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A Blueprint for Every State: How North Dakota Is Bridging the Career Awareness Gap

The heartland's innovation hub is showing the nation how to connect curiosity with opportunity through accessible immersive tech for all students

Fargo, ND - North Dakota is taking another bold step in workforce innovation, announcing the statewide expansion of **CareerViewXR** to every elementary school, building on the state's growing reputation for turning big ideas into scalable solutions that close the career awareness gap.

Now every K-12 student in North Dakota, including public, private and homeschooled, will have access to experience immersive, 360-degree career journeys, from wind farms and hospitals to construction sites and bakeries, without ever leaving the classroom.

The move makes North Dakota **the first state in the country** to implement immersive career exploration technology accessible across all grades.

"North Dakota is leading the way in connecting students to meaningful career experiences," **said Wayde Sick, State Director of the North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education.** "Through initiatives like this, we're preparing our future workforce with the tools they need to succeed."

Earlier this year **outgoing North Dakota State Superintendent Kirsten Baesler** indicated these efforts reflect North Dakota's leadership in education innovation.

"North Dakota may be small in size, but we're leading big changes in K-12 education," **Baesler said in September 2025.** "We're proving that innovation can happen anywhere, and that every student deserves a pathway to success."

North Dakota is no stranger to impacting education on a national scale, with Baesler confirmed last month as the U.S. Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education.

This latest development builds on last biennium's milestone rollout to all secondary schools and the donation of more than 300 VR headsets from Fargo-based CareerViewXR. By investing early in career awareness and leveraging virtual technology to make opportunity readily available to all students, North Dakota is demonstrating how any state, urban or rural, can empower students to see and experience their future before they're expected to choose their path.

"Our state and much of the heartland often gets dismissed as 'flyover country,' perceived as being less innovative because we lack big cities and major tech hubs," **said Matt Chaussee,**

co-founder and CEO of CareerViewXR. “Here, innovation is built through collaboration and practical use of new technologies. With immersive storytelling, a powerful equalizer that brings opportunity to life, we showcase real people at work in real, relatable environments, showing meaningful, high-demand careers exist in every pocket of the country, not just on the coasts. If we can support students in rural North Dakota, we can support students anywhere.”

Chaussee explained that the expansion is the result of years of statewide collaboration and a shared commitment to strengthening North Dakota’s workforce pipeline.

“Through the North Dakota legislature’s foresight and continued investment in Career and Technical Education, and collaboration with partners like Job Service North Dakota, the North Dakota University System, and the Department of Public Instruction, every student will have the chance to step inside real workplaces and explore careers they might never have imagined,” **said Chaussee.** “We’ve been incredibly fortunate to start and grow this work in a state that has made a deliberate effort to align education and workforce leaders. The technology alone doesn’t drive progress, but when paired with motivated changemakers, it truly has the potential to transform lives.”

Career exploration traditionally begins in middle or high school, but as national research increasingly shows, earlier exposure makes a huge difference. Discovery Education’s [Education Insights 2024–2025 report](#) found that “introducing opportunities for career exploration early allows students flexibility to adjust their paths while the stakes are still low.”

Sick said the findings reinforce what educators have already seen in classrooms.

“Elementary students are naturally curious,” **Sick continued.** “They dream big, ask big questions, and imagine endless possibilities. Early exposure helps them see what’s out there and connect their interests with real-world opportunities before preconceived notions or self-doubt take root.”

Elizabeth Hyman, President and Chief Executive Officer of the XR Association (XRA), the trade association promoting the dynamic growth of the XR industry across the globe, is dedicated to the responsible development and thoughtful advancement of XR technologies. Hyman believes education is an incredible use of this growing technology.

“Congratulations to CareerViewXR and the state of North Dakota for making CareerViewXR’s innovative platform fully accessible to K-12 students as they explore possible career options,” **said Hyman.** “Education is one of many compelling use cases of XR, and we commend North Dakota for taking such an innovative approach to helping students identify possible career paths by equipping them with the tools to experience a day in the life across a wide range of professions.”

Other states are watching closely. In places like Texas, where students are required to select a career pathway as early as ninth grade, and where funding consequences can follow if they later change course, North Dakota’s approach offers a clear roadmap for helping students make informed, confident decisions before high school.

A hallmark of CareerViewXR’s North Dakota program is its authentic, place-based storytelling. The platform’s immersive field trips showcase real professionals in real workplaces. From advanced manufacturing, to wide-ranging careers in energy across the prairie, to healthcare in

small-town clinics, students are discovering that their dream career might be closer to home than they think.

Elementary, middle, and high school students will access the platform through NDCTE's *RUReady.nd.gov* education and career planning portal, with new integrations on the way, specifically designed for younger learners and with supplemental resources for educators to effectively implement the solution in the classroom.

CareerViewXR has continued to gain attention in North Dakota and beyond for its innovative approach to career exploration. With a growing library of more than 100 immersive experiences, the platform offers students of all ages a front-row seat to in-demand careers across industries like healthcare, energy, and skilled trades. Some of the newest jobs filmed in North Dakota include Weatherization Technician created with Community Action Partnership of North Dakota, Ski Resort created with Frost Fire Park, Skydiving Instructor created with Skydive Fargo, and a trio of roles from the North Dakota Department of Transportation - Engineering Technician, Equipment Operator, and Fleet Maintenance Technician.

"North Dakota's investment demonstrates what's possible when a state aligns education and workforce priorities early," **said Chaussee**. "Every student deserves the chance to discover their dream job. What started here as a statewide initiative is being recognized as an adaptable blueprint for any state, proving that when the right technology is paired with collaboration and purpose, we can give every learner a clear understanding of the opportunities on their horizon."

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About CareerViewXR:

CareerViewXR is an immersive career exploration platform that brings field trips to the classroom through 360-degree web-based tours and companion virtual reality videos. Students and adult job seekers alike can explore engaging tours highlighting in-demand industries like skilled trades, healthcare, energy, and more. Best of all – VR headsets are completely optional; the content is accessible on devices schools already own – including laptops, cell phones, interactive displays, and tablets. Explore more at careerviewxr.com.