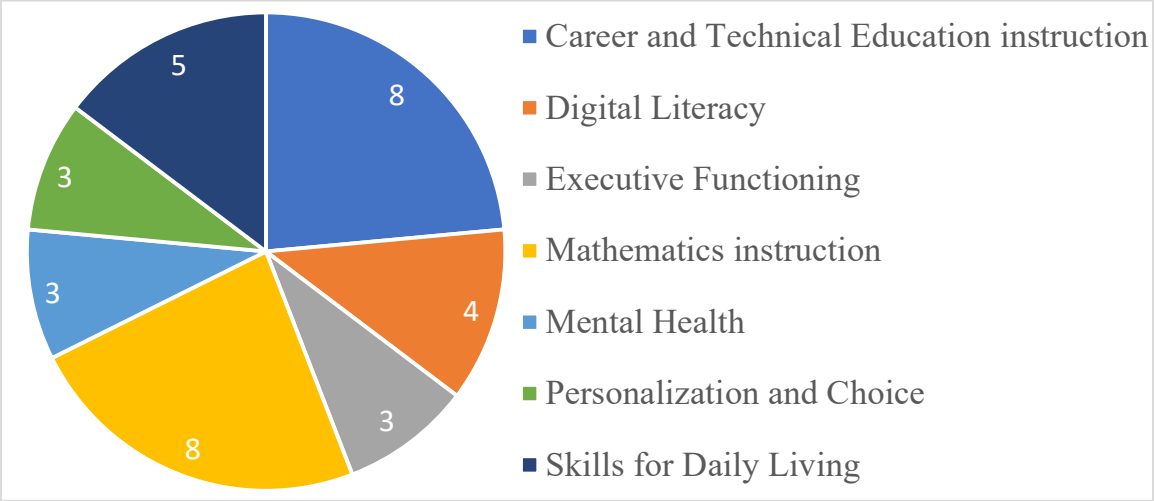
For those who perceived themselves as prosperous, the final question (P9y) about prosperity asked them what, if anything, they wished they would have learned in their K-12 education that would have helped them on their road to prosperity. Thirty-eight individuals responded to this question with 45 significant statements identified. These statements were coded and sorted into 14 categories. Three categories were only found once including: "science instruction," "social studies/history instruction," and "soft skills." The statement mentioning social studies/history instruction specifically referred to government/civics education. This subcategory continued to surface in survey data. Five categories were only mentioned twice including: "art/music/drama/speech instruction," "communication," "emotional intelligence," "foreign or native languages instruction," and "nothing." The remaining seven categories are displayed in Figure 9.

Note the two most frequently mentioned categories are "career and technical education instruction" and "mathematics instruction." Statements regarding career and technical education included "opportunities to see what careers are out there and job shadow," "more vocational skills," "I wish that I would have had the chance to do a sewing/cooking class like my parents had when they were younger," and "I wish I would have learned a trade or multiple trades during high school." Importantly, one subcategory of mathematics instruction, budgeting and finance, was mentioned in six of eight instances where math was referenced. The other two statements referenced geometry and more math skills in general. Skills for daily living tended to encompass statements such

as “adulting,” “real world skills,” and “life basics.” The category, “personalization and choice” does not exactly refer to a skill, but three individuals wished they would have had more personalization and choice as part of their educational experience such as expanded electives choices, more challenging classes, and opportunities to graduate early.

Figure 9

What “Prosperous” Individuals Wished They Would Have Learned During Their K-12 Education



Only five individuals perceived themselves as not being prosperous. Respondents were asked why they felt they were not prosperous at the time of the study (Survey Question P5n). Of the five, four reported the issue to be just dissatisfaction with their current salary. Only one identified a missing skill as the problem which was self-confidence, a transferrable skill.

When asked what skills they thought they needed to develop in order to become prosperous (Survey Question P6n), responses included communication, emotional intelligence, budgeting and finance, and an attitude of hard work. Respondents were then asked if any of these skills had been taught to them in their K-12 educational experiences

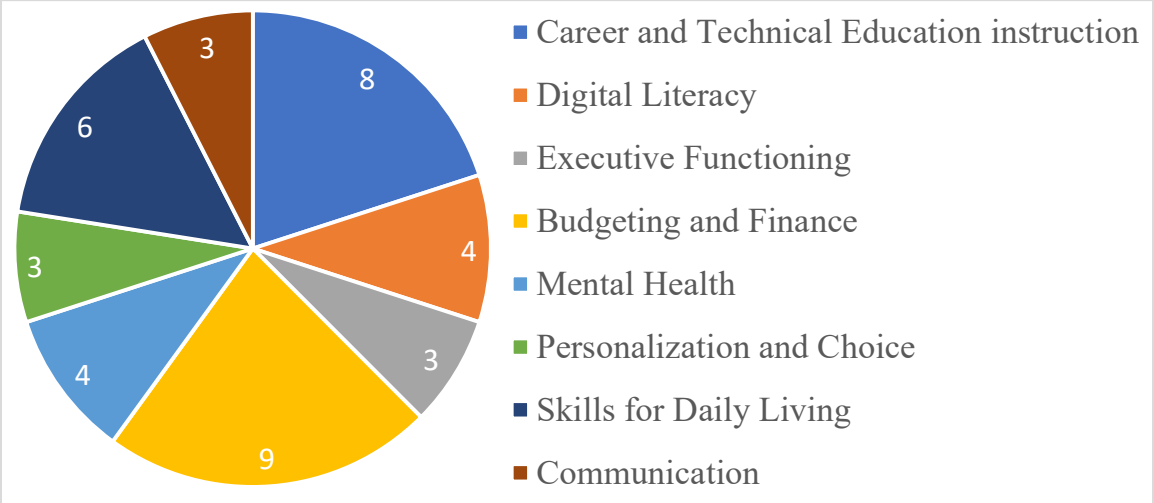
(Survey Question P7n). Two classes were identified, speech class and home economics. Note that neither is a requirement for graduation and neither features in skills tested for in standardized assessments. Another respondent expressed a belief that school was not the best place to learn important skills saying, “You learn more in the workforce.”

Finally, these individuals were also asked what, if anything, they wished they would have learned in their K-12 educational experiences that would have helped them be more prosperous at the time of the study (Survey Question P8n). Six significant statements were identified and coded. One mentioned communication, “how to be comfortable with public speaking”; another, skills for daily living, “practical knowledge for adult life”; and a third, mental health, “I wish I had more classes about mental health and well being.” The other three all mentioned mathematics instruction, specifically budgeting and finance. This makes nine total mentions of budgeting and finance making it the most frequently requested school experience for prosperity. If we add the responses of the “no” group to the “yes” group and make budgeting and finance its own category, the results look like those displayed in Figure 10. Note the three most prevalent categories, “career and technical education instruction,” “skills for daily living,” and “budgeting and finance” all deal with learning that is directly applicable to the real world.

A desire for real world experiences continued to surface during data analysis, also appearing in the responses related to what individuals wished they would have learned in order to be happier and more democratically engaged. Categories of “career and technical education” and “skills for daily living” as well as “community involvement/ volunteering” reflect this desire for learning that is more real (applicable to situations outside a school environment).

Figure 10

What All Individuals Wished They Would Have Learned During Their K-12 Education in Order to be More Prosperous



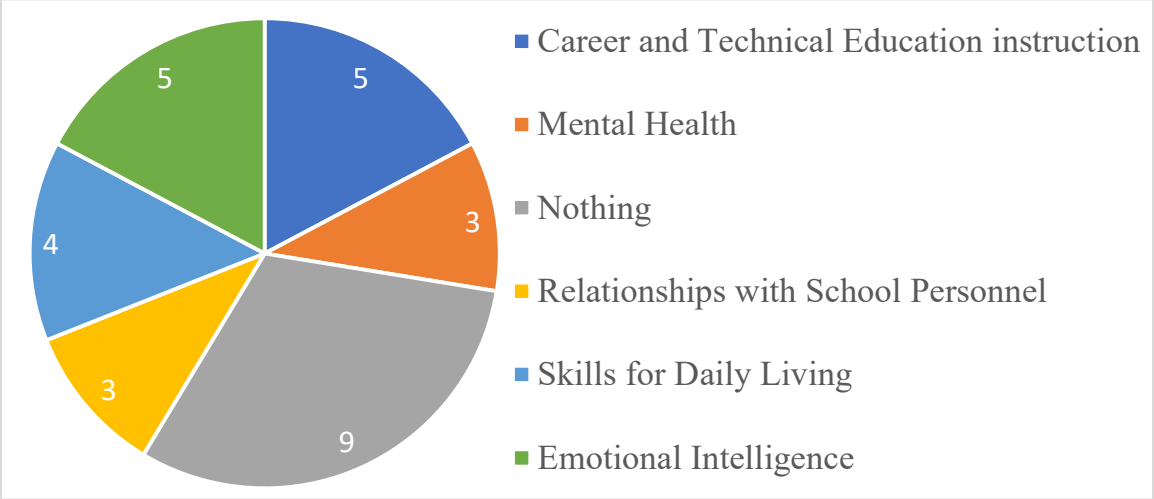
Happiness – What Individuals Wished They Would Have Learned

For those who perceived themselves as happy, the final question about happiness (Survey Question H9y) asked them what, if anything, they wished they would have learned in their K-12 education (but didn't) that would have helped them on their journey to happiness. Twenty-six individuals responded to this question with 40 significant statements identified. These statements were coded and sorted into 14 categories. Five categories were only found once including "art/music/drama/speech instruction," "social studies/history instruction," "executive functioning," "flexibility and creativity," and "foreign or native languages instruction." The statement mentioning social studies/history instruction specifically referred to government/civics education. Three additional categories were only mentioned twice including "mathematics instruction," "exposure to diverse people/ideas," and "self-care and recreation." Note that, once again, mathematics

instruction was referring specifically to budgeting and finance. The remaining six categories and their frequencies are displayed in Figure 11.

Figure 11

What "Happy" Individuals Wished They Would Have Learned During Their K-12 Education



Note the most frequent category was "nothing" meaning some individuals (nine respondents) did not believe there was anything else in their K-12 experiences that would have contributed to their happiness. Non-school experiences were more highly rated as being influential on skills needed for happiness than school experiences in the quantitative data. The categories "career and technical education instruction" and "emotional intelligence" were the next most frequently mentioned categories, followed by "skills for daily living." Some representative statements regarding career and technical education included: "more access to real job experiences through a mentoring program," "a trade of some sort would have helped me to feel successful and be a contributing member of the community," and "more exposure to different career opportunities." It is interesting respondents made connections between career skills and feelings of success

(competence) and belonging (relatedness). Statements about emotional intelligence included: “how to better manage conflict with others,” “more focus on building relationships,” and “more of public education needs to emphasize emotion in a controlled and safe environment.” Note that several statements referred to relationships which makes sense given relatedness was a relative area of weakness for respondents when compared with autonomy and competence. Three statements referring to skills for daily living mentioned “life skills” while one gave the specific desire for “kitchen skills” and “laundry.”

“Relationships with school personnel” was mentioned three times. This isn’t a skill, but it shows some respondents believed better relationships in their school environment would have helped them to be more happy. Mental health was also mentioned three times with statements about managing mental health and mental health awareness. Note that none of the categories on the chart were measured in curriculum and graduation requirements at the time of this study.

Only four individuals perceived themselves as not being happy. Of the four, one did not respond to the question asking: “Why do you feel you are not happy at this time?” (Survey Question H5n). One individual felt they were fine, but marked themselves as unhappy given the criteria. Two individuals mentioned a lack of relatedness as the cause of their unhappiness and one individual also mentioned mental health. One individual felt insecure in their choices and stuck in their career showing a lack of autonomy.

Participants were asked “what skills and/or knowledge sets do you believe you need to develop to become happy?” (Survey Question H6n). Two individuals identified missing skills including emotional intelligence, self-care and recreation, attitude and

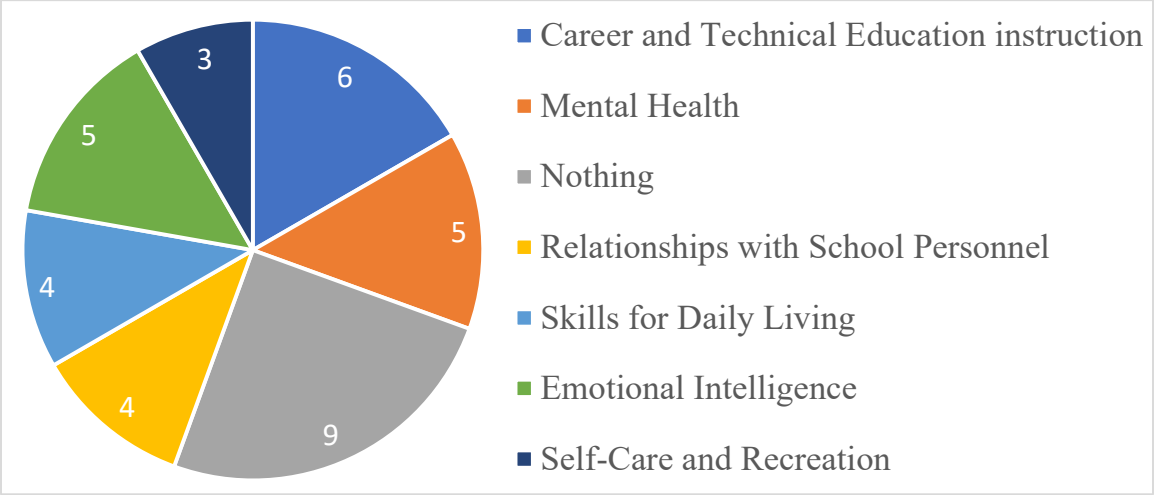
mindset, and domain specific knowledge. Respondents were then asked if any of these skills had been taught to them in their K-12 educational experiences (Survey Question H7n). Two classes were identified—career and technical education and health. Note that neither features in skills tested for in standardized assessments. One respondent mentioned that a guidance counselor or school psychologist might have been able to help, and one respondent talked about school as being detrimental to their happiness.

Finally, individuals were asked what, if anything, they wished they would have learned in their K-12 educational experiences that would have helped them be more happy at the time they filled out their survey (Survey Question H8n). Five significant statements were identified and coded. Two mentioned mental health; one, self-care and recreation; one, relationships with school personnel; and one, career and technical education instruction.

The responses of the "no" group (not happy at the time of the study) were added to the "yes" group (thought they were happy at the time of the study) to determine what all respondents wished they had learned during their K-12 education in order to be happier, and the results are displayed in Figure 12. Note that self-care and recreation is now on the chart with three responses, and that the three leading categories (other than nothing) are career and technical education instruction, social emotional skills, and mental health.

Figure 12

What All Individuals Wished They Would Have Learned During Their K-12 Education in Order to be Happier



Democratic Engagement – What Individuals Wished They Would Have Learned

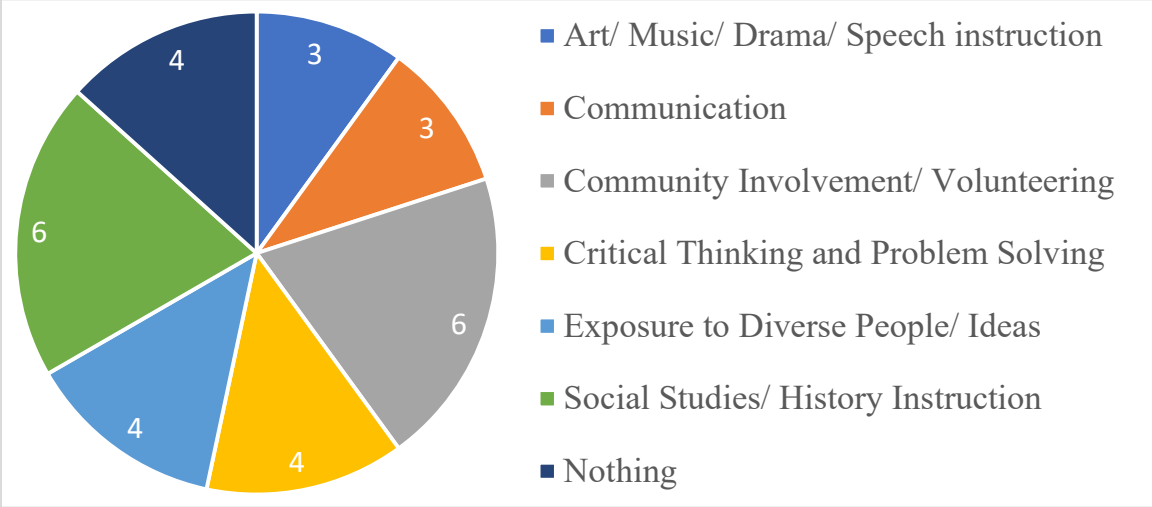
For those who rated themselves as satisfied with their democratic engagement, the final question asked them what, if anything, they wished they would have learned in their K-12 education (and didn't) that would have helped them on their journey to democratic engagement (Survey Question DE7y). Twenty-five individuals responded to this question with 32 significant statements identified. These statements were coded and sorted into nine categories. Two categories were only found once including "career and technical education instruction" and "K-12 expectations." The remaining seven categories and their frequencies are displayed in Figure 13.

The two most frequent categories were "community involvement/volunteering" (with 6 statements alluding to this) and "social studies/history instruction" (also with 6 responses). Those who mentioned community involvement/volunteering provided statements such as "have practice with the steps that are necessary to be more engaged

with public service," "Why not have volunteers and politicians address classrooms," and "ways to be involved in the community even under the age of 18."

Figure 13

What "Democratically Engaged" Individuals Wished They Would Have Learned During Their K-12 Education



Respondents seemed to desire more experiences outside of the classroom and more community members pushing into the classroom. All six of the individuals who mentioned "social studies/history instruction" specifically referenced wanting more instruction in the area of government/civics. Statements referring to government/civics included "understanding of how laws are made," "the importance of the democratic process," "actual differences between the two party system," and "how politics works." One respondent said, "I think our government class could have been more interactive to allow the information to stick with us."

While "communication" was not a large category, it is noteworthy that the three references to communication were about civil discourse. This was a new subcategory that

arose from this question. Statements regarding communication and civil discourse included, “It’s okay to have the minority opinion,” “having more open discussions within the classroom,” and “have conversations about political policies.” This subcategory appears to combine elements of emotional intelligence and communication to enable individuals to discuss differences of opinion. The references to art/music/drama/speech were also centered around communication with phrases like “being more influential and outspoken,” and “better debate skills.”

Eleven individuals rated themselves as dissatisfied with their level of democratic engagement at the time they submitted their surveys. Nine answered the question on why they were dissatisfied with their democratic engagement (Survey Question DE3n). Five respondents said they lacked information on how to be more democratically engaged. Three stated they felt they could or should be doing more. Two individuals cited a lack of time as a barrier to democratic engagement, and one person expressed a belief that democratic engagement wouldn’t make a difference, which I coded as unempowered.

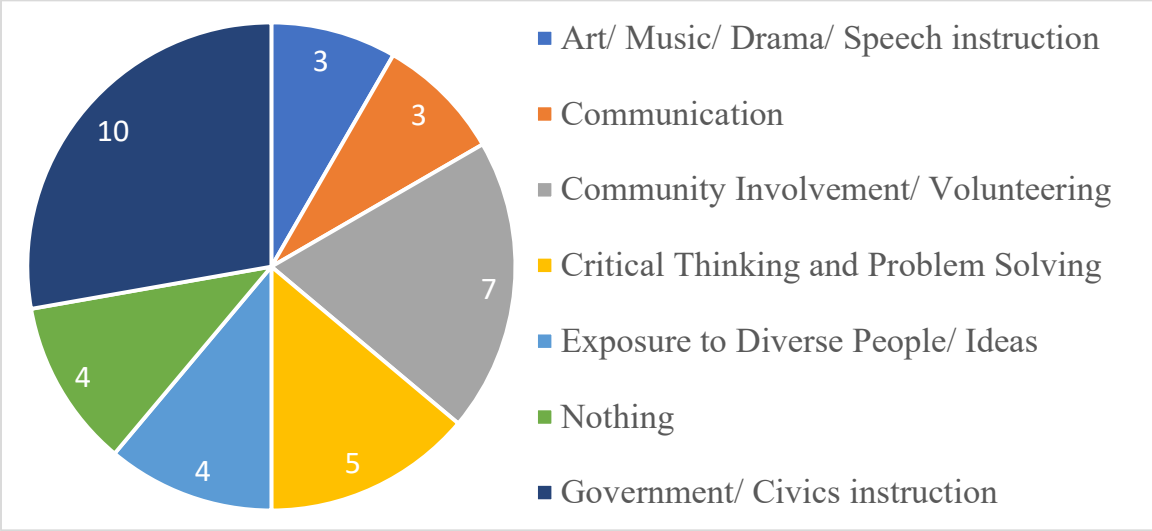
Six individuals identified skills they felt they needed to become more democratically engaged (Survey Question DE4n) including: critical thinking and problem solving, attitude and mindset, community involvement/volunteering, and domain specific knowledge. The two individuals who identified domain specific knowledge were referring to understanding government. Respondents were then asked if any of these “missing” skills had been taught to them in their K-12 educational experiences (Survey Question DE5n). Four educational experiences were identified: career and technical education, extra-curricular activities, and art/music/drama/speech instruction were all mentioned once. Social studies/history was mentioned five times, two times specifically

referencing government/civics education. Two individuals did not believe the skills they needed were offered at all in their K-12 experiences.

Finally, individuals were asked what, if anything, they wished they would have learned in their K-12 educational experiences that would have helped them be more democratically engaged (Survey Question DE6n). Five responses were recorded with seven significant statements identified and coded. One mentioned critical thinking and problem solving; one, community involvement/volunteering; and five mentioned social studies/history instruction with four specifically referring to government/civics education. If we add the responses of the "no" group (respondents who did not feel satisfied with their level of democratic engagement) to the "yes" group (respondents who did feel satisfied with their level of democratic engagement) and separate out the government/civics category, results can be seen in Figure 14.

Figure 14

What All Individuals Wished They Would Have Learned During Their K-12 Education in Order to be More Democratically Engaged



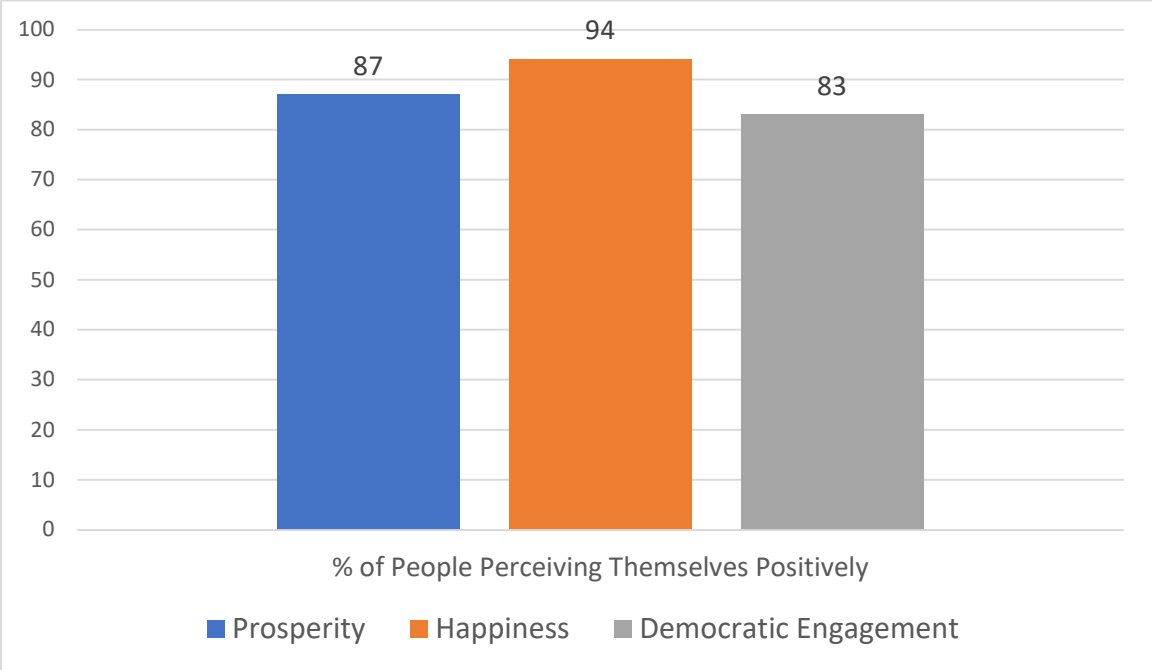
Note that "government/civics instruction" is now the most frequently mentioned category followed by "community involvement/volunteering." These qualitative data clearly show that most respondents believed educational experiences could be improved to help students develop skills they need to be more democratically engaged adults.

Summary Data

Taken together, the three areas of prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement address how North Dakota is doing overall in fulfilling the purpose of education outlined in North Dakota's constitution according to survey respondents. Figures in this section compare all three areas. Figure 15 shows percentage of respondents who rated themselves as prosperous, happy, or satisfied with their level of democratic engagement.

Figure 15

Percentage of Respondents Rating Themselves as Prosperous, Happy, or Satisfied With Their Level of Democratic Engagement



Overall, in each area, more than 80% of respondents felt positively about how they were doing at the time they filled out their survey (they felt prosperous, Survey Question P4; they felt happy, Survey Question H4; they were satisfied with their level of democratic engagement, Survey Question DE2). When looking at the influence of K-12 experiences on these "three areas" (prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement): English/language arts, social studies/history, extra-curricular activities, and relationships with school personnel were highly influential in at least one area (Figure 16). At first it appeared most other subjects were relatively equal in influence on the "three areas," but when they were adjusted for respondents who did not experience certain classes, "art/music/drama/speech" and "career and technical education' pulled ahead of "mathematics" and "science" in influencing respondents' development of needed skills and/or knowledge (Figure 17). Figures 16 and 17 also show that individuals perceived their educational experiences to be most influential on their prosperity and least influential on their democratic engagement. Social studies/history was the sole exception.

Figure 16

Means of Responses Comparing K-12 School Experiences' Influence on Developing Skills and/or Knowledge for Achieving Democratic Engagement, Happiness, and/or Prosperity

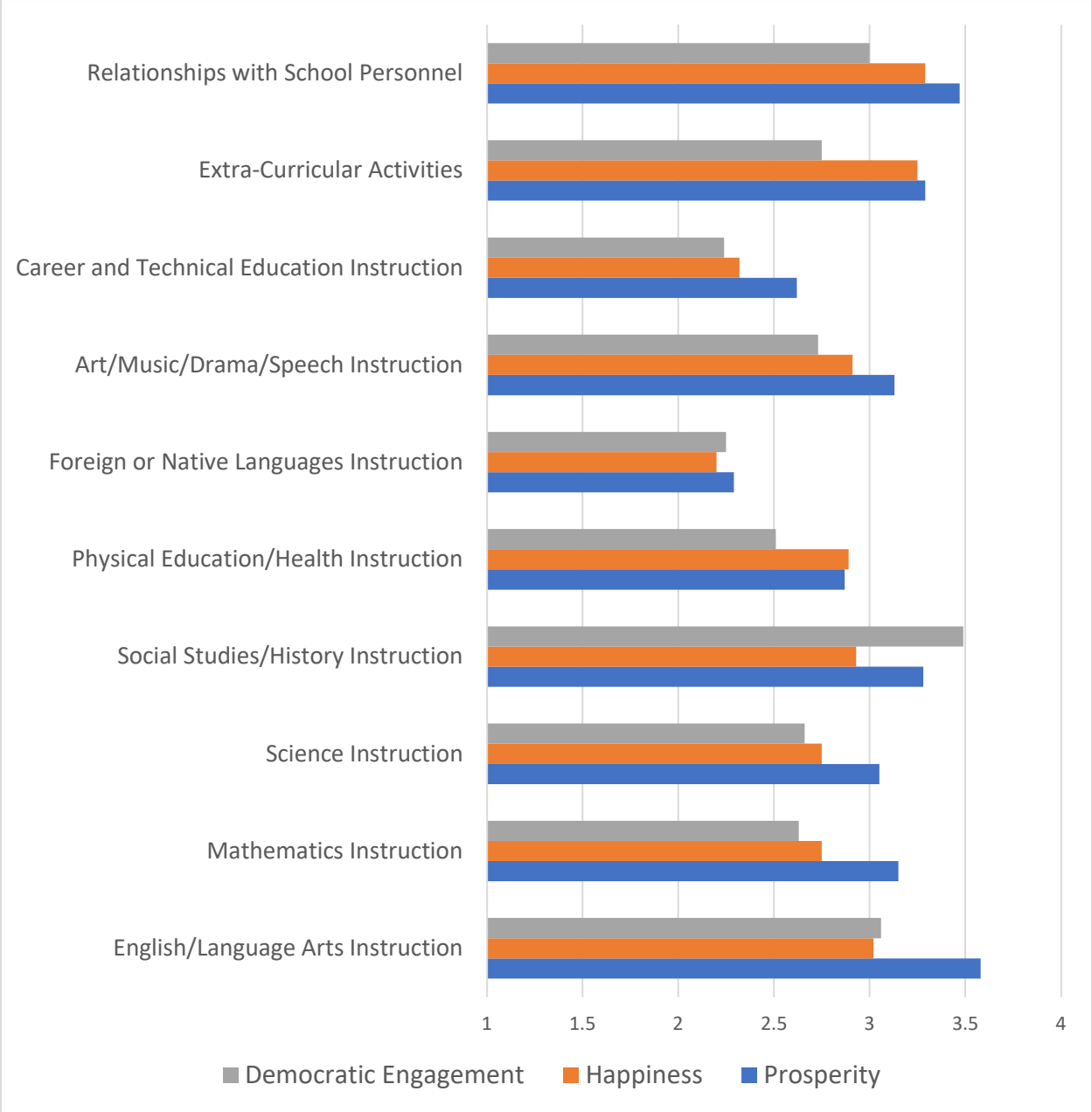
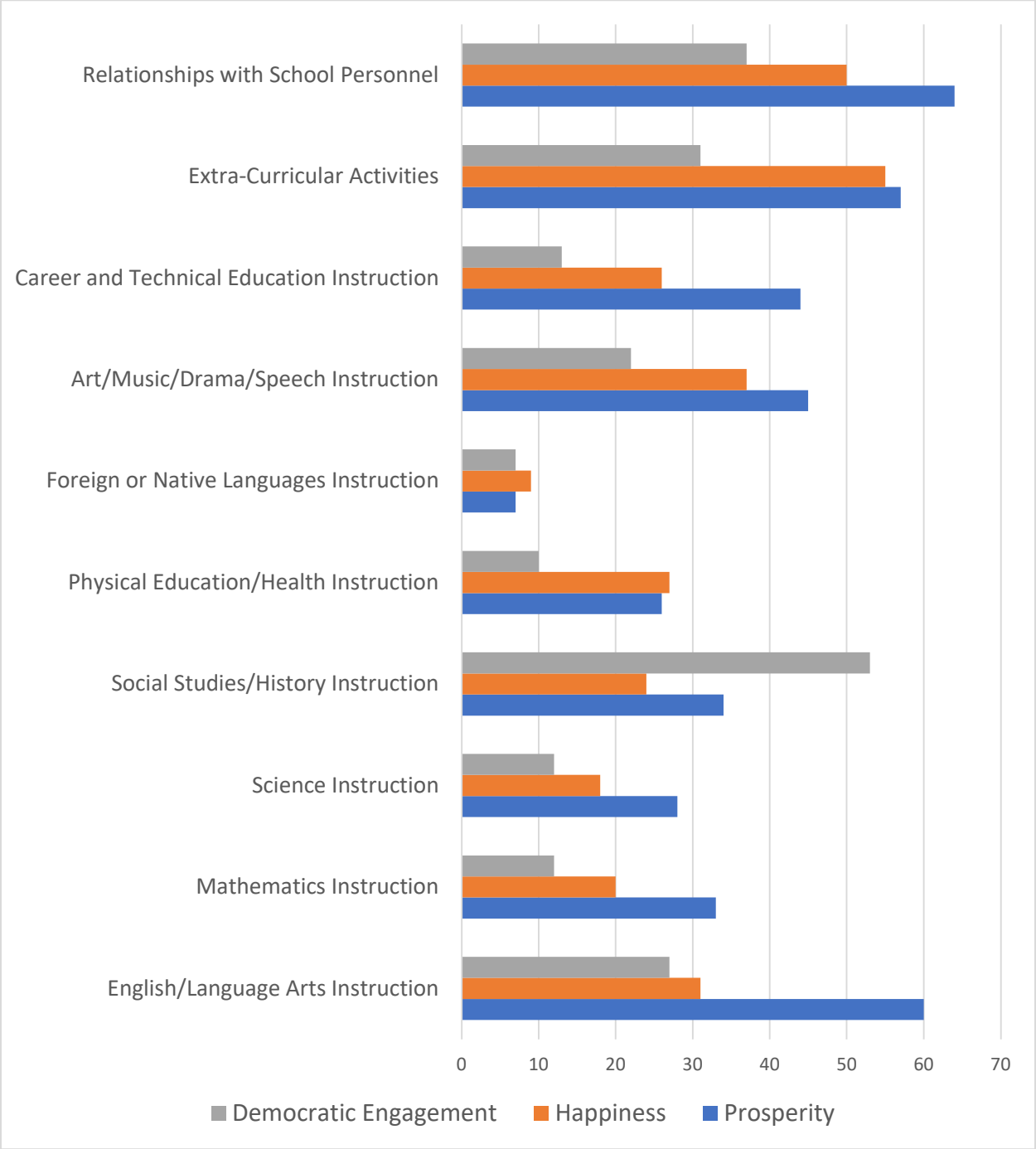


Figure 17

Adjusted Percentages of K-12 School Experiences Rated as a "Large Influence" on Development of Skills and/or Knowledge Needed for Given Objectives

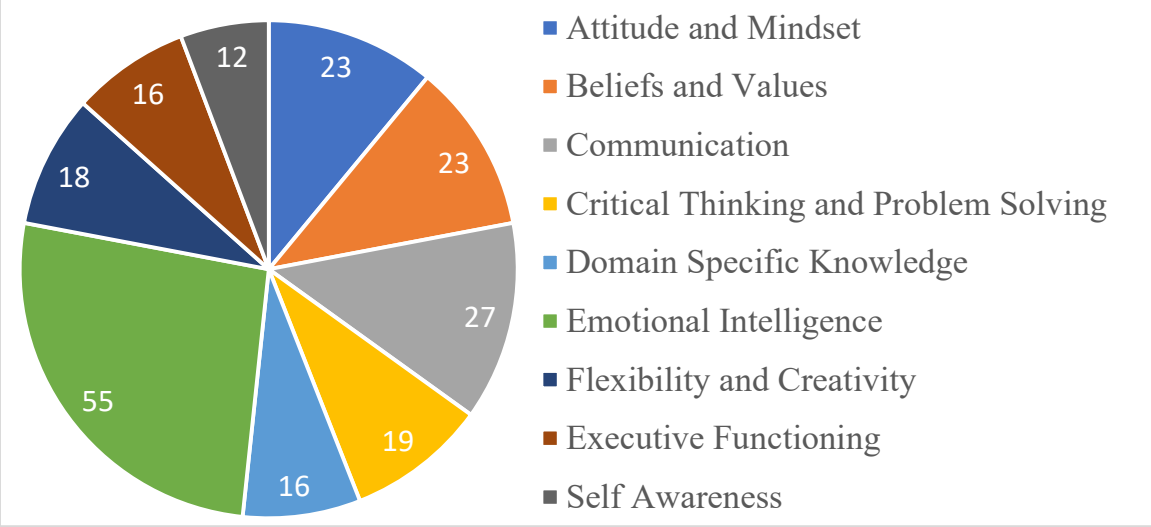


Note. Data does not include participants who chose "1 = *did not experience this*."

Many skills and/or knowledge sets were identified as important to becoming prosperous, happy, and democratically engaged. Figure 18 shows overall frequencies (numbers) of responses identifying skills and/or knowledge considered important. Three categories not shown include: leadership (8 responses), digital literacy (5 responses), and self care and recreation (4 responses).

Figure 18

Skills and/or Knowledge Identified as Important Overall

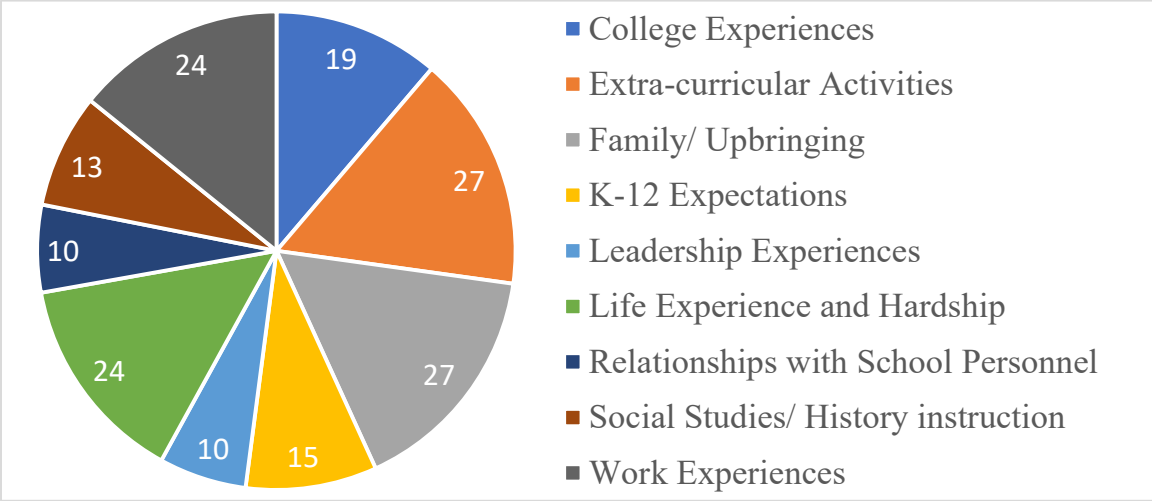


The most frequently mentioned skill/knowledge was emotional intelligence with a frequency of 55 responses. Other prominent overall important categories were communication (27 responses), attitude and mindset (23 responses), and beliefs and values (23 responses). Note that beliefs and values continue to surface even though they are not learned skills, but rather a learned way of being (existing, thriving) in the world. Also note that, with the exception of written communication, these skills were not mentioned or measured in North Dakota's curriculum and graduation requirements at the time of this study.

Respondents identified 21 categories of experiences that influenced them (participants) across the three areas of prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement. Nine of these categories were identified at least ten times. These are displayed in Figure 19.

Figure 19

Experiences Identified as Influential to Developing Skills/Knowledge Needed Overall

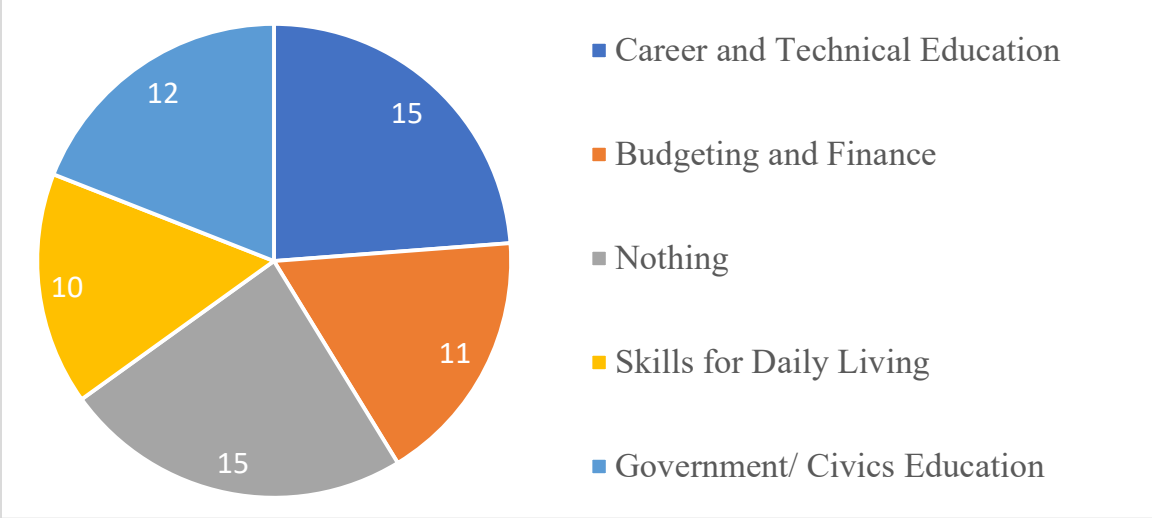


The most frequently identified categories overall were family/upbringing (27 responses), extra-curricular activities (27 responses), life experience and hardship (24 responses), and work experiences (24 responses). Note that of the experiences listed on the chart, only extra-curricular activities, K-12 expectations, social studies/history instruction, and relationships with school personnel are related to K-12 education. Leadership experiences might be tied to K-12 experiences, but they might also occur outside of school. Other frequently mentioned categories were friend group (8 responses), religion/church (8 responses), and community/mentors (6 responses).

Twenty-two categories were identified of what individuals *wished* they would have learned in school in order to be more prosperous, happy, or democratically engaged. Five categories were mentioned 10 times or more. One of these categories was math. However, 11 out of 13 mentions of math were specific to budgeting and finance so that subcategory will be used in Figure 20. Similarly, social studies/history was mentioned 13 times but 12 of those instances were specific to government and civics so that subcategory will also be used as it more specifically reflects what individuals wished they would have learned. Please see Figure 20.

Figure 20

What All Individuals Wished They Would Have Learned During Their K-12 Education



Note that 15 respondents said "nothing," suggesting either that they were satisfied with their education or that they did not believe K-12 education could have taught them the things they needed. The most frequently mentioned item was "career and technical education" followed by "government/civics education." "Budgeting and finance" and then "skills for daily living" were very close as well. Note that only "government/civics"

is a requirement for graduation. Other frequently mentioned items included mental health (9 responses), emotional intelligence (7 responses), community involvement and volunteering (7 responses), art/music/drama/speech instruction (6 responses), communication (6 responses), and exposure to diverse people/ideas (6 responses).

Chapter V will include a discussion and analysis of the data from this research. Chapter V will also include an explanation of how the data answered research questions. Additionally, recommendations for future research and implications for educators and policy-makers will be provided.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Chapter V reviews the purpose of this study and research questions. These are followed by conclusions drawn about each of the research questions. Research Question 1 is answered in the section entitled, "Perceptions of North Dakota High School Graduates" with subsections for prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement. Research Question 2 is answered in the section entitled "Curriculum and Graduation Requirements and the Purpose of Education" with subsections for curricular requirements and graduation requirements. A section on acknowledged limitations of the study follows. Chapter V also includes a discussion drawing connections between the conclusions of this study and prior research. The discussion topics include: required curriculum, experiential and personalized learning, and assessment and graduation requirements. One final discussion section is entitled "Beyond the Classroom" which covers the topics of extracurricular activities and relationships with school personnel; both were found to be related to the purposes of education. Finally, Chapter V concludes with recommendations for educational policy, educational practice, and future research.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this part of a larger study reviewing parts of Title 15.1 of the North Dakota Century Code was twofold: to determine whether or not the curriculum and

graduation requirements in NDCC 15.1-21 at the time of this study fulfilled the purpose of education in North Dakota, and to determine how graduates of North Dakota high schools perceived their educational experiences in relation to preparing them for their adult lives.

Research Questions

Research questions that guided this study are:

1. What are the perceptions of North Dakota high school graduates regarding their elementary and secondary education and preparation for adult life?
2. How do the curricular and graduation requirements outlined in NDCC 15.1-21 fulfill the purposes of education described in the Constitution of North Dakota, namely, to ensure the continuance of our democracy and provide for the "prosperity and happiness" of its citizens (N.D. Const. art. VIII, § 1)?

Summary

Overall, survey results showed a population of North Dakota High School graduates who have been doing well. Most considered themselves to be happy, prosperous, and satisfied with their democratic engagement. Regarding how their education has influenced them, respondents tended to indicate that educational experiences do influence their preparedness for adult life in each of the purposes of North Dakota's educational system—prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement—as outlined in North Dakota Century Code. Every educational experience was rated at least a *small influence* by at least 65% of respondents within each category. However, educational experiences measured or required by the North Dakota curriculum and graduation requirements at the time of this study fared less well. Skills measured by

requirements in the North Dakota Century Code made up less than 34% of skills identified as important by respondents to prosperity, happiness, or democratic engagement. Further, when asked what experiences led to development of important skills, K-12 educational experiences, which were part of the curriculum and graduation requirements of North Dakota at the time of this study, made up less than 29% of experiences identified as influential in any category. The overall message here is that, at least for this population, North Dakota has many appropriate elements in place to provide an education which leads to a prosperous, happy, democratically engaged life. However, the state may not be prioritizing, measuring, or requiring the correct elements in their curriculum and graduation requirements if prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement is the goal.

Conclusions

Perceptions of North Dakota High School Graduates

Before diving into the details of curriculum and graduation requirements, I wish to address perceptions of North Dakota high school graduates about education and their preparation for adult life. Research Question 1 stated: "What are the perceptions of North Dakota high school graduates regarding their elementary and secondary education and preparation for adult life?" These perceptions must be considered carefully and in context.

The perceptions of my survey respondents regarding their preparedness for adult life were positive. However, their perceptions about their education in relation to preparing for adult life were more tenuous. Perceptions for each purpose of North

Dakota's educational system—prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement—are discussed.

Perceptions of Prosperity

In the area of prosperity, most respondents felt they were comfortable with their collaboration, communication, and information communication technology skills. At least 94% of respondents rated their skill level as "comfortable" or a "strength" in each of the three areas. This means that these North Dakota graduates overall perceived themselves to be prepared for adult life in the area of 21st century employability skills. The data showed a general trend upward in mean scores of collaboration and communication when compared with annual salaries. This trend validates the idea that collaboration and communication are important to success in employment. However, information communication technology did not show the same upward trend along salary lines. Those with the highest salaries had the highest mean scores, but a dip in mean scores occurred between an annual salary of $54,000 and $95,000.

This dip may have been impacted by the age of persons likely to be making those salaries. Graduates before the year 2000 also had lower mean scores in information communication technology than those who graduated after 2000. This is unsurprising given that younger graduates have had more exposure to digital tools in their daily lives than older graduates. Another possibility is that when this survey was given, schools in general and Dickinson Public Schools specifically were undergoing a vast transformation pushing content out online and utilizing new digital platforms and a host of new programs due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Individuals may have felt more vulnerable in this area than usual due to all the new technology they were being asked to

use in a short amount of time and in a high-stress situation. People in the $54,000-$95,000 range were more likely to be teachers who would be impacted by this deluge of digital demands while support staff who tend to fall into lower salary ranges might have continued to feel comfortable with the technology they were being required to use at work.

Perceptions of prosperity were similarly positive, although not as positive as perceptions of 21st century employability skills. Overall, 86.7% of respondents felt they were prosperous. There were some differences in demographic groups regarding perception of prosperity. However, given the very small size of some demographic groups, it was difficult to draw conclusions from these differences. One interesting trend was that perceptions of prosperity increased with salary. Again, this makes sense, the more money you earn, the more likely you are to feel you can care for your own needs without assistance. Everyone making $55,000 or more perceived themselves as being prosperous with the exception of one outlier making more than $95,000. Even at lower salary levels, a majority of individuals still perceived themselves as being prosperous.

Respondents identified skills important to their prosperity with emotional intelligence and communication being the most frequently identified. The emotional intelligence category included statements regarding collaboration. This result confirms that collaboration and communication are important 21st century employability skills.

Respondents definitely felt their K-12 educational experiences influenced their ability to become prosperous. The mode for all categories of K-12 educational experiences was either a 3 (*small influence*) or 4 (*large influence*). However, given that K-12 educational experiences are supposed to prepare one to be career or college ready,

one might expect most curricular areas to have a large influence on prosperity. English/language arts (ELA) was the only curricular area to be rated a *large influence* by more than half of respondents. Again, this makes sense given that communication was a skill identified as important to prosperity and ELA instruction includes written and oral communication. ELA was also identified one time in the open-ended questions as an influence on prosperity with this comment, "My high school English teachers gave me a strong foundation in writing and speaking." An additional respondent felt they learned their communication skills in speech class saying, "Really, much of the successes in my life I attribute to those speaking skills I developed in high school." An honorable mention for influential curricular areas on prosperity was career and technical education instruction (CTE). This was identified three times by two different respondents in the open-question portion of the survey and was rated a *large influence* by more than 40% of respondents who experienced CTE in their K-12 years.

There is a clear and logical connection between CTE and prosperity; training that leads to a career would directly impact one's prosperity. More surprising was the identification of relationships with school personnel and extra-curricular activities as large influences on prosperity. Extra-curricular activities and relationships with school personnel were also identified in the open-ended questions as experiences important to prosperity. While neither of these would seem to have a direct link to prosperity, unless your full-time job is coaching, respondents felt these experiences were essential in helping them develop the transferrable skills they needed. Some comments that illustrate this included, "Extracurricular activities helped me contribute to a common goal and improve my own skill sets at the same time;" "It gave me a great experience in

communication and leadership;" "Having a teacher when I was 10 years old recognize my individuality was paramount."

One additional category arose from open-ended questions that was not on my list of K-12 educational influences. This category was "K-12 expectations." Respondents indicated the structure and expectations of school helped them become prosperous adults. I had not conceived of the very structures of school as a teaching tool, but respondents indicated expectations surrounding behavior, working with others, and completing assignments were important. One respondent commented, "We were treated with respect and there were high standards for behavior and follow through on the school work."

Respondents believed their non-school experiences were more influential in their prosperity than their K-12 educational experiences with family and upbringing being rated as a *large influence* by more than 94% of respondents. Other non-school experiences rated more highly than any K-12 educational experiences were work experiences and college experiences. All three of these categories were well represented in the open-ended questions with work experiences being the mostly frequently mentioned. Work experiences leading to prosperity is no surprise. One unexpected category that arose was life experience and hardship. Some respondents spoke about skills that have built up over time through life experiences, while others referenced specific events which shaped them. Some of these life events were losing a parent at a young age, having a parent with alcoholism, failing, experiencing disappointment, having divorced parents, etc. The connection between life experiences and prosperity and 21st century skills might be that an individual would have to develop emotional intelligence in order to cope with these difficult life situations.

Some gaps that respondents perceived in their educational experiences regarding prosperity included instruction in math and CTE. Math was rated as a *large influence* by only about one third of respondents. This surprised me because prosperity has a great deal to do with math, for example, calculations of salary versus cost of living. Many careers require the use of math on a daily basis. The fact that math appears in the perceived gaps of high school graduates suggests individuals did not get the kind of math instruction they wanted or needed. The mathematical sub-category of budgeting and finance appeared throughout survey responses as an educational gap.

While CTE had a stronger showing than math in terms of influence, it seems respondents wished for additional or different CTE offerings that might have helped them become more prosperous. Some comments regarding this included: "I wish that I would have had the chance to do a sewing/cooking class"; "I wish I would have learned a trade or multiple trades during high school"; "[I wish I had] opportunities to see what careers are out there and job shadow"; and "I feel many high schoolers get lost at this point and need more influence from professionals before they get to college." Aligning closely with CTE was the category of skills for daily living. These statements were more generalized but included skills that could be housed in CTE classes. Statements in this category included: "I only wish that more hands on or 'real life' situations would have been presented during K-12"; "Adulting. There are so many things you just have to figure out"; "Certain real world skills such as taxes, investments, reading contracts, etc." This desire for hands-on and real-world experiences was supported by the theory of constructivism and the work of Dewey (1938/2015), which suggested that experience is the best education.

Digital literacy made a showing in the respondents' perceived educational gaps also, supporting data showing respondents felt weaker in this area and that digital literacy is important to prosperity. Executive functioning and mental health appeared on this list as well. Mental health has been a recognized need by the state of North Dakota, and this might include social-emotional skills and executive functioning skills. However, social-emotional skills remain on the fringes of education because they are not mandated nor measured. One final category that respondents perceived was missing in their education for prosperity was the element of personalization and choice. Respondents wanted more choices in electives, more challenging curricula available to them, and opportunities to graduate early.

Perceptions of Happiness

In the area of happiness, most respondents answered "yes" to statements regarding autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In autonomy, almost all respondents felt they had a sense of who they were (93.9%) and their activities reflected their true selves (84.8%). Most respondents felt fulfilled by life choices (78.8%) and had clear goals (75.8%). An interesting finding was that all autonomy statements except for "I know who I am" trended upward along with salary. This might suggest that having clear goals is also important to prosperity, and that prosperity might impact how satisfied you feel about your choices in life.

For competence, all but one respondent felt themselves capable of caring for their own needs (98.5%). Most respondents also felt confident in their ability to succeed (86.4%) and competent when making important decisions (84.5%). Competence was the area with the highest percentages of "yes" responses. Competence was also the area most

closely linked with content knowledge as being competent requires knowledge specific to one's career field. This suggests these North Dakota graduates felt prepared for the jobs they were doing at the time they completed their surveys. Some sporadic differences in demographic categories do appear in the data as detailed in Chapter IV. One interesting difference was, of those making less than $35,000, only 54.5% perceived themselves as confident in their ability to succeed. This might suggest that confidence impacts prosperity to some degree or vice versa. Perhaps it is a relationship in which more financial success brings confidence about finding further success, or it could be that those with more confidence tend to be promoted or take the financial risk of getting further post-secondary training. This theory would be slightly undermined, however, with the fact that those who were both employed full time and in higher education rated themselves as confident less frequently than those who were employed full time and not in higher education. Regardless, relationships between skills for prosperity and happiness appeared regularly in the data.

In relatedness, almost all respondents felt able to form positive, meaningful, relationships (93.9%). Most respondents (84.5%) had a friend they felt deeply connected to but fewer agreed they belonged to an organization in which they felt loved and accepted (71.2%). A couple of interesting trends appeared in the data for relatedness. Class B graduates fared better on every relatedness statement than class A graduates. One possible reason might be that a smaller school setting lends itself to stronger relationships because individuals spend time with the same people for many years. There appeared to be an increase in feelings of belonging for individuals making more than $55,000 a year. Perhaps those who make more money feel more appreciated by the organization they

work for, that to some extent the amount someone is paid contributes to the feeling of care they get from their place of employment. It could also be that those making $55,000 or more have more leisure time in which to join organizations that would provide a sense of belonging. Additionally, those who make more may have been with their organizations longer which would contribute to their sense of belonging. This might be yet another way in which prosperity does impact happiness.

Perceptions of overall happiness were very positive with 93.5% of respondents rating themselves as being happy. Most skills respondents identified as important to happiness in the open-ended questions fell into four categories—emotional intelligence, attitude and mindset, self-awareness, and beliefs and values. Identified emotional intelligence skills included listening with empathy, collaborating, and building relationships. Identified attitude and mindset skills included persisting, being open to learning, responding with wonderment and awe, and taking responsible risks. Identified self-awareness skills were focused around metacognition—keeping thoughts positive and taking time to reflect. Beliefs and values identified as important to happiness included compassion, gratitude, purpose, and independence. These skills and values fit well into the framework of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Respondents perceived some parts of their K-12 education were influential to their happiness. ELA, social studies, and the arts all had a mode of 3 (*small influence*) while extra-curricular activities and relationships with school personnel had a mode of 4 (*large influence*). It is not surprising core curricular areas were not rated more highly given the skills identified as necessary to happiness are not skills that are typically directly taught or measured in school. Perhaps ELA, social studies, and the arts (art,

music, drama, speech) are the most likely classes in which students interact with each other in vulnerable ways—such as class discussions and performative acts—and so create situations more likely to lead to developing relationships. These are also the classes most likely to deal with topics and texts that require emotional intelligence to process and respond to them. In open-ended questions on the survey, the arts and CTE were the only curricular areas mentioned as influential to happiness. One respondent said, "Participating in the arts helped me learn to express myself and built a confidence in my abilities."

Respondents perceived the non-curricular part of their K-12 educational experiences to be more influential to their happiness than the curricular part with just over half of respondents rating extra-curricular activities as a *large influence* and almost half rating relationships with school personnel as a *large influence*. These categories were present in the open-ended questions as well along with K-12 expectations. Relationships with school personnel makes sense as a happiness influencer because it would contribute directly to the relatedness of a person. Extra-curricular activities may be influential because a team is often a place of belonging (relatedness), but extra-curricular activities also often build confidence as students experience success (competence) and students choose to do the activity as a reflection of themselves (autonomy). "Extra-curricular activities" was the most frequently mentioned K-12 experience considered influential on happiness.

Once again, respondents perceived non-school experiences to be more influential on happiness than school experiences with every non-school experience having a mode of 4 (*large influence*). Four categories were rated more highly than any school experience

including family and upbringing, friend group, work experiences, and college experiences. Once again, life experiences and hardship was frequently mentioned in the open-ended question responses as being influential on happiness. One respondent explained, “If you don’t go through the trials and hardships, you can’t fully appreciate what comes after.” Overcoming hardship likely contributes to an individual’s competence. Finding success despite trials would definitely increase one’s confidence. Family, work, and college likely contribute to all three elements of happiness as individuals develop relationships, make choices that reflect who they are, and build skills that allow them to care for themselves.

When asked to identify what they wish they would have learned in school to help them develop skills needed for happiness, many respondents answered “nothing.” There appeared to be a perception among some respondents that it was beyond the scope of school to help individuals find happiness. One comment about life experience influencing happiness seemed to echo this sentiment, “School again, showed the doors, but it was real life experience that allowed [me] to approach the door, open the door, and go through the door.” I find it interesting that the constitution of North Dakota identifies happiness as a core reason for public education, but there may not be buy in or belief from some constituents that schooling can influence happiness.

Other respondents did identify educational areas that might have helped them to develop more happiness. The largest categories included emotional intelligence, CTE, skills for daily living, mental health, and relationships with school personnel. Those who did make comments on what was missing from their education had a lot to say. Here are a few examples, “I would like to have learned more about life skills. We had one required

class, but it didn't cover life goals, relationships, and parenting skills"; "I think if K-12 education placed more focus on building relationships and SEL standards, this would have a greater impact on happiness"; "More of public education needs to emphasi[ze] emotion in a controlled and safe environment"; "Life skills (social and emotional) and a trade of some sort (would have helped me to feel successful and be a contributing member of the community)." A few respondents expressed some real pain and regret regarding what was missing in their school experiences. One said, "[I was s]o focused on homework, work, and tests that I don't think I really [retained] any real life lessons. Just facts and dates." Another respondent expressed that they wished they had been "given strategies to adjust to a mom who committed suicide when I was four and given acceptance by school personnel and classmates." In these comments, there continued to be the thread of a desire for real-life experiences, and additionally, an emphasis on the emotional and social context of school.

In the comments regarding what individuals wished they would have learned in school that might have helped them to be happier, there were two core curricular areas mentioned beyond CTE classes. Two individuals mentioned mathematics, specifically budgeting and finance. One individual mentioned social studies, specifically government and civics. It is important to note that content knowledge is still valuable in happiness especially in the areas of competence and autonomy. This shows up in the desire for specific learning in math and social studies that would better help adults navigate their world and feel more self-sufficient and able to do the things they want to do.

Perceptions of Democratic Engagement

In the area of democratic engagement, individuals responded to statements which sometimes relied on perception, but sometimes were statements of fact. Respondents indicated that almost all of them vote, at least in some capacity (88.9-100%), while almost none of them have run for public office (3.2%), and few of them have attended open government meetings (28.6%). Most respondents perceived themselves to be followers of local and national news (84.1%) and to have a personal responsibility to help others (76.2%). Some respondents felt they had a strong desire for justice (49.4%) and an interest in politics (38.1%). Some also perceived themselves to be people who regularly volunteered in their community (33.3%) while few felt they knew how to make social changes (20.6%) or would consider running for public office in the future (11.1%).

Despite these very disparate levels of democratically engaged behaviors, a majority of people still rated themselves as satisfied with their democratic engagement (82.5%). These numbers tell us a few things. First, individuals felt less confident in the skills and/or knowledge they needed and possessed for being engaged in the democratic process than they did for skills and/or knowledge they possessed to achieve prosperity or happiness. Second, some individuals were satisfied with their very peripheral involvement in the democratic system, suggesting they may not have understood or believed in the importance of their involvement. This relates back to the three priorities Kahne and Westheimer (2003) described for successful citizenship programs—commitment, capacity, and connection. The fact that individuals are satisfied with low-level involvement speaks about a need to teach in the commitment area of our democratic education. The fact that few people felt they knew how to make social changes and even

fewer would even consider running for office perhaps shows room for growth in the capacity element of democratic education.

There were also some interesting demographic trends in this data. Men tended to perceive themselves as much more involved in politics and government than women. Men saw themselves as more interested in politics (70.6% versus 26.7%), more willing to run for public office in the future (29.4% versus 4.4%), more invested in following local and national news (100% versus 80%), and having a stronger desire for justice (82.4% versus 55.6%). This phenomenon is well known and documented globally. There are many potential explanations for these differences including gender roles and norms, and the fact that women statistically have less access to socioeconomic resources (Fraile & Sánchez-Vítores, 2020). The representation of women in state government at the time of this study certainly bears out this gender gap. The 67th Legislative Assembly had just 32 women amongst its 141 members (North Dakota Legislative Branch, 2021). This means that women made up less than a quarter of the membership. There are certainly women in other prominent state positions, such as state superintendent Kirsten Baesler, but the faces we see in North Dakota government are still overwhelmingly male.

Democratic engagement also appeared to be impacted by salary. One salary category, $75,000-$95,000, had the highest percentage of "yes" responses in 7 out of 10 statements regarding democratic engagement. This suggests that more economic resources might provide either additional interest in government or more time and social capital that might allow for greater democratic engagement. Conversely, satisfaction with democratic engagement trended downward as salary increased. So, even though those in the $75,000-$95,000 salary category were arguably the most democratically engaged,

only 75% of them were satisfied with their democratic engagement. Perhaps this reflects an increased sense of commitment among those who do engage in the work of democracy and who have economic resources, a kind of virtuous cycle in which making a difference helps you to see that you could make an even bigger difference. This also might mean that the same skills that are important to democratic engagement also contribute to prosperity or vice versa.

Skills that respondents perceived as important to democratic engagement included critical thinking and problem solving, beliefs and values, and emotional intelligence. The idea that beliefs and values are necessary for democratic engagement again speaks to the idea of commitment. Some of the beliefs and values respondents mentioned included the right to vote, a sense of justice, an ethic of care, and civil rights.

Respondents perceived their K-12 educational experiences to be influential in their development of skills needed for democratic engagement. School experiences with a mode of 3 (*small influence*) included ELA, science, the arts, and extra-curricular activities. School experiences with a mode of 4 (*large influence*) included social studies and relationships with school personnel. In fact, democratic engagement is the only area in which respondents identified a curricular area more frequently in the open-ended responses than any non-school experience. Social studies instruction was identified 13 times as an influential experience to democratic engagement with 7 of those instances specifically mentioning government. Several individuals mentioned experiential learning as being influential to their democratic engagement. Experiences mentioned included North Dakota Boys State, holding office in school organizations, student congress team, student council, projects in classes, and a trip to the state legislature during high school.

These experiential learning opportunities are what build capacity according to Kahne and Westheimer (2003), so it is no surprise that graduates would specifically identify this kind of learning as influential. This also fits in with the larger theme of real-world and authentic learning that continued to arise from the data and which, as discussed in Chapter II, aligns with Dewey's (1938) belief that experience is education and that education is necessary to democracy.

Other curricular areas one or more respondents mentioned as being influential included ELA, the arts, and math. Listening and research skills were specifically mentioned for ELA as being influential. One individual identified both the arts and math as important to their democratic engagement saying, "My mathematical background has helped me to think critically about situations. My theatre background has helped me feel comfortable to speak in front of others." Non-curricular K-12 experiences identified included leadership experiences, K-12 expectations, extra-curricular activities, and relationships with school personnel.

As before, non-school experiences were perceived to be influential on democratic engagement as well. However, only family and upbringing was rated more highly than social studies instruction. Other non-school experiences rated highly were college experiences and religion and church. The fact that religion and church is perceived to be a large influence speaks again to the impact of beliefs and values on democratic engagement.

Even though social studies instruction was the strongest influence on democratic engagement, the most frequently perceived gap in education for democratic engagement was also social studies instruction, specifically government/civics instruction. Some

comments explaining what was missing included: “I wish there would have been more hands on activities and mock situations that allowed for practice in civic engagement”; “It would have been helpful to have learned more of the importance of the democratic process and have practice with the steps that are necessary to be more engaged with public service”; “A broader understanding of how laws (from local to nation-wide) are made and how people who want to make laws can potentially take different professional tracks”; and “I think our government class could have been more interactive to allow the information to stick with us.”

Other perceived gaps in educational experiences when discussing democratic engagement included opportunities for community involvement and volunteering. This aligns with Kahne and Westheimer’s (2003) element of community. Some respondents expressed a need for more critical thinking and problem-solving, exposure to diverse ideas, and communication, specifically civil discourse. One respondent commented:

> I do wish there were a few more facilitated conversations . . . because “political talk” was often discouraged because it was chaotic and really just fighting[.] I think letting younger aged children express their views in a neutral environment or at least have conversations about political policies may help people realize what they truly believe and maybe question why they have certain opinions[.]

The idea that civil discourse is important to democratic engagement was also supported by the literature. Open political discussion was one of the variables identified by Hoskins et al. (2012) as influential in learning skills needed for democratic engagement.

Two additional curricular areas were mentioned in comments regarding perceived educational gaps in learning skills needed for democratic engagement, CTE and the arts.

Specifically, two respondents felt that better speech and debate skills were needed and should be taught while another individual thought that more education on fields that might lead to a political career should be provided. One respondent also mentioned K-12 expectations as something that needed to be improved to increase democratic engagement, saying that school systems should better enforce the rules of appropriate behavior. As with happiness, there were some respondents who felt that nothing more could have been done in school to increase democratic engagement, suggesting either that they were completely satisfied with their education or that they did not believe democratic engagement to be within the purview of public schooling.

Curricular and Graduation Requirements and the Purpose of Education

At the time of this study, North Dakota law outlined two different types of requirements for public schools—input requirements and output requirements. Input requirements referred to curriculum, to types of courses schools were required to provide student access to in Grades K-12. Output requirements took the form of graduation requirements and assessments. Research Question 2 asked how curricular and graduation requirements outlined in NDCC 15.1-21 fulfilled the purposes of education described in North Dakota's constitution. Within this question were two sub-questions. First, was the curriculum schools have been required to offer to students the right curriculum to lead students to become prosperous, happy, and democratically engaged citizens? Second, have graduation requirements been measuring sufficiently the elements needed to ensure students graduating from North Dakota high schools have been properly prepared to be prosperous, happy, and democratically engaged citizens?

Curricular Requirements

At the time of this study, required curricular offerings for K-12 education fell into general core areas of ELA, math, science, social studies, physical education and health, fine arts, foreign and Native languages, and CTE. Each curricular area fulfills the purposes of education in North Dakota to a greater or lesser extent.

ELA has different requirements at different grade levels. As discussed in Chapter II, at the time of this report, there were specific reading elements newly required in Grades K-3 including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. More generally, in Grades K-8, required elements of ELA included reading, composition, creative writing, English grammar, and spelling. In high school, required elements of ELA included literature, composition, and speech.

In thinking about ELA as a tool to climb Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, one could argue that reading is a foundational skill necessary to safety. One needs to be able to read and comprehend in order to follow important safety guidelines, protect oneself from being taken advantage of, and understand and navigate one's environment generally. Reading is also important at higher levels such as self-actualization. Reading provides access to a wealth of knowledge and recreation which contributes to a sense of self and the ability to pursue one's own interests. Composition, or writing, could also be said to be a foundational skill necessary to all levels of need. Writing to fill out forms, make inquiries, apply for jobs, and respond to business partners might fulfill needs from the bottom tiers of Maslow's hierarchy, while writing to express emotions, record one's thoughts, and express ideas might meet needs from higher tiers. Writing is needed to provide for physiological and safety needs, to express love and connectedness, to feel

confident in one's abilities, and to express one's truest self. Writing is also needed at the level of transcendence to organize and advocate for changes that impact the whole of society.

Beyond this foundational level, however, ELA is also needed for specific elements of prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement. In prosperity, one of the identified skills for 21st century success is communication. Communication might be written or verbal, in-person or digital, private or public. Communication is much wider than just composition. The speech element at the high school level might partially address the need for teaching communication skills, but speech is often performative and may not provide practice with other types of collaborative communication. In fact, communication was identified by respondents as an important skill for prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement. Communication was also identified as something individuals wished they would have learned in school as a skill needed in all three areas (prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement). In open response questions, respondents identified writing, speaking, listening, and research skills as some specific ways in which ELA was influential in meeting the purposes of education. In happiness, emotional intelligence was identified as an essential skill. I hypothesized that respondents may find ELA influential in happiness because of literature and class discussion that might deal with topics that require emotional intelligence to navigate. Emotional intelligence was also identified as being important to democratic engagement.

Overall, ELA, in its current form (at the time of this study), was identified as being a large influence on prosperity and a small influence on happiness and democratic engagement. The fact that ELA has been influential in all three purposes of education

suggests that North Dakota is right to require ELA at all grade levels (K-12). However, greater emphasis on certain elements of ELA such as speaking, listening, and research may be needed in addition to the foundational skills of reading and writing.

Math is offered in all grades, K-12. In Grades K-8, there are no specifications on what kind of math must be offered to students, but there are grade level standards which guide mathematics instruction at these levels. At the high school level, schools are required to offer at least four different math classes which must include Algebra II and a math class for which Algebra II is a prerequisite like trigonometry or calculus. Just as with reading and writing, one can argue that basic math is a foundational life skill necessary for meeting both physiological and safety needs. One needs to have number sense and be able to add, subtract, multiply, and divide to make sense of finances, understand the value of an earned wage, make purchases, etc.

Overall, math was perceived to be a small influence on prosperity and not influential on happiness or democratic engagement. It makes sense that math would be influential on prosperity as certain math courses are needed to get into college programs, and many careers require math specific to the industry. An architect might need expertise in geometry, while an analyst might need greater expertise in statistics. Math was only mentioned once in open responses as an important influence. That individual specifically referenced critical thinking as the skill gained through math courses. Despite not being rated highly as influential, math was a skill identified that respondents wished they had learned more of in school, specifically personal finance and budgeting. Personal finance is mandated to be offered in public high schools by the North Dakota Century Code, but it is often placed as just one unit inside an economics or problems of democracy course.

Critical thinking and problem solving were skills identified as important overall in fulfilling the purposes of education and these are skills that certainly should be a part of math instruction, but this data might suggest that not everyone is getting these skills from their math classes.

These findings support what other studies have found—certain elements of mathematics instruction are much more impactful than others for success in college and in the workforce. Steven Levitt assembled a group of experts to do a podcast on this subject (Levitt, 2019) and found that, according to David Coleman of the College Board, the most influential math topics for achieving post-secondary success include: the four basic operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division; fractions; data analysis and problem-solving; and algebra, specifically linear equations. So, like ELA, mathematics is important to at least one educational purpose, but greater emphasis may need to be placed on certain parts of mathematics.

Science instruction has not been specified at the elementary and middle school level other than to state that it must include agriculture, but at the high school level schools must offer at least 3 credits worth of science including biology and physics. Science might be important to prosperity depending on one's career field. Those who wish to be entrepreneurs will need a solid foundation in the science of the field in which they wish to innovate. Science was also listed on Marx's list of 20 educational targets for the 21st century, so there are many arguments for including science in the curriculum for the purpose of prosperity.

Science was identified as being a small influence on democratic engagement and not influential, overall, on prosperity or happiness. Knowledge of science was mentioned

once by a respondent as a skill important to prosperity and one respondent felt that a "better science education" would have helped them to become more prosperous. No specific areas of science were mentioned other than medicine which would be a subset of biology. Within science classes, transferrable skills might be developed that were identified as important overall including critical thinking and problem solving, communication, flexibility and creativity, and executive functioning. However, the data suggested respondents did not see a connection between science classes and those important transferrable skills. Additionally, science instruction should be providing important background knowledge which contributes to the reading comprehension of students, a skill previously identified as a foundational skill. So, science education, as it is being experienced, is not fulfilling the purposes of education as well as it could be.

At the time of this study, social studies was the subject with the most specific requirements at both primary and secondary levels of education. In Grades K-8, required social studies topics at the time of this study included the United States constitution, United States history, geography, government, and North Dakota studies including Indian tribes and agriculture. At the high school level, required social studies offerings included world history, United States history including Native American tribal history, problems of democracy, or United States government and economics. As discussed earlier, either problems of democracy or economics had to include education in personal finance.

Overall, social studies instruction was identified as a large influence on developing skills and/or knowledge to assist in democratic engagement and a small influence on developing skills and/or knowledge needed for prosperity. It makes sense that social studies would be a large influence on skills needed for democratic engagement

as it requires knowledge about government and democratic processes to be democratically engaged. It also makes sense that social studies might influence prosperity given that social studies instruction provides background knowledge which aids in the foundational skill of reading comprehension. However, social studies was also identified as an area of need for education, specifically the topics of civics and government. So, social studies, as it was presented at the time of this study, was influential in achieving democratic engagement and prosperity, but it could be more so if additional focus was placed on topics of government and civics. As mentioned earlier, respondents specifically wrote about wanting more hands-on opportunities to practice the skills of democratic engagement and wanting more interaction with governmental and community entities.

At the time of this study, physical education and health were required offerings at both the primary and secondary levels. At the K-8 level, health education was required to include physiology, hygiene, disease control, and the nature and effects of alcohol, tobacco, and narcotics (North Dakota Century Code, 2021). At the secondary level, physical education was required to include at least one class on personal fitness, and a health class was required to include sexual health and the benefits of abstinence. Logically, physical education and health are related to the bottom tier of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs—physiological needs—so one would assume that these classes would be influential at a foundational level. While this is likely true, they are not directly related to prosperity, happiness, or democratic engagement and so did not arise as influential classes in any of these three areas. However, because good physical health is a prerequisite for many kinds of work and certainly makes happiness and democratic engagement easier, these classes still contribute to the fulfillment of the purposes of

education in a peripheral way. One subcategory of health that surfaced as an area of need was mental health. This might be an additional health component that would contribute more directly to the purpose of happiness.

At the high school level, at the time of this study, at least two fine arts classes were required to be offered, including music. Fine arts might contribute to the development of creativity, an attribute identified as important to entrepreneurship and prosperity in Chapter II. Fine arts might also help to develop autonomy, a sense of self and doing activities that reflect that sense of self which would contribute to happiness. Other skills identified as important overall that might be developed in the fine arts included emotional intelligence and self-awareness.

Overall, fine arts were rated as a *small influence* on developing skills and/or knowledge for prosperity and happiness. Speech and debate and theater were specifically mentioned as arts classes that were influential to respondents in developing needed skills. Respondents mentioned wanting more art, music, and debate skills taught in school in order to better develop skills needed for prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement. At the time of this report, speech was a required offering within the umbrella of ELA, but theater, debate, and visual arts were not required offerings for primary or secondary schools.

Foreign and Native languages might contribute to prosperity depending on one's field and who you need to communicate with. Learning new languages also can contribute to communication skills, a skill identified as important to achieving all three purposes of education. Gary Marx (2014) expressed the opinion that languages will become more important in a more globalized society and global/international knowledge

and skills is one of 20 educational targets he listed for the 21st century. While some individuals found their foreign and native languages classes to be valuable, overall, this was the least likely curricular area to be rated as influential. When looking at averages, it does not rise to the level of even a *small influence* for any of the three purposes of education. However, a few respondents felt that learning a foreign or second language would have helped them to become happier and more prosperous.

At the time of this study, CTE (career and technical education) was required at the high school level. CTE should have a direct influence on prosperity as developing skills needed for a career is important in being successful in a career field and earning money. It is not surprising, then, that CTE was, overall, a *small influence* in the area of prosperity. Interestingly, CTE featured prominently in open-ended responses about what graduates wished they would have learned during their K-12 education. Many respondents expressed the desire to learn a trade during high school, to job shadow, to meet people working in various fields, and to get real work experience. CTE was mentioned as something that would have helped individuals develop the skills they needed for each purpose of education, but it was mentioned more frequently for prosperity and happiness. This data suggests that individuals feel CTE could be more influential if the right classes or programs were offered.

Overall, curriculum requirements at the time of this study all contributed in some way to the fulfillment of the purposes of education. However, in some curricular areas, a different focus or more specific requirements might lead to better fulfillment of the purposes of education.

Graduation Requirements

As stated previously, graduation requirements are output requirements. School systems are supposed to produce graduates; this is one of the measures reported on schools' dashboards on North Dakota's Insights website (Information Technology Department, 2021). The reason it is important for schools to produce graduates is that graduating from high school should represent that a student has mastered the things they need to know and do in order to be prosperous, happy, democratically engaged adults. Graduation requirements, then, are measures of success for our educational systems. The question is, do the graduation requirements described in North Dakota's Century Code measure the elements needed to ensure students graduating from North Dakota high schools have been prepared properly to be prosperous, happy, and democratically engaged citizens?

Elements measured as part of graduation requirements include sufficient performance on a citizenship test and the passing of 22 classes. The citizenship test is a naturalization test given by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. It consists of 100 short-answer questions. The majority of these questions require rote memorization of facts about the United States and its government and history. While some of these questions require knowledge of how the government works and might help an individual see their role in government, most questions do not require real understanding at all but rather recitation of facts. Questions include asking for the number of voting members of the house, the names of several important government positions—president, vice president, speaker of the house, etc., the name of the highest court, and the name of a political party (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2019). All of these

facts might be good background knowledge for reading an article about the government, but none would provide an individual with a sense of what his role is, nor how he should be engaging in democratic processes. The citizenship test could be a measure of democratic engagement, but in its current form (at the time of this study), it measures memorized facts about the United States.

Passing 22 classes measures a couple of different elements. First, it measures the attendance of a student; the student was present for enough of the 120-150 instructional hours to be considered as having completed a course. Second, it measures the performance on homework and classroom assessments regarding course material. The quality of a student's homework and classroom assessments may vary, the grading practices of instructors may vary, and the grading scales of schools may vary. In one school, you may need only a 60% to pass; in another school that passing grade may be as high as 70%. In one class, you may get points for turning in your homework on time—an executive functioning skill, but not reflective of content mastery, while in another class you may only get points from multiple choice tests. Therefore, it is difficult to say that passing grades accurately measure whether a student has mastered course content, only that they were physically present for most of the instruction and completed some portion of the work associated with a course. Even if classroom assessments were accurate measures of course content knowledge, mastery of the courses required for graduation would not mean a student is ready to be a prosperous, happy, and democratically engaged citizen because mastery of transferrable skills identified as important to North Dakota's educational purposes would not be reflected in those passing grades.

To answer the question bluntly: no, North Dakota's graduation requirements do not measure all elements needed to ensure students graduating from North Dakota high schools are prepared to be prosperous, happy, and democratically engaged citizens. Additionally, elements that are measured are not measured in reliable or consistent ways. So, while North Dakota's input requirements are on the right track, state educational output requirements could use some significant improvements.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was the narrow sample population who responded to my survey. As detailed in Chapter III, I had hoped to have a broad sample of persons who had graduated from North Dakota high schools living in the Dickinson, North Dakota, area. The sample I got was almost entirely limited to employees of the Dickinson Public School district due to several factors, which were also discussed in Chapter III. The sample may have inherent biases because most respondents were working in the field of education. Individuals who choose to work for a school district are likely to believe education is important and impactful. Therefore, I believe it is likely some individuals might have perceived skills taught in the curriculum and K-12 educational experiences, in general, as more important to adult life than an average person might. On the other hand, those closely associated with a system are more aware of its flaws. So, it is also possible some individuals may have responded more negatively regarding K-12 educational experiences than someone on the outside of the educational system looking in. I believe these two potential biases may have created some balance within responses, but it is important to acknowledge that this population may be more positive toward K-12 experiences than the general population might be.

Discussion

Required Curriculum

Research results indicated the arts have been influential in gaining skills and/or knowledge needed to achieve both prosperity and happiness and that CTE has been influential in gaining skills and/or knowledge needed to achieve prosperity. Individuals specifically mentioned the arts, CTE, skills for daily living, and social-emotional skills as areas they needed more education in to become more prosperous, happy, and democratically engaged. Because knowledge builds upon knowledge, these topics should likely be introduced in earlier grades. For younger children, CTE may be embedded in social studies as children learn about roles of community members and their jobs. Similarly, skills for daily living in earlier grades might be as simple as tying shoes. However, research results clearly pointed to a need for greater breadth in educational content. This was supported by the literature, most particularly Gary Marx's list of 20 learning targets, and the work of the Core Knowledge Foundation (Marx, 2014; Core Knowledge Foundation, 2013).

Several educational organizations have included the arts, skills for daily living, and social-emotional skills in their curricular outlines for K-8 education. For example, the North American Montessori Center has included the following topics in its lower elementary curriculum: cosmic education and peace (social emotional learning), language arts, mathematics, practical life (skills for daily living), botany, matter and astronomy, history, geography, zoology, health sciences, and art and music (North American Montessori Center, n.d.). Note the multitude of specific science and social studies topics. Maybe, at this level, even just having more content areas would be considered CTE as it

exposes students to future careers in various disciplines. Similarly, the Core Knowledge Foundation has included music and visual arts in their core curriculum at each grade level in addition to language arts, history, geography, mathematics, and science (Core Knowledge Foundation, 2013). Finland, a world-leader in education, has included the following topics in its national curriculum for the first nine years of education (equivalent to North Dakota's K-8 grade levels): mother tongue and literature, second national language, foreign languages, mathematics, environmental studies, religion, ethics, music, visual arts, crafts, physical education, guidance counseling (social emotional skills and career advising), history, social studies, biology, geography, physics, chemistry, home economics (CTE or skills for daily living), and health (National Center on Education and the Economy, n.d.). Despite a broader curriculum, Finland still outperformed the United States in both reading and in math in the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA; Schleicher, 2019).

Just listing additional curricular areas in the North Dakota Century Code is unlikely to have a great impact on what gets taught in the classroom. In my experience, the majority of time in elementary classrooms is spent on reading and math because that is what gets tested each year. When I taught fourth grade, there were only 20-40 minutes per school day to cover all science and social studies content. If there was an assembly, testing, or other disruption, science and social studies were the most likely content areas to be cut. At the time of this study, science and social studies were listed in the century code as required curriculum, but they were not being given equal time or attention when compared with literacy and math. Even at the middle school where I worked during this

project, there was a sense that subject areas such as social studies and science were less important because they have not been tested as frequently (or at all) as ELA or math.

One solution to this problem would be for the state to identify both topics and skills in each content area and grade level considered essential for achieving the purposes of education (prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement). While there are already skills-based state standards created for each required content area and many optional content areas, these standards do little to provide a clear roadmap of learning because there are too many of them to reasonably teach in a school year (Marzano et al., 2018; North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, n.d.a). Additionally, not all state standards identify important topics that should accompany a skill. One might find this feature in social studies standards, but find it absent in literacy standards (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 2017; North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 2019). Listing essential topics in addition to essential skills is important because, as discussed in Chapter II, background knowledge is key in reading comprehension and this background knowledge comes from being exposed to a wide array of information on relevant cultural topics (Liu, 2015; Core Knowledge Foundation, 2017; O'Reilly et al., 2019). Additionally, selected topics reflect core beliefs and values, a theme which surfaced repeatedly in the research as important to prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement.

For some students, background knowledge is easily developed in an enriched home environment, but for other students, school will be their only exposure to a wealth of interesting information about the world. Marzano addressed background knowledge by recommending teacher teams create a set of guaranteed vocabulary for each grade level

with a target number of 20-30 terms (Marzano et al., 2018). Hirsch has also been an advocate for developing background knowledge, not just skills, at school. However, like Marzano, he believed required topics or knowledge to be taught should be limited so there is still local control and flexibility. He said:

> The *Sequence* is not meant to outline the whole of the school curriculum; rather it offers specific guidelines to knowledge that can reasonably be expected to make up about *half* of any school's curriculum, thus leaving ample room for local requirements and emphases. (Hirsch, 1993, p. xviii)

Knowing that local control is an important value to North Dakotans, it would be wise for the state to make a very limited set of essential topics and content skills that still leaves a lot of room for personalization. However, at least by listing essential topics, North Dakota could be sure some level of background knowledge and skills in each of the required curricular areas was being provided to its students.

In addition to certain content knowledge and skills, the importance of transferrable skills was brought to light in this research. Transferrable skills are key to all three purposes of education, but as discussed in Chapter II, they are difficult to teach or assess on their own without the context of a content area. It would be like teaching and assessing the transferrable skill of measuring flour without the context of baking cookies or a cake. Therefore, either at the state or district level, transferrable skills should be sorted and embedded within content skills so that they are taught and assessed along with content.

Based on research results, specific content and skills which North Dakota should consider including on their list of essentials are: civics and government, specifically how

local and state governments operate; financial literacy and budgeting; and communication skills including listening, speaking, writing, and using digital media. North Dakota might also wish to review specific learning that is already written into the century code to determine if it is still relevant statewide. For example, one required area in both social studies and science is agriculture, but according to the North Dakota Job Service, farming jobs are declining (North Dakota Job Service, n.d.b).

Experiential and Personalized Learning

One strong theme that arose in the research was the desire for more hands-on experiences in education. These kinds of experiences take time and resources, so it is understandable they have not been happening more often in K-12 settings. However, if topics, content skills, and transferrable skills are carefully prioritized, this should make more room for experiential learning. If more time is spent on content knowledge, that more easily lends itself to experiential learning than practice of a discreet skill. Additionally, if literacy and math skills are embedded as transferrable skills in other content, this also creates additional time within a school day.

One suggestion is to alternate Marx's (2014) ideas of "sampling" and "post-holing" to create the breadth of education respondents expressed a need for, while still providing depth of experiential learning in an area of interest. The sampling part of a unit would be moving through essential topics and skills, followed by a post-hole section of a unit which allows a deeper dive into a certain concept and assessment of transferrable skills. If students have some voice or choice on what they do a deep dive on, this also provides for some level of personalization, another desire that arose from survey responses. For example, let's say there is a science and social studies combined unit on

physical geography and erosion. During this unit, sampling of a few different landforms and how they are formed occurs. Because we have combined these two topics and content skills into one unit, we have saved time which allows us to go on field trip to the Badlands to investigate the physical geography and patterns of erosion in that area. While there, students write and ask questions to gather relevant data and come to conclusions about how this area might have been formed (critical thinking). Upon returning from the trip, students can model their hypotheses (creating models, a science skill) using media of their choice and then engage in a class discussion comparing and contrasting various student hypotheses (speaking and listening; critical thinking).

Another way to create time and space for experiential learning is to move to competency-based education. In a regular classroom situation, the whole class must move at the pace of the slowest learner in each subject. So, one student might be struggling to keep up during math but is finished ahead of his peers during literacy. In this scenario, there is wasted time for almost all students at some point of the day. In a competency-based system, the teacher is engaged primarily in small-group and individualized instruction with other students having access to materials that allow them to continue their learning journey without a teacher's immediate help or intervention (Marzano et al., 2018). When a teacher notices a student needs instruction to move on to the next concept, she provides it with a quick interaction or by pulling a small group of students together who are also ready for that next concept. If experiential learning opportunities can be set up to be accessed independently, then students can have these experiences while their teacher is engaged with another student or group of students.

For a competency-based system to work, there must be a clear curriculum of content knowledge, content skills, and transferrable skills organized in a linear way with attached resources for students to investigate and experience. I have witnessed such a system myself when I worked at a Montessori school. Students worked independently and in small groups with several interactions with a teacher throughout the day. Students had some required content areas they had to work on each day, and some that were self-selected. Teachers maintained a mastery checklist which was shared with and reviewed with the child as they made progress in various content areas. Occasionally, there would be a whole-group lesson, but most instruction happened in small group settings.

Assessment and Graduation Requirements

Since graduation requirements at the time of this report did not effectively assess the skills needed for prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement, opening the door for a mastery framework to replace graduation requirements is a good first step. However, the state will need to determine what competencies are required and which are optional for this new system to work. Required competencies should probably be those that directly impact prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement such as speaking, listening, writing, using digital media, collaborating, executive functioning, creativity, emotional intelligence, critical thinking and problem solving, and leadership. However, there are also minimal competencies in content areas that serve as a foundation that should be considered essential. This might include reading and comprehending texts at a Lexile level determined by the state—not necessarily a 12th grade reading level—but one that will serve an individual well when reading in daily life. Math is another area in which, instead of requiring a certain number of courses, competency in certain basic

mathematical skills might be a more important measure. As mentioned previously, important math areas include financial literacy, basic operations (adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing), fractions, linear equations, and data analysis. For social studies, the ability to articulate how governments operate, how an individual can make changes using governmental systems, and why it is important to participate in government as an engaged citizen might be key. The North Dakota Learning Continuum has a good start on identifying essential competencies, but at the time of this study, all competencies were written as transferrable skills and there may need to be more specificity for some content areas.

Additionally, competencies will need to be developed for optional content areas. I assume that, like graduation requirements at the time of this study, there will be required competencies and a certain number of additional competencies required that students can select. This is the tack Finland has taken with their secondary students. Their graduation requirements include compulsory courses (minimum requirements), specialization courses (advanced courses in selected areas), and applied courses (CTE courses; National Center on Education and the Economy, n.d.). This is also the way that a mastery transcript is set up, with school districts able to input their course offerings aligned to content and transferrable competencies and then sort them into categories of "required" and "advanced" (Mastery Transcript Consortium, n.d.a).

Offering and requiring advanced or specialized courses is important both for those seeking post-secondary education and for those seeking to be entrepreneurs or innovators in given field. However, offering a variety of advanced courses in CTE or other areas may be difficult for smaller school districts. The need for additional CTE offerings was

clear from survey responses. Districts may wish to build upon existing CTE consortiums to specialize and offer different advanced courses and competencies which other students can access via distance learning or open enrollment.

If competence in both content and transferrable skills is what is needed to be prosperous, happy, and democratically engaged, then other measures at the state level should reflect these priorities. For example, the ACT may not be a good reflection of the kind of learning we desire for students. Other measures such as those discussed by Zhao should be considered, and perhaps on a rotating basis, so we are not overly testing any one group of students (Zhao, 2016). For younger students, the NDSA (North Dakota State Assessment) could be a better measure of desired skills if reading passages were about required content topics and answering questions about the passages required the use of some transferrable skills. This would show student ability to read relevant texts rather than testing pure reading comprehension on an unfamiliar subject. This would test both content knowledge and reading skills in a more meaningful way and would encourage schools to spend time on content knowledge instead of just isolated reading skills. Engagement is already included on the Insights dashboard, but other measures such as belonging, or HRS (high reliability schools) certifications might speak to how our schools are trying to create good environments for learning transferrable skills.

Another measure that districts report out on their North Dakota Insights dashboard is graduation rate. Currently, students who graduate late are counted against districts in their graduation rate. This reflects a value of students completing seat time in certain courses on a rigid schedule. Moving forward, if students reach mastery and graduate before age 22, they should be counted as successes even if it took them longer to

demonstrate those competencies. This would better reflect the value of skill acquisition. Having such a policy would speak to the need noted by Brodersen et al. for policy that allowed more flexibility in student progression (Brodersen et al., 2017). Flexibility could be given in the other direction as well, allowing students to graduate much earlier from high school if they can demonstrate mastery of required competencies and an acceptable number of advanced competencies even without completing all of the coursework. At the time of this study, a student was typically only allowed to graduate one semester or, at most, one year early.

Beyond the Classroom

Two of the elements of K-12 education considered most influential in learning essential skills and knowledge were extra-curricular activities and relationships with school personnel. This means that, beyond adjusting curriculum and graduation requirements, there are other elements of a school experience that could be tweaked to enhance prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement.

Extra-curricular activities were a large influence on both prosperity and happiness, but at the time of this research, they were not accessible to all students, and they frequently competed with academic demands of schools. Because they have been so influential, it makes sense that one way to enhance prosperity and happiness would be to have more students participate in extra-curricular activities. This might be accomplished in a few different ways. First, activities could be offered at more grade levels. Right now, elementary students have less access to extracurricular opportunities than older students. However, these kinds of activities typically do exist in a community, usually in the form of programs run through a parks department. Schools might partner with a parks

department to offer programs in school buildings after school. Many students are already participating in after-school programs; this would just provide an additional benefit to that after-school time. Schools might also partner with a parks department to offer transportation to games and other events on weekends.

Another way to increase participation in extra-curricular activities is to remove the financial barrier for families. North Dakota's state government might consider providing funds to alleviate costs for families who cannot afford them. At the local level, districts might consider using a sliding scale based on family income to determine how much a student must pay to participate in an activity so that those who can afford it pay more in order to allow some who can't afford it to participate for free.

One problem with extra-curricular activities is they compete with academic classes and coursework for students' and teachers' time. This might be dealt with in a few ways. First, extra-curricular experiences could be counted towards mastery of certain competencies that one might otherwise get in school. If an activity is a sport, perhaps it takes the place of PE class and students learn needed competencies during the season that sport is active. If an activity is speech and debate, perhaps that takes the place of a literacy or fine arts class during the speech and debate season. In effect, an activity becomes a ninth hour class in which a student is given credit for what they are learning during that time. Now, a student has the opportunity to take a study hall if he or she needs more time to work on schoolwork, or it frees up a spot for an additional class, so he or she can accelerate their learning if they are keeping pace with their coursework easily.

A second way to reduce competition between extra-curricular activities and academics would be to revisit the way scheduling is handled at the state level. Because

schools have to travel long distances to compete against other schools, a single away game can eat up an entire school day for a student athlete. If games were consolidated, with many teams coming to a single location to compete, perhaps events could be held primarily on Fridays and Saturdays or Saturdays and Mondays. A predictable and consolidated schedule would reduce the amount of class time missed by both students and teachers involved in extracurricular activities and provide an opportunity for reteaching, enrichment, or short cross-curricular projects with those students remaining behind.

Removing academic eligibility requirements would be a third way to reduce competition between academics and extra-curriculars. If extra-curriculars are sometimes more influential than classes, then why should a student be denied the opportunity to participate in something that is helpful to them? Instead, eligibility could be based on pro-social behavior and engagement. One final thought, a fourth idea, would be to provide access to Wi-Fi and a device on buses so that students could continue to work on academics while they travel.

The idea that relationships between staff and students matter is not new. It was not surprising that relationships were influential in happiness, as one of the components of happiness is relatedness. In the literature review, I discussed the idea that one element of relatedness is belonging, something an individual may have very little control over. I suggested that schools would have to provide the right environment for students to experience belonging. Similarly, the *World Happiness Report* found that countries who focus on happiness end up prioritizing four things: ending poverty, environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and good governance (Sachs, 2012). Schools can control

some elements of the environment, but they require the help of government to address others.

Schools can create safety for students by having good disciplinary procedures and a culture that does not tolerate verbal or physical abuse. Schools can prioritize relationships with students in teacher assessment. An element for relating to students can be found in all three state-approved teacher evaluation frameworks (Marshall, 2011; Marzano, 2017; The Danielson Group, n.d.). Schools can offer a variety of activities to engage students in an inclusive and welcoming environment. The strategies for increasing participation in extra-curricular activities would apply here as well. Schools can provide good governance within a school by having students participate in decision making, restorative justice practices, and student council. Schools can mitigate effects of poverty through backpack programs, free meals, and sliding scales for participation in activities, purchase of yearbooks, etc. However, it is the state government that can have a bigger impact on eliminating poverty and in providing good governance that includes caring for the physical and mental health of families. Environmental sustainability both in a larger sense, and within a school building is also impacted by government policy and funding. Additionally, the state is in charge of the continuous improvement process for school systems, so government can help by prioritizing the creation of appropriate school environments as part of that process.

I mentioned student council as part of a good governance and an inclusive school environment. Participation in student council was one of the elements found to have a positive effect on student understanding of democratic institutions (Hoskins et al., 2012). However, survey results showed women were more politically disengaged than men. This

suggests efforts to include girls and other marginalized student groups in student government should be made. A group called Democracy in Practice has suggested using a lottery system with short term limits to increase participation in student government by a wider sector of the student population (Democracy in Practice, n.d.).

Recommendations

My research results have several implications. In this section, recommendations for educational policy, educational practice, and future research will be explored.

Educational Policy

At the time of this study, educational policy in North Dakota mandated certain inputs and outputs for accredited public and private schools in the state. Both input and output regulations could be improved upon to increase the efficacy of our educational systems in producing prosperous, happy, democratically engaged citizens.

Inputs – Curriculum and School Environment

Recommendations:

1. Include the arts, CTE/skills for daily living, and social-emotional skills as required curricular areas at the K-8 level.
2. Include social-emotional skills and mental health as required curricular areas at all grade levels.
3. Provide specific topics, prioritized content skills, and embedded transferrable skills in each content area and grade level.
4. Review specified topics in the century code to see if any are out-of-date or should be adjusted for other reasons. Consider new emphasis on government and civics, budgeting and finance, and communication and research skills.

5. Support equitable access to extra-curricular activities at all grade levels through funding. Allow skills gained in extra-curricular settings to be used as evidence of competency mastery.
6. Support schools in creating the right conditions for learning by providing feedback and guidance through the Cognia continuous improvement system (Elgart, 2017) and by engaging other state departments in reducing poverty and providing appropriate social services.

Outputs – Graduation Requirements and Assessment

1. Assess both transferrable skills and disciplinary or content skills as part of graduation requirements. Some competencies should be mandated, while others should be chosen from a menu of advanced competencies. Consider using a mastery transcript as several high schools in the state are members of the Mastery Transcript Consortium.
2. Support development of additional competencies for specialized classes and areas including foreign and Native languages, the arts, and CTE.
3. Allow for flexibility in student progression. Allow students to graduate early if they have mastered appropriate competencies. Allow other students more time to complete their education without penalizing the school district.
4. Use a variety of assessment measures on the Insights dashboard. Assessment measures should reflect both content knowledge and transferrable skills. Consider placing NDSA reading and math questions in the context of required content. Consider using other standardized measures in addition to

or instead of the ACT at the high school level. Consider rotating which assessments are used so that no one grade level is overly tested.

Educational Practice

School districts and educational practitioners can make changes and take actions to support development of skills that will lead to greater prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement. Here are some suggestions:

1. Utilize content areas to practice and assess transferrable skills including foundational reading and math skills. Consider what content knowledge is important at a local level. Prioritize content knowledge and skills and embed transferrable skills within content. Strive to balance the amount of time spent on various content areas.
2. Alternate sampling and post-holing techniques so students get both breadth and depth of knowledge from their studies. Allow students more choice in what they study as they get older.
3. Increase experiential learning opportunities.
4. Increase access to extra-curricular activities and reduce competition between extra-curricular and academic demands by adjusting schedules, counting learning done during extra-curricular time, adjusting eligibility requirements, and providing devices and Wi-Fi access to students on buses so they can do homework during travel to activities out of town.
5. Consider leveraging existing CTE consortiums to specialize in high school courses and competencies in order to offer greater variety to all students.

6. Use strategies such as a lottery system to increase participation in student government, especially by girls and other marginalized groups.

Future Research

Although my research answered many questions, more research in specific areas would add validity and weight to these research results and help North Dakota continue to monitor the effectiveness of educational practices in fulfilling the purposes of education.

1. Repeat this research by using a similar survey in different occupational and geographic populations to see if results would be consistent with this study or if there would be differences in needs and perceptions regarding K-12 educational experiences and adult life.
2. Continue post-secondary research in this area periodically to monitor the effects of changes made to our educational system on prosperity, happiness, and democratic engagement.
3. Create more in-depth studies for each of the three purposes of education to gather additional details. Specifically, more information about how more general or background content knowledge impacts these purposes of education would be helpful. Right now, the idea that content knowledge not ranked as influential is still peripherally important is based on logic and literature review. Follow-up interviews might be helpful to see the relationship more clearly.
4. The power of extra-curricular activities was somewhat surprising to me. Research regarding the salient features of extra-curricular activities that

make them impactful and how those same features might be used in a classroom setting could provide insights on increasing student engagement and motivation.

APPENDICES

Appendix A
University of North Dakota Educational Leadership Doctoral Cohort #8
Biographies

BAKKE, MATT: Matt grew up, and at the time of this study resided in Grand Forks, North Dakota. After graduating from Grand Forks Central in 2006, Matt attended the University of North Dakota (UND). While at UND, he was a member of the football team and was involved in student government being elected student body vice president in 2009 and elected student body president in 2010. He graduated with a double major in secondary and middle level education in 2011. After graduating, Matt took a teaching position at Valley Middle School as part of a resident teacher program, teaching seventh grade math while also pursuing a master's degree in education. Matt earned his master's degree in education from UND in 2013 and at the time of this study was pursuing his doctoral degree in educational leadership. Matt had the privilege of teaching math and social studies at Valley Middle School for 4 years before taking an administrative position as Title I school-wide program coordinator/dean of students. Currently, Matt serves as superintendent of the Manvel Public School District. He also enjoys coaching varsity football and girls' basketball at Grand Forks Central High School. Matt and his wife, Melissa, who teaches in the Grand Forks Public Schools district, are proud parents of three children.

BYE, JACKIE: At the time of this study, Jackie Bye had worked 29 years in the elementary education field. She was elementary principal for the Dakota Prairie School District when this report was written, and the elementary school was located in McVille, North Dakota. Jackie grew up in Hatton, North Dakota and graduated from Hatton High School. Her education journey took her to Mayville State University where she earned her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, with a minor in psychology. Jackie began her teaching career with the Hatton Public School District in 1991. She taught in the Hatton elementary school for 25 years beginning with a variety of positions including teaching kindergarten, third, fourth, and fifth grades. The majority of her teaching career in Hatton was teaching first grade for 17 years. While teaching elementary school, Jackie earned a math specialist certification from Mayville State, and then went on to earn her master's degree in educational leadership from the University of North Dakota. At the time of this writing, Jackie was continuing her education at the University of North Dakota and was enrolled in the Doctorate in Educational Leadership program.

DALUSONG, CHARLES: Charles Dalusong was born and raised in Glendale, California, which is located eight miles north from downtown Los Angeles. After graduating from Milo Academy in Days Creek, Oregon, in 1991, Charles attended Walla Walla University in College Place, Washington. There he majored in history, minored in psychology and obtained his secondary teaching certificate. After graduating in 1998, Charles obtained his elementary teaching certificate and began his teaching career as a fourth grade and fifth grade teacher in the inner city of Benton Harbor, Michigan, where he taught for 10 years serving as an assistant principal, a lead teacher, and a member of numerous curriculum committees. During this time, Charles pursued his master's degree

in educational leadership graduating in 2004 from Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Charles continued his teaching career as a fifth grade teacher at Sylvester Elementary in Berrien Springs, Michigan, for the next 6 years. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Charles served as an assistant principal and as the Berrien Springs Educational Association building representative and vice-president. Charles served in the Michigan National Guard from 2008-2014 in the infantry as a specialist in advanced field artillery data systems and as a first lieutenant. At the time of this study, Charles was pursuing his Ed.D. in PK-12 educational leadership through the University of North Dakota. He was in his sixth year as a principal and was the elementary administrator at Will-Moore Elementary in the Bismarck Public School District.

DIEDERICH, LISSA: Originally from Minnesota, Lissa Diederich came to North Dakota to attend UND. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in communication sciences and disorders in 2000 and with a master's degree in speech language pathology in 2002. Lissa was a resident teacher at J. Nelson Kelly school in Grand Forks for the 2001-2002 school year. After graduating with her master's degree, she left Grand Forks, working in Dickinson, North Dakota, and Fergus Falls, Minnesota, as a speech-language pathologist. In 2009, Lissa came back to the Grand Forks Public School district where she worked as a speech-language pathologist at Lake Agassiz Elementary School. In 2017, Lissa accepted a position as the school-wide Title 1 program coordinator at Lake Agassiz Elementary. In the Fall of 2018, she was accepted into UND's Educational Leadership Doctoral program, where she was enrolled at the time of this study. At the time of this report, Lissa was the associate principal at Lake Agassiz Elementary School and the principal designee at West Elementary School.

LARSON, HOLLY: Holly is originally from Beatrice, Nebraska, a rural farming community near the Kansas border. After graduating from Beatrice High School in 2002, Holly attended Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, and studied English and writing. After graduating in 2006 from Augustana, Holly continued her studies in creative writing at the University of San Francisco. It was here where she entered into a teaching role and fell in love with the vocation. Holly has earned her master's in curriculum and instruction and her master's in school counseling from Doane College in Lincoln, Nebraska. At the time of this study, Holly was working towards her Ed.D. in PK-12 educational leadership through the University of North Dakota. Throughout her 11 years in education, Holly worked in both urban and rural settings throughout the country including the following locations: Lincoln, Nebraska; Kansas City, Missouri; Fort Worth, Texas; New Orleans, Louisiana; East Grand Forks, Minnesota; and Grand Forks, North Dakota. Holly has primarily worked with middle school students (Grades 5-9) teaching English, reading, and language arts. She also has experience as an elementary school counselor and an elementary behavior specialist. At the time of this study, Holly was the Title 1 behavior intervention coordinator at South Middle School in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

QUINTUS, AMANDA: Amanda is originally from Dickinson, North Dakota, and was a lifelong public-school student who graduated from Dickinson High School in 2006. She

attended the University of North Dakota (UND) where she earned a bachelor's degree in 2011 in social studies secondary education and a master's degree in special education in 2012. At the time of this study, Amanda was working towards her Ed.D. in PK-12 educational leadership through UND. Amanda has worked in rural and urban school settings within the state of North Dakota since 2011. She was a resident teacher (special education) at South Middle School in Grand Forks, North Dakota, and a 7-12 special education strategist at Stanley High School in Stanley, North Dakota. At the time of this study, Amanda had been a special education teacher working alongside students with emotional disturbance (ED); she had been working for 6 years at Davies High School in Fargo. At the time of this report, Amanda had spent the last five summers teaching U.S. history during summer school sessions. When this paper was written, Amanda was in her first year as a special education area service coordinator in which she provided special education support and consultation to secondary schools within the Fargo Public Schools District. Her future goals include becoming a high school principal within the state of North Dakota.

RICKS, SARAH: Sarah Ricks grew up in Fairborn, Ohio, but has been a resident of Dickinson, North Dakota, for the past 8 years. She graduated from Fairborn High School in 2001. Sarah attended Brigham Young University where she received a bachelor's degree in audiology and speech-language pathology in 2004 and earned her teaching certificate for special education shortly thereafter in 2005. She earned her master's degree from the University of North Dakota in educational leadership in 2018 and is now pursuing her doctoral degree in educational leadership. Sarah has been privileged to experience public schools in a variety of ways. During college, she worked as a paraprofessional and speech-language pathology assistant in elementary schools. Some of her teaching experiences include teaching in a self-contained class of K-1 students in Payson, Utah, a support classroom for K-2 students with learning disabilities in Baltimore County, Maryland, a deaf-blind classroom for secondary students in Baltimore City, Maryland, a toddler classroom and music program in a Montessori pre-school, and an early intervention setting for ages 0-3 in southwestern North Dakota.. She had the honor of serving as a school board member and then school board president for Dickinson Public Schools from 2014-2018. For the past 3 years, she has worked for Dickinson Public Schools as a fourth grade teacher, a teacher of gifted and talented students in Grades 4-6, and an English language arts teacher for students in Grades 7-8. At the time of this report, she was serving as the interim assistant principal at Dickinson Middle School. She is the proud mother of five boys, all of whom attend public school in Dickinson. Sarah and her husband, Marc, love living and working in North Dakota. Sarah looks forward to contributing to the tradition of educational excellence in the state.

WARMAN, THOMAS: Thomas Warman was born in and attended school in Millinocket, Maine. After graduating from high school, Thomas enlisted in the Air Force in January of 1991. He served as an electronics technician on Minuteman III Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles and was stationed in Minot, North Dakota; Grand Forks, North Dakota; and Great Falls, Montana. While in the Air Force, he earned an associate's degree in electronics technology from the Community College of the Air

Force. Thomas served in the Air Force until September, 2000. In 2004, Thomas made the decision to attend college and become a teacher. Thomas graduated from Minot State University with a bachelor's degree in social science education in 2008. Thomas taught social studies for Grades 7-12 at Sawyer School from 2008-2012. He also taught drivers' education at Sawyer during the summers. While teaching, Thomas was selected by Atlantic Brücke and the North Dakota School Boards Association to travel to Germany for 2 weeks to study the German education system. Thomas was also selected by the We the People Institute to study the Navajo nation's education system in Chinle, Arizona. Thomas earned his master's degree from the University of North Dakota in educational leadership in 2018 and is now pursuing his doctoral degree in education leadership. At the time of this report, he was serving his fourth year as principal of Sawyer School.

WHEELER, DAVID: After graduating from Mayville State in 1988, David spent 6 years substitute teaching and coaching in Minnesota and North Dakota. He got his first full time teaching position in the Fall of 1994 in Lakota, North Dakota. David spent 3 years in this position before moving on to Lake Region State College in Devils Lake. Here, he was the men's basketball coach for 4 years. David started his master's degree work in educational leadership while at Lake Region, and took a position teaching and coaching at Larimore in the Fall of 2001. David spent 6 years teaching and coaching in Larimore before starting his career as a high school principal in the Fall of 2007. At the time of this report, David was in his 13th year as an administrator in public education. The first 7 years were spent as high school principal in Larimore. As the principal in Larimore, David was fortunate enough to be named the North Dakota High School Principal of the Year in 2014. At the time of this study, David was completing his 6th year as elementary principal in Thompson, North Dakota.

Appendix B
Study Information and Consent for Survey

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

Institutional Review Board

Study Information

Title of Project: School Experiences and Adult Life

Principal Investigator: Sarah Ricks, Email Address: sarah.ricks@ndus.edu

Advisor: Sherryl Houdek, Phone Number: 701-777-3577, Email Address: sherryl.houdek@und.edu

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this research is to explore how the current curriculum and graduation requirements in NDCC 15.1-21 are related to the purpose of education in North Dakota and to determine how graduates of North Dakota high schools perceive their educational experiences in relation to preparing them for their adult lives.

Procedures to be followed:

You will be asked to answer up to 30 questions on this survey.

Risks:

There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

Benefits:

The research may provide a better understanding of how K-12 educational experiences prepare students to be happy, prosperous, citizens of a democracy. Potential policy changes based on this research may benefit generations of future students in North Dakota.

Duration:

It will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete this survey.

Statement of Confidentiality:

The survey does not ask for any information that would identify who the responses belong to. Therefore, your responses are recorded anonymously. If this research is published, no information that would identify you will be included since your name is in no way linked to your responses.

All survey responses that we receive will be treated confidentially and stored on the researcher's home desktop for a period of three years. However, given that the surveys can be completed from any computer (e.g., personal, work, school), we are unable to guarantee the security of the computer on which you choose to enter your responses. As a participant in this study, we want you to be aware that certain "key logging" software programs exist that can be used to track or capture data that you enter and/or websites that you visit.

Right to Ask Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Sarah Ricks. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please contact Sherryl Houdek at 701-777-3577 during the day.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at (701) 777-4279 or UND.irb@UND.edu. You may contact the UND IRB with problems, complaints, or concerns about the research. Please contact the UND IRB if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone who is an informed individual who is independent of the research team.

General information about being a research subject can be found on the Institutional Review Board website "Information for Research Participants" http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/research-participants.html

Compensation:

You may be entered into a drawing for one of two $50 Amazon gift cards when you have completed the survey. In order to enter, you must send your email address to sarah.ricks@ndus.edu

Voluntary Participation:

You do not have to participate in this research. You can stop your participation at any time. You may refuse to participate or choose to discontinue participation at any time without losing any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this research study.

Completion and return of the survey implies that you have read the information in this form and consent to participate in the research.

Please print this page for your records or future reference.

Appendix C
Survey Instrument

School Experiences and Adult Life

Start of Block: Survey Information and Consent

SI1 Thank you for taking the time to do this survey and assist with important research. On the next page, you will find detailed information about the study. This survey will be no more than 30 questions long and should take 15-20 minutes of your time. You can enter a drawing for $50 Amazon gift cards at the end of the survey. Thank you for doing your part to help shape the future of education in North Dakota.

End of Block: Survey Information and Consent

Start of Block: Survey Information and Consent 2

SI2

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

Institutional Review Board

Study Information

Title of Project: School Experiences and Adult Life

Principal Investigator: Sarah Ricks, Email Address: sarah.ricks@ndus.edu

Advisor: Sherryl Houdek, Phone Number: 701-777-3577, Email Address: sherryl.houdek@und.edu

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this research is to explore how the curriculum and graduation requirements in NDCC 15.1-21 are related to the purpose of education in North Dakota and to determine how graduates of North Dakota high schools perceive their educational experiences in relation to preparing them for their adult lives.

Procedures to be followed:

You will be asked to answer up to 30 questions on this survey.

Risks:

There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

Benefits:

The research may provide a better understanding of how K-12 educational experiences prepare students to be happy, prosperous, citizens of a democracy. Potential policy changes based on this research may benefit generations of future students in North Dakota.

Duration:

It will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete this survey.

Statement of Confidentiality:

The survey does not ask for any information that would identify who the responses belong to. Therefore, your responses are recorded anonymously. If this research is published, no information that would identify you will be included since your name is in no way linked to your responses.

All survey responses that we receive will be treated confidentially and stored on the researcher's home desktop for a period of three years. However, given that the surveys can be completed from any computer (e.g., personal, work, school), we are unable to guarantee the security of the computer on which you choose to enter your responses. As a participant in this study, we want you to be aware that certain "key logging" software

programs exist that can be used to track or capture data that you enter and/or websites that you visit.

Right to Ask Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Sarah Ricks. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please contact Sherryl Houdek at 701-777-3577 during the day.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at (701) 777-4279 or UND.irb@UND.edu. You may contact the UND IRB with problems, complaints, or concerns about the research. Please contact the UND IRB if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone who is an informed individual who is independent of the research team.

General information about being a research subject can be found on the Institutional Review Board website "Information for Research Participants" http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/research-participants.html

Compensation:

You may be entered into a drawing for one of two $50 Amazon gift cards when you have completed the survey. In order to enter, you must send your email address to sarah.ricks@ndus.edu

Voluntary Participation:

You do not have to participate in this research. You can stop your participation at any time. You may refuse to participate or choose to discontinue participation at any time without losing any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this research study.

Completion and return of the survey implies that you have read the information in this form and consent to participate in the research.

Please print this page for your records or future reference.

End of Block: Survey Information and Consent 2

Start of Block: Introduction and Demographics

DI: School Experiences and Adult Life

Please respond to the following questions to help the researcher better understand the relationship between K-12 school experiences and facets of adult life.
The first section asks about **Demographic Information.**

DI1 Did you graduate from a high school in North Dakota?

- ○ yes (1)
- ○ no (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Did you graduate from a high school in North Dakota? = no

DI2 What year did you graduate from high school?

_____

DI3 The High School I graduated from was considered

- ○ Class A (325 or more students) (1)
- ○ Class B (less than 325 students) (2)

DI4 I identify as

- ○ Female (1)
- ○ Male (2)
- ○ Non-binary (3)
- ○ Prefer not to say (4)

DI5 I identify as (you may select more than one)

- ☐ White (1)
- ☐ Black or African American (2)
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- ☐ Asian (4)
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- ☐ Hispanic (6)
- ☐ Other (7)
- ☐ Prefer not to say (8)

End of Block: Introduction and Demographics

Start of Block: Prosperity

P: **PROSPERITY**

The North Dakota constitution outlines three purposes for education: prosperity, happiness, and perpetuating democracy. This section asks questions about the first purpose, prosperity, and how your educational and life experiences have influenced your level of prosperity. Prosperity for the sake of this survey is defined as consistently having enough to meet your basic needs of safety, shelter, food, etc. without having to rely on the government or other assistance programs.

P1 Which best describes you? (You may select more than one if necessary.)

- [ ] I am enrolled in a degree-seeking higher education program of study. (1)
- [ ] I am enrolled in a certificate-seeking technical or vocational program. (2)
- [ ] I am an intern or an apprentice learning a profession. (3)
- [ ] I am self-employed full-time. (4)
- [ ] I am self-employed part-time. (5)
- [ ] I am employed full-time by someone else. (6)
- [ ] I am employed part-time by someone else. (7)
- [ ] I am unemployed- not seeking employment. (8)
- [ ] I am unemployed- seeking employment. (9)
- [ ] I am an unpaid caregiver (i.e. stay-at-home parent). (10)

P2 What is your current annual salary?

- ○ less than $15,000 (1)
- ○ $15,000-$34,999 (2)
- ○ $35,000-$54,000 (3)
- ○ $55,000-$75,000 (4)
- ○ $75,000-$95,000 (5)
- ○ more than $95,000 (6)

P3 Three skills sets that are consistently identified as important to 21st century employability are collaboration, communication, and information communication technology skills. Please rate yourself in each area. 1 – This is an area I struggle in. 2 – I am comfortable but could improve. 3 – This is an area of strength for me.

	struggle (1)	comfortable (2)	strength (3)
Collaboration: I work well with others. I am able to learn from others. (1)	○	○	○
Communication: I can communicate clearly and accurately in both spoken and written language. (2)	○	○	○
Information Communication Technology: I can use digital tools to find, manage, evaluate and use relevant information. I can use a variety of digital tools to communicate with others including email, social media, websites, and applications. (3)	○	○	○

P4 Do you perceive yourself as being prosperous?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

End of Block: Prosperity

Start of Block: Prosperity- Yes

Display This Question:

If Do you perceive yourself as being prosperous? = Yes

P5y What skills and/or knowledge sets are most important to success in your current role?

_____

Display This Question:

If Do you perceive yourself as being prosperous? = Yes

P6y What life or school experiences helped you to develop those skills and/or knowledge sets?

_____

Display This Question:

If Do you perceive yourself as being prosperous? = Yes

P7y For each K-12 school experience, please rate how much it influenced your development of those skills and/or knowledge sets which led to your current level of **prosperity**.

	N/A (Did not experience this in school.) (1)	Not a Factor (2)	Small Influence (3)	Large Influence (4)
English/ Language Arts instruction (1)	○	○	○	○
Mathematics instruction (2)	○	○	○	○
Science instruction (3)	○	○	○	○
Social Studies/ History instruction (4)	○	○	○	○
Physical Education/ Health instruction (5)	○	○	○	○
Foreign or Native Languages instruction (6)	○	○	○	○
Art/ Music/ Drama/ Speech instruction (7)	○	○	○	○
Career and Technical Education instruction (8)	○	○	○	○
Extra-curricular Activities (sports, clubs) (9)	○	○	○	○
Relationships with School Personnel (10)	○	○	○	○

Display This Question:

If Do you perceive yourself as being prosperous? = Yes

P8y For each non-school experience, please rate how much it influenced your development of skills and/or knowledge sets which led to your current level of **prosperity**.

	N/A (Did not experience this.) (1)	Not a Factor (2)	Small Influence (3)	Large Influence (4)
Family/ Upbringing (1)	○	○	○	○
Friend Group (2)	○	○	○	○
Religion/ Church (3)	○	○	○	○
Work Experiences (4)	○	○	○	○
Clubs/Sports outside of school (5)	○	○	○	○
College Experiences (6)	○	○	○	○

Display This Question:

If Do you perceive yourself as being prosperous? = Yes

P9y What, if anything, do you wish you would have learned in your K-12 education but didn't that would have helped you on your journey to prosperity?

_____

End of Block: Prosperity- Yes

Start of Block: Prosperity- No

Display This Question:

If Do you perceive yourself as being prosperous? = No

P5n Why do you feel you are not prosperous at this time?

_____

Display This Question:

If Do you perceive yourself as being prosperous? = No

P6n What skills and/or knowledge sets do you believe you need to develop to become prosperous?

_____

Display This Question:

If Do you perceive yourself as being prosperous? = No

P7n Were the skills and/or knowledge sets you identified in the previous question taught or offered to you in your K-12 educational experiences? If those skills and knowledge sets were offered, what classes were they offered in?

_____

Display This Question:

If Do you perceive yourself as being prosperous? = No

P8n What, if anything, do you wish you would have learned in your K-12 education but didn't that would have helped you to become prosperous?

_____

End of Block: Prosperity- No

Start of Block: Happiness

H: **HAPPINESS**

This section asks questions about the second purpose of education, happiness, and what school and life experiences have influenced your current level of happiness. For this study, happiness is defined as feeling that you are able to be your true self with goals and activities that reflect who you are (autonomy), feeling confident in your ability to care for yourself and be successful (competence), and having positive relationships with individuals or organizations in which you feel loved and accepted (relatedness).

H1 According to Self-Determination Theory, three components of happiness are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Please answer “yes” or “no” for each statement regarding autonomy.

	YES (1)	NO (2)
I have clear goals for myself. (1)	○	○
I feel the activities I am currently involved in reflect my true self. (2)	○	○
I feel fulfilled by my life choices. (3)	○	○
I know who I am. (4)	○	○

H2 According to Self-Determination Theory, three components of happiness are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Please answer “yes” or “no” for each statement regarding competence.

	YES (1)	NO (2)
I feel confident in my ability to succeed. (1)	○	○
I feel competent when making important decisions. (2)	○	○
I feel capable of caring for myself and my needs. (3)	○	○

H3 According to Self-Determination Theory, three components of happiness are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Please answer “yes” or “no” for each statement regarding relatedness.

	YES (1)	NO (2)
I am able to form positive, meaningful, lasting relationships. (1)	○	○
I have at least one friend with whom I feel deeply connected. (2)	○	○
I belong to a group or organization in which I feel loved and accepted. (3)	○	○

H4 Given this definition of happiness, would you consider yourself to be a happy person?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

End of Block: Happiness

Start of Block: Happiness- Yes

Display This Question:

If Given this definition of happiness, would you consider yourself to be a happy person? = Yes

H5y What skills and/or knowledge sets do you believe contribute most to your ability to be happy?

_____

Display This Question:

If Given this definition of happiness, would you consider yourself to be a happy person? = Yes

H6y What life or school experiences helped you to develop those skills and/or knowledge sets?

_____

Display This Question:

If Given this definition of happiness, would you consider yourself to be a happy person? = Yes

H7y For each K-12 school experience, please rate how much it influenced your development of those skills and/or knowledge sets which led to your current level of **happiness**.

	N/A (Did not experience this in school.) (1)	Not a Factor (2)	Small Influence (3)	Large Influence (4)
English/ Language Arts instruction (1)	○	○	○	○
Mathematics instruction (2)	○	○	○	○
Science instruction (3)	○	○	○	○
Social Studies/ History instruction (4)	○	○	○	○
Physical Education/ Health instruction (5)	○	○	○	○
Foreign or Native Languages instruction (6)	○	○	○	○
Art/ Music/ Drama/ Speech instruction (7)	○	○	○	○
Career and Technical Education instruction (8)	○	○	○	○
Extra-curricular Activities (sports, clubs) (9)	○	○	○	○
Relationships with School Personnel (10)	○	○	○	○

Display This Question:

If Given this definition of happiness, would you consider yourself to be a happy person? = Yes

H8y For each non-school experience, please rate how much it influenced your development of skills and/or knowledge sets which led to your current level of **happiness**.

	N/A (Did not experience this.) (1)	Not a Factor (2)	Small Influence (3)	Large Influence (4)
Family/ Upbringing (1)	○	○	○	○
Friend Group (2)	○	○	○	○
Religion/ Church (3)	○	○	○	○
Work Experiences (4)	○	○	○	○
Clubs/ Sports outside of school (5)	○	○	○	○
College Experiences (6)	○	○	○	○

Display This Question:

If Given this definition of happiness, would you consider yourself to be a happy person? = Yes

H9y What, if anything, do you wish you would have learned in your K-12 education but didn't that would have helped you on your journey to happiness?

_____

End of Block: Happiness- Yes

Start of Block: Happiness- No

Display This Question:

If Given this definition of happiness, would you consider yourself to be a happy person? = No

H5n Why do you feel you are not happy at this time?

_____

Display This Question:

If Given this definition of happiness, would you consider yourself to be a happy person? = No

H6n What skills and/or knowledge sets do you believe you need to develop to become happy?

_____

Display This Question:

If Given this definition of happiness, would you consider yourself to be a happy person? = No

H7n Were the skills and/or knowledge sets you identified in the previous question taught or offered to you in your K-12 educational experiences? If those skills and knowledge sets were offered, what classes were they offered in?

_____

Display This Question:

If Given this definition of happiness, would you consider yourself to be a happy person? = No

H8n What, if anything, do you wish you would have learned in your K-12 education but didn't that would have helped you to become happy?

_____

End of Block: Happiness- No

Start of Block: Democratic Engagement

DE: **DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT**

The third purpose of education in North Dakota is perpetuating democracy. This requires citizens to be engaged in their communities and to fulfill civic duties. Democratic engagement then consists of behaviors which help to perpetuate the representative democracy which governs North Dakota. This section asks about democratic engagement and what school or life experiences have influenced your current level of democratic engagement.

DE1 Please select all statements which are true of your civic and community engagement.

- ☐ I vote in local, state, and federal elections. (1)
- ☐ I only vote in major elections- like presidential elections. (2)
- ☐ I volunteer regularly in my community. (3)
- ☐ I am interested in politics. (4)
- ☐ I have run for public office. (5)
- ☐ I will consider running for public office in the future. (6)
- ☐ I follow local and national news. (7)
- ☐ I attend open government meetings (i.e. school board, city council, park board, state legislative committees, etc.). (8)
- ☐ I feel a personal responsibility to help others. (9)
- ☐ I have a strong desire for justice. (10)
- ☐ I know how to make social changes within our governmental systems. (11)

DE2 After reflecting on these statements, do you feel satisfied with your current level of **democratic engagement**?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

End of Block: Democratic Engagement

Start of Block: Democratic Engagement- Yes

Display This Question:

If After reflecting on these statements, do you feel satisfied with your current level of democratic... = Yes

DE3y What skills and/or knowledge sets do you believe contribute most to your ability to be democratically engaged?

_____

Display This Question:

If After reflecting on these statements, do you feel satisfied with your current level of democratic... = Yes

DE4y What life or school experiences helped you to develop those skills and/or knowledge sets?

_____

Display This Question:

If After reflecting on these statements, do you feel satisfied with your current level of democratic... = Yes

DE5y For each K-12 school experience, please rate how much it influenced your development of skills and/or knowledge sets which led to your current level of **democratic engagement**.

	N/A (Did not experience this in school.) (1)	Not a Factor (2)	Small Influence (3)	Large Influence (4)
English/ Language Arts instruction (1)	○	○	○	○
Mathematics instruction (2)	○	○	○	○
Science instruction (3)	○	○	○	○
Social Studies/ History instruction (4)	○	○	○	○
Physical Education/ Health instruction (5)	○	○	○	○
Foreign or Native Languages instruction (6)	○	○	○	○
Art/ Music/ Drama/ Speech instruction (7)	○	○	○	○
Career and Technical Education instruction (8)	○	○	○	○
Extra-curricular Activities (sports, clubs) (9)	○	○	○	○
Relationships with School Personnel (10)	○	○	○	○
Other: (11)	○	○	○	○

Display This Question:

If After reflecting on these statements, do you feel satisfied with your current level of democratic... = Yes

DE6y For each non-school experience, please rate how much it influenced your development of skills and/or knowledge sets which led to your current level of **democratic engagement**.

	N/A (Did not experience this.) (1)	Not a Factor (2)	Small Influence (3)	Large Influence (4)
Family/ Upbringing (1)	○	○	○	○
Friend Group (2)	○	○	○	○
Religion/ Church (3)	○	○	○	○
Work Experiences (4)	○	○	○	○
Clubs/ Sports outside of school (5)	○	○	○	○
College Experiences (6)	○	○	○	○
Other: (7)	○	○	○	○

Display This Question:

If After reflecting on these statements, do you feel satisfied with your current level of democratic... = Yes

DE7y What, if anything, do you wish you would have learned in your K-12 education but didn't that would have helped you on your journey to democratic engagement?

_____

End of Block: Democratic Engagement- Yes

Start of Block: Democratic Engagement- No

Display This Question:

If After reflecting on these statements, do you feel satisfied with your current level of democratic... = No

DE3n Why do you feel you are not satisfied with your democratic engagement at this time?

_____

Display This Question:

If After reflecting on these statements, do you feel satisfied with your current level of democratic... = No

DE4n What skills and/or knowledge sets do you believe you need to develop to become more democratically engaged?

_____

Display This Question:

If After reflecting on these statements, do you feel satisfied with your current level of democratic... = No

DE5n Were the skills and/or knowledge sets you identified in the previous question taught or offered to you in your K-12 educational experiences? If those skills and knowledge sets were offered, what classes were they offered in?

_____

Display This Question:

If After reflecting on these statements, do you feel satisfied with your current level of democratic... = No

DE6n What, if anything, do you wish you would have learned in your K-12 education but didn't that would have helped you to become more democratically engaged?

_____

End of Block: Democratic Engagement- No

Start of Block: Conclusion

Q42 **THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY!** Please send an email address to sarah.ricks@ndus.edu with the subject line Amazon Gift if you wish to be entered into a drawing for one of two $50 Amazon gift cards.

Q43 **Do you have more to say?** Once the data from this survey has been analyzed, I may have follow-up questions. If you would be interested in volunteering to answer further questions please send me an email at sarah.ricks@ndus.edu with the subject line Follow Up.

End of Block: Conclusion

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