

# Foreword

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After listening to Dr. Steve M. Constantino talk about family engagement, I wished I could begin my education career over again. As a classroom teacher, librarian, vice principal, and even as a school board member, I had not fully realized the importance and power of family engagement and its critical role in promoting student success until I encountered Dr. Constantino. He opened my eyes.

Family engagement has become a priority emphasis in North Dakota education. We have facilitated training sessions in some of our school districts, which have imbued family engagement into the fabric of their educational mission.

Teachers have embraced the idea of getting closer to their students and families (although not without some initial trepidation!). They understand that true, authentic family engagement isn't about doing more, it is about doing things differently. Our teachers are learning to be approachable, and they want to know how they can be more helpful.

Because of what I learned through Dr. Constantino's work, I have formed the Superintendent's Family Engagement Cabinet. It includes family members from across North Dakota, with children in all school grades. They are passionate about working to make sure their students are getting a good education, and I am inspired by their dedication and enthusiasm.

We have a rapidly growing Facebook group, North Dakota Family Engagement, and a PK–12 Alliance to promote family educational involvement. These receive joyful support from my teammates at the Department of Public Instruction, who know a good thing when they see it and are eager to be part of it.

As Dr. Constantino proves in his books and numerous workshops and keynotes, when families are involved in, and supportive of, the education of their children, the student is more successful. You almost don't need research to establish that fact. It makes sense to every family member and educator.

Families want to be involved in the education of their children, but often they're not sure how to go about it. School culture can be hard to understand and even harder to navigate. Dr. Constantino helps to break down those barriers, and empower educators to create a better partnership with families. We must go beyond parent–teacher conferences and family fun nights and encourage broader and deeper relationships.

Dr. Constantino deserves credit for inspiring and facilitating our commitment to improving family engagement in North Dakota. Because of his work, families are becoming more involved in North Dakota education, and our students are the winners in it all!

Read this book and be inspired. I was.

**Kirsten Baesler, Superintendent of Public Instruction**

State of North Dakota