



# NDMTA NEWSLETTER

April 2026

## Letter from the President, Lisa Schuler

Hello!

I had a wonderful time at the MTNA national conference in Chicago, along with nine other NDMTA members. It was five days of sessions for professional development, state president and division meetings, enjoyable meals with colleagues, and evening recitals. At the MTNA Gala, our North Dakota state table honored Foundation Fellow Michelle Kallod. As she was unable to attend, I accepted the award on her behalf, an especially meaningful moment since I could not walk the stage during my Fellow year due to the pandemic. Congratulations Michelle and thank you for the honor of representing you.



If you were unable to attend the national conference, I encourage you to join us at the state conference on August 5th and 6th in Grand Forks. It is all the same experience but in a short day and a half. This year's mini conference is just \$75 and includes the Popplers Competitions, Popplers Recital, Commissioned Composer Premier, sessions by Helen Marlais, the annual meeting and awards, and a special IMTF session celebrating 150 years of MTNA and 70 years of NDMTA. Dr. Beth Klingenstein, MTNA President-Elect, will present on the historical highlights, followed by a presentation from Upper Valley MTA featuring narration, photos, and videos covering 150 years of music in North Dakota. But that's not all! We will also enjoy catered hors d'oeuvres as part of this celebration! You must be a registered attendee to participate in the IMTF party.

The state conference is truly going to be a celebration of this great organization that we all belong to. So, get excited and send in your registration. I'm looking forward to seeing you there!

Finally, my term as your NDMTA president ends during the state conference. I truly enjoyed serving as your leader. Some highlights for me were the national conferences, leadership summits, productive board meetings, seeing our new membership numbers rise, the adding of another collegiate chapter, and working with members who are now my dear friends. NDMTA has always been a blessing to me. Seriously think about a leadership role in NDMTA, you will be rewarded over and over again.

My Best,  
Lisa Schuler, NDCTM



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## Consider Attending an MTNA National Conference

By Vangie Johnson Parker

In the public school system, there are continuing education requirements for each of our teachers. As private teachers, we often think we are receiving enough pedagogical information from our monthly programs. I just returned from attending the 2026 MTNA Conference in Chicago. This was my fourth national conference and it is difficult to list all of the valuable information I captured. At each conference, you will find camaraderie, high level networking opportunities, answers to questions you didn't know you had, inspiration, and learning about new trends in teaching.

Here is a brief synopsis of some of the sessions I attended at MTNA's 150th Anniversary Conference:

Teaching Voicing-From Top to Bottom and Sometimes in the Middle too!

This Session was presented by Ingrid Clairfield. If you haven't yet heard her speak, you are missing out! What an inspiration she is. Suggestions on how to teach your students to "Voice the melody so that even people in the cheap seats can hear"!

Artificial Intelligence: It's the new wave of the future whether we like it or not. What is it? How can I use it to bring myself and my studio into the 21st century? I learned about the Pro's and Con's of its offerings.

These are just a few of the AI Sessions offered:

- What Happens When Students Co-learn with Machines?
- Rethinking Piano Learning with the AI Generation:
- Piano Teaching in the AI Age: A Future-Facing Survival Guide
- Timewarp Technologies
- Equipping your Students with the Best tools for Home Practice

Empowering Parents: Best Practices to Support Pianistic Development, Anxiety Management, and a Lifelong Love for Music: Parents can be your student's best or friend...or not (see article on Empowering parents, page 9)

We expect our students to be like sponges which absorb new information. We too, need to be the sponges absorbing relevant information to share with our students. The 2027 MTNA Conference will be in St. Louis, Missouri. I encourage to consider attending. You won't be sorry. You don't know what you don't know unless you've been introduced to it.

## Strategies for Working with Students who Rarely or Never Practice

Anne Morris

Ben Kapilow began by addressing the problem of students arriving unprepared for lessons. He recommended turning these sessions into guided practice and involving parents by asking targeted questions about their goals and whether such issues appear in other areas. This approach aims to clarify problems and foster better support. To promote accountability, Ben advised tracking practice with charts, tables, or apps, and including parent signatures. He highlighted digital tools like Vivid Practice, Andante Music Journal, and Pomodoro, which facilitate varied practice, progress monitoring, and access to lesson materials.

(practice, cont on page 10)



Vangie and Ingrid Clairfield, clinician

## Advancing Opportunities::

Recap by Ozzie Johnson

## Incorporating Business & Performance into the Collegiate Chapter

This session described the activities of the University of Oregon Collegiate Chapter (referred to hereafter as “the Ducks” for the sake of brevity) from 2021 to the present, with plans for the future outlined as well. First, they presented a brief roadmap, as well as described the main focus of their activities. Shortly after their founding in 2021, the Ducks announced the first annual UO Piano Festival. 2023-2024 saw membership growth and festival expansion, and 2024-2026 saw a diversifying of their mission and activities, as well as an expanding budget. They hold one large event per term – either a themed concert or large-scale event. They described their goal as “optimizing our digital and physical presence”. They included a few posters of recent concerts to give examples of themes. One example was a Fall Concert, which encouraged costumes and asked parents to bring candy and mentioned fun activities would take place following the concert. Another festive theme was their Holiday Concert, which mentioned a white elephant gift exchange to follow. Another concert type (2 instances were shown) was a four hand concert, which featured duets, duos, and also UO alumni alongside the collegiate members. They also included posters from two of their UO Piano Festivals, featuring the themes “con spirito” and “the sound of nature”. They detailed their process for doing these events: several meetings (conception, curation, gathering the flock, recap, and post mortem) with email blasts interspersed between the early meetings and the post mortem following the concert.

Following this, the Ducks mentioned important partnerships for them: their state level MTNA chapter, local performance venues and music teachers, internal university student orgs and non-music department collabs, and external music orgs that benefit from their member’s presence/service. They briefly mentioned mistakes they made – communication errors and uneven distribution of tasks – and difficulties they face – financial instability and recruiting new members. Their future plans are threefold: 1. Maintaining and growing their annual piano festival; 2. Present a minimum of two concerts per year; and 3. Strengthen connections with local teachers. They left some contact info, which I’ll leave here: @duckspiano (how to find them on Instagram, Youtube, and Facebook); their festival’s website: [pianouofestival.org](http://pianouofestival.org); their collegiate chapter’s website: [bio.site/mtnaducks](http://bio.site/mtnaducks).



*NDMTA Members attending MTNA Conference in Chicago, Left to Right:  
Ozzie Johnson, Joann Herman, Alice Pekarski, Vangie Johnson Parker, Amy Mercer,  
Anne Morris, Beth Gigante Klingenstein, Lisa Schuler*

## Motivation, Mindset and Grit: Fostering a Culture of Excellence

Recap by Amy Mercer

Christopher Fisher's presentation titled "Motivation, Mindset, and Grit: Fostering a Culture of Excellence" included many ideas for teachers to consider and/or implement in their teaching. He first discussed the idea of incentives and how incentives can boost motivation but only in the short-term – if practice/progress is always contingent on an award, it will eventually backfire. Extrinsic awards can limit natural curiosity and creativity and can become addictive. He suggests using rewards and incentives (used judiciously and occasionally) with the goal that eventually the activity itself will be in reward. Research shows that the single greatest motivator is progress in your work.



The next section of his presentation went through the differences between a fixed mindset versus a growth mindset. People with fixed mindsets don't want to apply themselves as they feel they are either already as good as they can be or they feel like they are not good enough to even try. People with a growth mindset have the idea that anyone can learn and that successes and failures are opportunities to grow and learn. We need to make sure we as teachers have a growth mindset and then need to educate parents to foster a growth mindset as well. One other interesting point he made on this topic was that stage fright and perfectionism can both be a type of fixed mindset – helping a student change their mindset to one of growth may help in these areas.

(Motivation, cont on pg 6)

## The One-Point Lesson: Self Observation as a Tool for Recording our Teaching

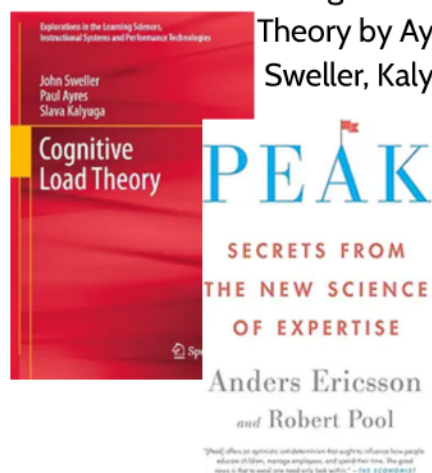
Recap by Lisa Schuler

This session, presented by Aubrey Faith-Slaker, Suzuki Piano Teacher Trainer at the Music Institute of Chicago, explored the value of recording lessons as a tool for professional development. Teachers were encouraged to inform students that recordings are for evaluating the teacher's practice, not the student's performance, and to keep recording devices unobtrusive to avoid distraction.

When reviewing the recording, teachers should look for lesson flow, clarity of communication, student engagement, teaching strategies, and musical teaching. Recording helps teachers identify both areas for improvement and practices worth keeping, allowing them to become students of their own teaching.

A final tip was a lighthearted comment that by watching a video, you may also discover you need to paint your walls a new color.

Suggested reading includes *Peak* by Anders Ericsson and *Cognitive Load Theory* by Ayers, Sweller, Kalyuga.



# Efficiency Meets Artistry: Practical AI Tools for Piano Teaching

Recap by Beth Gigante Klingenstein

The world of teaching is changing at lightning speed, but sessions like this one, given by Aya Hagelthorn, help pave the way for us all. Hagelthorn started her session with an explanation of five types of AI (authentic, artistic, administrative, adaptive, and actualized) and the uses of each, a good introduction for those new to using AI in their teaching. Throughout her presentation she discussed the creative ways that AI can be used, while stressing the fact that it can never replace our own teaching... rather, it can be used to enhance it. She explained how AI prompts (explicit questions or commands that can be given to AI to help it give us a helpful response) can be used to find repertoire for a specific student, draft messages to parents, find music by underrepresented composers, explain Baroque ornaments, create rhythmic exercises for a particular student, help with updating a studio policy statement, create a late payment notice, assist with a unique student (ADHD, dyslexia, hypermobility, small hands), and provide musical information for a particular piece. These are just some of the examples she used, explaining that AI information should always be fact-checked and that the teacher will never be replaced by AI, only assisted. Hagelthorn's presentation was well organized, humorous, and engaging and included an exceptionally helpful handout. At the end, I felt encouraged rather than concerned about the ways AI can be used in today's music studios.



Hagelthorn kindly offered to share this link to her handout with NDMTA members when I mentioned I was writing this article for our newsletter: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1H-C3O\\_V\\_XRmmAKeyUYuo4Dq6AXDhZLtl/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1H-C3O_V_XRmmAKeyUYuo4Dq6AXDhZLtl/view?usp=drive_link). (Editor's Note: this link is in the body of the email from NDMTA northdakotamta@gmail.com).

She also said that if anyone had questions or would like help, she would be happy to connect by email at [ahiguchi@umich.edu](mailto:ahiguchi@umich.edu). Just the kind of MTNA member we all can appreciate!

# Modern Family: How to Navigate Teaching in Today's Society

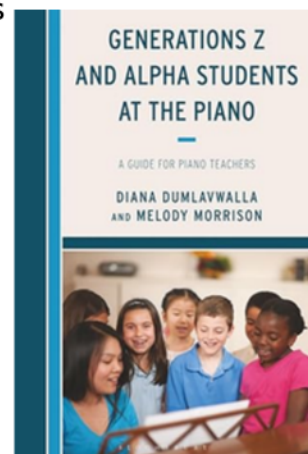
Recap by Lisa Schuler

This session, presented by Diana Dumlavwalla of Florida State University's College of Music and Melody Morrison of Middle Georgia State University, focused on using technology and gamification to support today's busy families. The presenters emphasized that parents and students respond best to tools that are visually appealing, interactive, and easy to use.

Technology resources may include video tutorials, backing tracks, and curated YouTube playlists tailored to individual students. Did you know that you can search backtracks for scales and chord practice on YouTube? Midweek check-in videos reinforce learning between lessons, while student recordings encourage sharing progress with family and friends. QR codes linked to practice materials and assignments provide convenient access to resources.

The presenters also highlighted the use of AI for lesson planning, parent communication, theory worksheets, and creative activities, including generating composer-style letters addressed to students.

Gamification strategies should be age appropriate, skill-aligned, and designed to promote success. The presenters discussed apps such as Practice Space, Note Rush, and Tenuto, as well as customizable games created through platforms like Canva. Incorporating elements such as streaks and progress tracking, similar to popular educational and social apps, can increase student motivation and consistency. Apps can be used to create games such as Jeopardy, wheel spinners, tracking maps, and tracing activities with music.



Resource: The two presenters have written a book! *Generations Z and Alpha Students at the Piano – A guide for Piano Teachers* by Diana Dumlavwalla and Melody Morrison.

*(Motivation, cont. from page 4)*

He then discussed the power and pitfalls of praise. Praise from a teacher should always be sincere, specific, and focused on effort, strategy, process, and progress – never on intelligence or talent. He suggested framing praise as a question since it will demand reflection on the process and strategy while commending hard work and effort. The last part of his presentation focused on self-determination theory and then left us with some helpful ideas:

- assign your students self-study pieces as they are a good assessment of your teaching
- students take lessons to create exciting sounds at the keyboard – keep this in mind for every lesson
- try having students work on three different levels simultaneously – current level, lower level for sightreading, and then a challenge or stretch piece
- assign students practice partners for accountability
- require a digital detox before a lesson

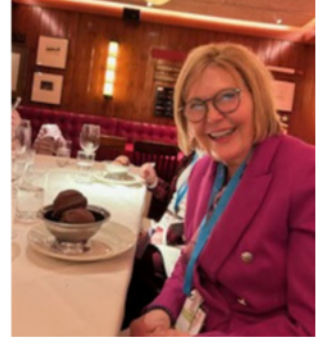
You can find the handout for this presentation on his website: [chrisfisherpiano.com](http://chrisfisherpiano.com).

# My Student Wrote a piece! Wait - What do I do Now?

Presented by Amy Stephens and Martha Hill Duncan

Recap by Anne Morris

Amy opened the session by sharing her first steps in composing. She emphasized that theory workbooks teach the essential building blocks of music reading and comprehension. Amy recommended that teachers assign theory at every lesson, ensuring that students progress through a theory level that matches or exceeds their repertoire. She also explained that composition workbooks pair seamlessly with theory books, allowing students to immediately apply new concepts—for example,



“Music by Me” by Wynn-Anne Rossi and Kevin Olson (Vol.1-5) or  
“Creative Composition Toolbox” by Wynn-Anne Rossi (Vol.1-6).

Alongside theory and composition books, Amy encouraged the use of lead sheets and fake books, which help students understand the melody and harmony interact. These resources also make it easy to learn contemporary songs popular in movies, shows, and musicals.

Additionally, building left hand technique becomes an act of composition once chord mastery is achieved. Amy suggested that students reach out to living composers for insight—by sending messages, asking questions, or sharing performances of their work.

Martha shared playful ideas to inspire young composers by encouraging creativity with their current repertoire. For example, students can experiment by changing the tempo—playing the pieces too fast or too slow. They might shift their focus by playing while someone is talking, looking around, or even blindfolded. Students can alter hand positions by crossing their hands or placing them apart. They can also explore different sounds by playing notes that are usually high, low, or soft. Additionally, students can invent stories at the piano—either solo or with friends—about topics like dogs and cats, stormy weather, making popcorn, playground adventures, hide and seek, putting out a forest fire, skating on a frozen pond, a day at the ocean. Jungle walks, wind and rain, mountain climbing, or sliding down a waterfall.

Martha emphasized that composing games and playful activities foster focused learning, flexible skill- building, and endless creative variations. These exercises also serve as excellent icebreakers. Student’s compositions should be clear, legible, and accurate. They are encouraged to use accidentals to add color and personality, and to ensure the time signature suits the rhythm. Students should also identify the most captivating feature of their piece—determining whether it appears enough or too often, and whether it connects throughout the composition. Guiding the performer with evocative titles, mood descriptions, and tempo suggestions is also important.

Finally, students should celebrate their work by adding a copyright statement, creating an artistic cover page, and showcasing their pieces at recitals or festivals. Teachers are encouraged to foster a culture where young composers feel proud, heard, and inspired.

# Can Everyone Be Taught to Play Musically?

Recap by Ozzie Johnson

Penelope Roskell, professor of piano and pedagogy at Trinity Laban Conservatoire in London

This session explored how teachers can equip and enable all their students to play musically, through inspiring their imaginations and developing musicality-driven technique, which combine to instill a deep love of music in them, help them reach their own goals and potential. This session did have a double purpose of selling Roskell's Essential Piano Technique method (published by Edition Peters), so it focused a lot on foundational technical solutions to musical problems. As a testament to the value I got from this, I'll mention that I recently used the pdf slides to regurgitate this presentation to my own applied students in their studio class. I suppose I would also have to recommend that you consider adding her method to your supplementary studio materials. Another note: I did run this pdf through generative AI (chatgpt) to see how it could do with summarizing slides out of a pdf, and it was honestly very good (it's just getting better and better, folks). Anything that I got from chatgpt will be italicized, and I include it because it's more or less how I would have summarized that content.



A major theme is that technique and musical expression should never be separated. Rather than relying on mechanical drills or purely repertoire-based learning, teachers should integrate technical development into musical contexts, using pieces and études that have artistic value. Efficient practice, coordinated movement, and physical gestures tied to musical intent are essential. Roskell also stresses the importance of sound: students must learn to listen both internally (imagining sound) and externally (evaluating what they produce), understanding how motion and touch influence tone quality. She presents many rudimental technical gestures from an exploratory perspective (a "/" means line break in the slide): "speed: fast or slow motion?/ Weight: heavy or light arm?/ Coordinated whole-arm movement or light finger touch?/ Use the natural forces:/ -A fast throw for a brighter sound/ -Release and rebound for staccato/ 'The Parachute touch' (arm weight) for a cantabile sound". The presentation contained a multitude of musical examples from her method, and they often presented familiar concepts (this is about teaching foundational technique, after all) in very fresh, imaginative ways. One rather specific example was on teaching rounding your wrist/arm at the apex of scales; after showing a C major scale with annotations for a low wrist ascending and high wrist descending, she showed a piece of music that uses C major ascending and D-flat major (or C Locrian, if your brain is a masochist) descending, to facilitate the higher wrist in a very natural way. The piece of music happens to sound lovely, and it teaches an extremely useful physical motion. The presentation highlights imagination as a core driver of musicality. This begins even before playing the instrument through singing, movement, improvisation, and exposure to varied repertoire. At the piano, teachers should encourage students to connect music to personal experiences, stories, and emotional landscapes. Questions about atmosphere, character, and color help students move beyond notes and into expressive interpretation. Creating a safe, supportive environment is crucial so students feel free to experiment, take risks, and develop their own artistic voice.

Roskell also outlines specific musical skills that contribute to expressive playing: phrasing, melodic shaping, harmonic awareness, rhythmic vitality, and rubato. Students should learn to shape phrases vocally, recognize structural and harmonic tension, and use physical movement to embody rhythm and flow. Ultimately, the goal of teaching is to foster independence—guiding students toward confident, self-directed musicianship. In this view, successful teaching "makes itself redundant," producing musicians who can think, feel, and communicate through music on their own.

Reach out to me (Ozzie Johnson) if you'd like the slides, I'm happy to share them out. Penelope's email that she shared is: [penelope@peneloperoskell.co.uk](mailto:penelope@peneloperoskell.co.uk)

# Empowering Parents: Best Practices to Support Pianistic Development, Anxiety Management and a Life long love of Music

*Recap by Vangie Johnson Parker*

## Parental Myths:

- Parents tend to think students remember everything that was discussed during the lesson.
- Some believe young children do not feel anxiety.
- Talking about anxiety makes it worse. (No. Talking it through actually helps a child work through it and builds valuable skills).
- Nervousness only happens when the student is not prepared.

## Some Do's:

- Parents should work with their child to set up a regular practice schedule. The practice time should happen when the student is not too tired and ready to focus. It's important to keep this time consistent.
- Parents need to impress upon the student that practice needs to happen within 24 hours after the lesson while the details are fresh in their mind.
- Parents should show an interest in the music each child is playing. Encourage parents to ask questions. "What did you like about this song?" "Is there a new skill or subject you are learning about in this piece?", "Tell me about it." "Can you tell me where the trickiest part is? Let's begin with that."
- Practice should be about results and growth. It is not about the amount of practice time. Explain to parents that each piece should be practiced in sections. Avoid moving onto another section before feeling comfortable with the first few phrases the child is attempting. Parents can help by saying "Oh that was so much better than last time! Can you play it just as well - one more time before we move onto the next page?" Parents should understand that their role is to be as encouraging as possible.
- The average elementary student up to fourth grade needs a parent sitting with them or close by during practice. Providing that a parent reads music, they may be helpful in pointing to notes, counting along, and correcting wrong notes. If not musical, the parent can be helpful by sitting close by and listening during practice time. Most parents know what does and doesn't sound quite right. It may be helpful to ask the student to repeat that questionable phrase just to bring the child's attention to it. They may be able to correct their error on their own.

- Parents can listen to recordings of their child's pieces together.
- It is very important to have parents check assignment information carefully for notes and reminders from the teacher. Is the student practicing all their assigned pieces? Parents can ask to have the student play each one by title just to be sure. Is their Theory assignment finished? Parents can check the page number, etc.
- The practice goal should be eventual self-evaluation and self-reflection.

## Some Don't's:

- Remind parents to avoid phrases such as "Oh, You are so smart, You look so cute at the piano, Perfect!, or You are so talented!" The focus should not be on the child but the effort put forth, and continued progress...never perfection.
- Parents should not be so quick to jump-in and "Fix" errors as they come up. Mistakes are a critical part of learning. Wait...was the student able to fix it on their own? If not, parents should ask "Is there something I can help with?"
- The words "Are you nervous...?" are not helpful. Parents should replace that with "Are you excited about playing today?"
- Should a student's performance be less than favorable, it is unwise for a parent to skip over the obvious. Parents can help them recover with positive remarks about the performance. "Your dynamics were just right, or, the fast notes at the end were nice and even. I just love that piece. Would you play it again for me when we get home?"

Given the proper parental support, parents can be their child's greatest support as they grow in their musical journey. Communication with parents on the above points can make practice more effective, enjoyable, and productive.

Ben stressed assigning specific, actionable tasks instead of vague directions. He urged teachers to assess repertoire difficulty and student engagement, recommending that students help select pieces or that teachers introduce more appealing works to boost motivation.

Teachers can diversify assignments beyond repertoire by incorporating listening exercises, improvisation, rote learning, or educational apps like Note Rush and Staff Wars. Lessons also may focus on easy pieces or music exploration to reduce dependence on at-home practice, at least temporarily.

Ben suggested increasing lesson frequency by adding shorter guided practice sessions. He also discussed the cautious use of rewards for meeting expectations and addressed the ongoing debate between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, noting that the most effective approach varies by student.

As a final measure, Ben recommended giving students a motivational talk, relating music lessons to broader life skills and, when appropriate, referencing relatable role models – while avoiding clichés.

## Alexa, Fix my Rhythm! AI Chatbots as Practice Coaches

*Recap by Amy Mercer*

Shiyl Zhu created three different apps with varying degrees of AI usage and tried using them with her students.

1. PracticePal was designed to help students practice their scales between lessons. A teacher can submit a lesson plan through the teacher portal and then students can access that plan through the student portal. This interactive AI app can only communicate with verbal communication so it cannot tell if a student is playing wrong notes or fingerings. It requires a lot of manual editing on the teacher's side and often gives wrong answers to students' questions (for example, when asked about the fingering for the Eb major scale, it gave the fingering for a C major scale). Her summary was that a video demonstration of a scale would be a lot more effective at this point as an interactive AI app may be too inconsistent to be useful.
2. Sightreading Coach which also had portals for teachers and for students. By the time this app was completed, it really didn't end up using AI at all, it just used the information the teacher put in so it ended up being more of a digital-assisted tool rather than an AI app.
3. Practice Log and she made an effort to balance the AI use in this app. It was created for students to keep track of what they are practicing each day and is more beneficial for advanced students. One benefit is that it can summarize all the notes a student has put in for a specific piece which can strengthen the reflective phase of learning. It also can summarize a student's overall notes for all pieces for general practice tips that they can then use when starting a new piece.

Zhu summarized with the following: AI is most effective when supporting cognitive processes and can extend the teacher's pedagogical presence. Well-designed technologies can assist in developing scaffolding and structural learning processes that students can internalize. Specific knowledge (unique knowledge and skills that are difficult to teach or to standardize) and tacit knowledge (knowledge that people possess but find difficult to explain or put in words or things learned through physical experiences) can't be generated by AI.

# NDMTA Board Meeting Minutes Jan 17, 2026

Present: Lisa Schuler, Vangie Parker, Vanessa Wold, Amy Mercer, Jessica Poyzer, Michelle Schumacher, Lynnae Wiitamaki, Sheryl Kjelland, Ozzie Johnson, Priscilla Keogh, Kathleen Johnson

Absent: Michelle Kallod, Jennifer Flores, Tamara Bertram, Dianna Anderson

Adoption of the Agenda

## OFFICER REPORTS

### Secretary: Vanessa Wold

Utilized recording of October Board meeting for accurate transcription and creation of meeting minutes for distribution to Michelle Kallod for November newsletter. Discussed use of Zoom and facilitation of meetings with Vangie Parker (VP). October 2025 Board Meeting Minutes not read. Lisa had correction to October 2025 meeting minutes to include 2026 Mini Conference Inviting nonmembers to session after lunch then asked to leave for board meeting and other business. Otherwise stand as submitted.

Treasurer: Michelle Kallod (absent) – Vanessa Wold read current balances below. Paid bills as presented and deposited checks when received. Submitted MNTA 2025-2026 Dues Verification Form.

Current Balance in Checking: \$24,919.45

Current Balance in Savings: \$15,338.50

Current CD: \$10,992.22. Matures Jan 17, 2027

\*\*question by Kathleen Johnson: does the savings balance include the CD value, or are they separate? Lisa believed they were separate however will confirm.

### Vice President/Commissioned Composer: Vangie Johnson Parker

- All requirements for Efrain Amaya's composition sent to MTNA last fall and well before the December 1, 2025 deadline.
- Suggesting the following candidates for 2027 Commissioned Composer: Ian Guthrie. Callie Stadem. Amy Mercer. Will be sending out a vote before March 1st.
- Spoke to current commissioned composer, Emily who is expecting a baby. Current composition in brainstorming phase much like a writer, and in whittled down process. 2 violins, cello, flute. She is (financially) responsible for getting those musicians to the performance. Her composition is relevant to current societal environments.
- Discussed Distinguished Composer of the Year. Benjamin Krause submitted.
- Vangie and Lisa to meet about composer's rehearsal time. Emily will need screen and laptop for performance. Kathleen requests name and composition title for the website.

*Motion: Vangie moved to reimburse VP for Zoom expenses (currently \$18.18) for online board meeting months, send to Michelle Kallod treasurer for reimbursement. Second: Kathleen Johnson Vote: passed unanimously*

### President: Lisa Schuler

- Notified MTNA that the NDMTA Board approved the VCSU Collegiate Chapter under the direction of Ozzie Johnson
- Submitted a President's Message for the November newsletter
- Helped to create a new job description and timeline for the Popplers Competition Chair Position. Updated the competition registration form and submitted an article to promote the competition.
- Updated the 2026 mini conference registration form and shared it with Popplers for comments
- Contacted GGFMTA about helping with the conference, Tamara will assist with the Popplers competition.
- Registered for the MTNA national conference, made flight arrangements, and a hotel room is reserved.
- Assisted Upper Valley with IMTF session, caterer has been secured
- Contacted the Grand Forks Visitor Center for complimentary items for the conference

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Certification/Service to the Profession – Amy Mercer

Will be sending out emails soon to local association presidents about submitting their 2026 Service to the Profession Nominees. Once nominations are received, will form an ad hoc committee to decide on the winner and then order the award.

### Coordinator of Directory Advertising – Jessica Poyzer

Sent 2nd and 3rd notices to advertisers who haven't paid for directory ads. Greater Grand Forks (take off as Tamara is stepping back), MSU and VCSU have not paid for advertising in current directory. March (by mid-March) requests go out for next year's ads.

### Directory Editor – Michelle Schumacher

Working on updating the directory as updates are sent to me. If you notice mistakes, alignment issues please contact Michelle.

*Motion: Michelle Schumacher moved that moving forward all members will automatically receive digital directories. Printed copies sent only by request. Second: Priscilla Keogh Vote: Approved unanimously*

### Foundation Fellow/Past President – Tamara Bertram

(absent)

- \$1, 667.36 raised for Michelle Kallod 2026 Foundation Fellow
- Google Form was distributed to board members to collect nominations for the 2027 Foundation Fellow.
- The nomination was distributed in advance of the board meeting.
- Planning next steps for fundraising and communications pending board approval.

*Motion: Sheryl Kjelland moved to nominate Dianna Anderson for 2027 Foundation Fellow*

*Second: Michelle Schumacher*

*Vote: approved unanimously*

### Historian – Lynnae Wiitamaki

Sent copies of photos and newspaper clippings from the NDMTA archives to Ryan Greene of MTNA for use in the 150th celebration. Compiling copies of photos from the NDMTA archives to be sent to Beth Gigante Klingenstein for use in her IMTF presentation at the NDMTA conference this summer. Her presentation will be on the history of NDMTA and MTNA.

### IMTF – Sheryl Kjelland

Upper Valley: 2026 & 2027,

Dickinson: 2028 & 2029,

Minot 2030 & 2031

The IMTF Gathering at the NDMTA State Conference in August 2026 will feature Beth Gigante Klingenstein presenting MTNA's 150th anniversary and the UVMTA giving a presentation about the NDMTA's 70th anniversary. We are putting together a video presentation about the music history in *North Dakota*.

### Membership – Dianna Anderson (absent)

Updated membership spreadsheet with numbers provided by Michelle Kallod. Sent updated membership list to directory editor, technology chair, newsletter chair. Current membership: 101 total (46 Regular, 31 Senior, 14 New, 9 Student, 1 reinstating). Sent welcome emails to new members.

\*\*13 new members per Lisa Schuler. Kathleen Johnson stated these numbers all pulled from same place.

### MTNA Competitions – Ozzie Johnson

*Sent in event request form for October 17th, 2026. Solidifying date for 2026 NDMTA performance competition. No confirmation yet for 10-17-26 competition date. VCSU Collegiate chapter meets Tuesdays.*

### Newsletter Editor – Michelle Kallod (absent)

- Prepared and Distributed November 2025 Newsletter.
- Updated gmail address lists with new members.
- February Newsletter will emphasize the Conference & Popplers Competition
- April Newsletter will emphasize MTNA Conference Recap. I would like each NDMTA member attending to either write one article summarizing 1 session they attended OR write one article with key take-aways from multiple sessions they attended. I would also like pictures from the conference.
- July will be a short newsletter with Conference emphasis and an email blast close to the conference registration deadline.
- Deadline for February Newsletter is February 5.

### Nominating – Priscilla Keogh

No changes. Candidates for 2026-28 President (Vangie Parker)/VP (Ozzie Johnson)

### Popplers Music Competition – Priscilla Keogh

Accumulating and organizing information on the Poppler's Competition. Finding ways to promote the competition so we are prepared for the event in August. Request Beth Dodotz to transport necessary files from Tamara Bertram at UND to Priscilla in Dickinson.

### Rally – Sheryl Kjelland

Sent papers to Fargo Moorhead for April Rally. Sheryl will produce "What is Rally?" to send to membership.

### Technology – Kathleen Johnson

The website is in the process of being updated. Popplers has renewed their advertising on the website, Schmitt Music did not. Tried again to reach Eckroth, but no reply. Popplers did an update on their logo and it was quickly changed by Bluestem Media. All contact information has been updated.

## **BUSINESS**

### 2026 Mini Conference Schedule

Wed - Vangie requested rehearsal time between 4-7pm for commissioned composer. Thurs - If morning start time adjusts, Lisa will let us know

*Motion: Vangie Parker moved to approve schedule. Second: Priscilla Keough Vote: passed unanimously*

### 2026 Mini Conference Registration Form

Only non-full conference registration attendees will be asked to leave after last session

*Motion: Amy Mercer moved to accept the registration form.*

*Second: Vangie Parker .ote: approved unanimously*

### MTNA Competition Judge Fees

Vote if MTNA Competition judges can be paid the same as the Popplers Competition judges (\$180 for 2 hours and \$60 for each hour after + \$100 mileage cap). Discussion and vote.

Motion: Priscilla Keogh moved to accept the above parameters for MNTA competition judge fees effective immediately. Second: Vangie Parker. Vote: approved unanimously.

2027 Full Conference – FMMTA will host.

Discussion of Mini conference in August vs full conference in June, pros and cons of each.. Lisa and Lynnae will get dates soon. Location: Moorehead State University Minnesota (MSUM)

MTNA Gala Table – Discussed buying a table for \$350. Reservation deadline is Feb. 2nd. Discussed how many people are going to the gala, does it justify the cost? We'll also form a list of attendees for the conference and see if anyone needs a roommate.

Motion: Vangie Parker moved to reserve a full table for \$350.

Second: Priscilla Keogh Vote: passed unanimously

Read Correspondence from Cyndie Caruth, WCD Director Came in second place for MTNA ND State Affiliate award, as read by Lisa Schuler

## LOCAL ASSOCIATION REPORTS

**Badlands – Priscilla Keogh.** October program, presentation by Kayla Kilwein regarding the Badlands Opera Project and upcoming performances. In November Beth Klingenstein presented a program about being a member of MTNA followed by a potluck lunch. Boys' Recital Nov 23rd. One of our members arranged for some mini recitals to be held at the nursing homes in Dickinson and Killdeer during December, in which all our students were invited to participate. Making plans for our March 21st program to be presented by Nariaki Sugiura.

**Bismarck Mandan – Jennifer Flores.** No activities since the last board meeting. Preparing to hold an open meeting; hoping to recharge the chapter

**Fargo Moorhead – Lynnae Wiitamaki.**

- November meeting was a round-table discussion on memorization and performance.
- Multi-Piano Concert on Saturday, November 8th at MSUM. There were five pianos on stage. Conducted by Dr. Peter Haberman from Concordia College.
- December, the potluck tradition continued at the home of one of our members.
- Zoom meeting in January on the pros and cons of teaching your own children, grandchildren, or other family members.
- Rally Committee is preparing for Rally on Saturday, April 11, 2026, at NDSU.
- Contacted MSUM regarding use of their facilities for the 2027 State Convention. They can accommodate our space and catering needs and are available during the first two weeks of August. I welcome board input on the preferred week.

**Minot – Dianna Anderson.** Has not met since last board meeting, stalled due to schedules.

**Northwest – Inactive**

**Upper Valley – Sheryl Kjelland.** We've had regular meetings. Working on presentation about North Dakota's musical history over 70 years for the IMTF Celebration of NNDMTA's 70th anniversary and MTNA's 150th anniversary. Beth Klingenstein will be working with us also. Rally is Saturday April 18, 2026 at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Park River

**Valley City – Ozzie Johnson** Eileen Geske receives checks and she drives them up to Ozzie. Contact MTNA to have this changed. Active in NDFMC. Collegiate chapter mentioned above.

**Greater Grand Forks – Tamara Bertram**

**Langdon Area - Lisa Schuler.** Confirmed with MTNA that Langdon Area MTA has 2 members, our local dues have stayed the same, and our local dues are included with the state and national dues. Lisa took her students to the Maple Manor Nursing Home to play Christmas Carols for the residents. They performed on the Clavinova that the students had purchased through their "Music Marathon for Maple Manor" fundraising event held a few years ago.

### Extras:

- NDMTA Facebook: membership encouraged to like and share posts!
- National MTNA Website: still coming
- MTNA financials: organization is healthy, working on payment plans for membership, discussed how to bump up fees to cover yearly dues

Meeting Adjourned

**Upcoming Events - see  
[www.ndmta.org](http://www.ndmta.org) for more information**

August 5-6, 2026

NDMTA Mini-Conference  
Popplers Music, Grand Forks

October 17, 2026

MTNA Competitions  
Valley City State University

April 2-4, 2027

MTNA National Conference  
St. Louis, Missouri

August 11-13, 2027

NDMTA State Conference  
Moorhead State University



Hosted by FMMTA

## August 2026 Conference Presenter: Helen Marlais

Dr. Marlais dedication to pedagogy for the young is sincere and unwavering. She has given well over 800 pedagogical presentations and master classes for pre-college students. One of the joys of her life has been creating materials to support piano teachers as they guide young musicians. The piano series that she has developed and published for The FJH Music Company have become an integral part of piano students' repertoire across the country and abroad.



Excellent external reviews have come from the European Piano Teachers Association (EPTA), Canada, and the USA. Her series, *Succeeding at the Piano®*, and *The All-in-One Approach to Succeeding at the Piano®*, *Succeeding with the Masters®*, *The Festival Collection®*, *In Recital®*, *Write, Play, and Hear Your Theory Every Day®* all have companion recordings. Other series that round out her catalog are: *Sight Reading and Rhythm Every Day®*, *Energize Your Fingers Every Day®*, *Play Your Scales and Chords Every Day®*, *The FJH Intervallic Reading Series®*, the *FJH Adult Piano Curriculum*, and *In Recital® for the Advancing Pianist*. The *Contemporary Keyboard Editions®* focuses on piano music by contemporary art-music composers. Several of these series above have been released in South Korea, China, and Taiwan. One can peruse this library and teaching resources, including over 1,500 free teaching and performance videos, on Marlais' website: [www.HelenMarlais.com](http://www.HelenMarlais.com) as well as on her You Tube channel: Piano Lessons Helen Marlais

Dr. Helen Marlais' performance schedule includes concerts and pedagogical sessions throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. Her travels abroad have included performing and teaching in India, S. Korea, Taiwan, Italy, England, France, Spain, Hungary, Turkey, Germany, Austria, Lithuania, Estonia, China, Australia, New Zealand, Jamaica, and Russia. Marlais has recorded on Audite, Gasparo, Stargrass and Centaur record labels. She has had performances broadcast regionally, nationally, and internationally, on radio, television, and the Internet. Her recording, *Music for Clarinet and Piano*, with husband Arthur Campbell, was nominated for the 2013 International Classical Music Awards, one of the most prestigious distinctions available to classical musicians today. *FonoForum*, a leading European classical music magazine, writes: "Seldom has one so clearly observed the bubbling substructure of the piano part of Schumann's *Fantasy Pieces Op. 73* and, thereby, seldom have the Schumann pieces been played so elegantly and delicately." They continue with: "...Marlais' playing is always exact, elegant, without excess. The beauty of this genuinely joint playing is so engaging that it seems to lack for nothing."

Recipient of the Distinguished Contribution to a Discipline Award at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Dr. Marlais teaches piano and directs the Piano Pedagogy Certificate program for undergraduate piano majors and for professional piano teachers. Dr. Marlais teaches applied piano lessons to a select number of exceptional piano majors who come to GVSU specifically to study with her, and she also teaches piano literature on a rotating basis. Many of Dr. Marlais' pre-college through university majors are awarding-winning pianists.

(Marlais, continued on page 15)

## Dr. Dianna Anderson Named NDMTA 2026 Foundation Fellow

Dianna Anderson has been a faculty member at Minot State University since 2003, teaching pianists of all levels and performing as a soloist and collaborator. A longtime member of NDMTA, she has presented and performed at state conventions in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Oklahoma, as well as the MTNA National Convention. She has served as president of NDMTA and is the faculty advisor for Minot State's Collegiate Chapter. She frequently adjudicates regional festivals and competitions and is on faculty at Dakota Chamber Music and International Music Camp. Originally from Ekalaka, Montana, her degrees are from the University of Idaho, and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and her teachers were Janeen Larsen, Jay Mauchley and Frank Weinstock.



You may give online via the MTNA website (be sure to request your donation to go directly to Dianna Anderson as Foundation Fellow nominee), or you can mail a check to MTNA. Please be sure to write Dianna Anderson in the memo section of your check.

MTNA website <https://www.mtnafoundation.org/contribute/contribute-now/>

or send your check to:

Jennifer Thomason  
MTNA Executive Assistant  
600 Vine St Ste 1710  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

*(Marlais, Continued from page 14)*

She has demonstrated the ability to develop the highest of standards while teaching with a joy-filled approach. She received her DM in piano performance and pedagogy from Northwestern University and her MFA in piano performance from Carnegie Mellon University. She received her BM in piano performance from the University of Toledo and was their 2008 Outstanding Alumna in the Arts. Dr. Marlais has been inspired by her teachers and their teachers: Frances Renzi, Rosina Lhévinne, and Beveridge Webster; Alan Feinberg and Dorothy Taubman; Ralph Zitterbart, Irene Schreier Scott, Elvina Truman Pearce, and Fran Larimer; and Harry Franklin, who traced his musical genealogy through Alexander Siloti to Franz Liszt.

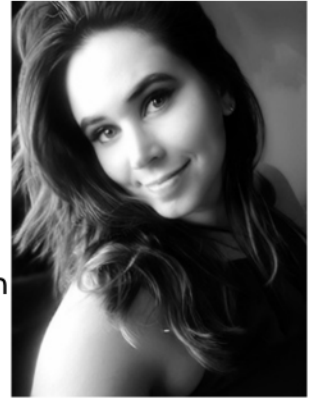
Visit:

[www.HelenMarlais.com](http://www.HelenMarlais.com)

FB: Succeeding at the Piano method

## NDMTA 2026 Commissioned Composer: Emily Driscoll

Emily E. B. Driscoll is a mother, pianist, composer, professor, vocalist, music director, piano instructor, conductor, singer/songwriter, and arranger. A native of Williston, North Dakota with over 20 years of experience in music, performance, and drama, she holds an undergraduate degree in Music (Piano Performance Emphasis) and a Master of Music degree in Choral Conducting from North Dakota State University. She has enjoyed a variety of musical ventures, including attending McNally Smith College of Music in St. Paul, Minnesota, where she studied Film Composition under the instruction of Sean MacMahon, a composer, ghostwriter, and orchestrator of many successful film scores, and Adi Yeshaya, an arranger for Prince and the TV show *The Voice*.



In addition to her experience in the academic world, Emily is a freelance composer and singer/songwriter with scores featured in sixteen nationally published audiobooks, a piano book featuring twenty-seven of her original compositions, and three albums featuring her skills as a pianist, lyricist, arranger, and vocalist, the most recent of which being the album *The Other Side*, which was adapted into a musical at the University of Sioux Falls, SD. She has performed at venues nationally and internationally, including at the Gospel Music Association of Canada in Calgary, Alberta and at the Breakforth Event in Edmonton, Alberta.

Emily is currently an Adjunct Professor at Williston State College, the Director of Music and Marketing at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, and the Music Director at Faith Methodist Church, as well as serving as the director of the Williston Concert Chorale and co-director of the Williston Youth Choir. When she is not busy with her eclectic assortment of hats (i.e. jobs), she enjoys being a stay-at-home mother to her 2-year-old son, Theodore, listening to classical MPR with her husband, Alec, and taking as many naps as is humanly possible in the midst of a demanding schedule!

## Popplers Music Competition, It's not too early to start!

The 2026 Poppers Music Competitions will be held on Wednesday, August 5, 2026, at the Popplers Music Store in Grand Forks, ND. Now is the time to think about what students in your studio would benefit from a non-advancing competition. The numerous benefits of a competition may help that student grow beyond your expectations! The competition details can be found in your NDMTA directory.

**Popplers**  
Music, Inc.

The competition day usually looks like this; the student and their teacher are given a rehearsal time to get used to the piano and atmosphere of the room. The students are given the competition time for a bit later in the day. Anyone can listen to the students play in the competition. The students will then receive written comments from the judge and learn the outcome of the competition. That evening at 7:00pm, all participating students will play one piece of their choice from their competition in the Popplers Music Recital. The recital is free and open to the public.

NDMTA members may submit students by completing and sending in the application by July 1, 2026. Applications can be mailed or filled out online at [ndmta.org](http://ndmta.org).



# Popplers Music Competitions Application

Popplers Music Store, Grand Forks, ND

Wednesday, August 5, 2026



Complete this form in pen or online <https://www.ndmta.org/competitions.php>

### Entrant Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_ Age as of June 1, 2026 \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of Parent(s) or Guardian(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Hometown Newspaper & Email \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Student Fees</b> (circle one)	Elementary	\$30.00 (ages 8-11)
	Junior High	\$35.00 (ages 12-14)
	High School	\$45.00 (ages 15-18)
	Collegiate	\$50.00 (ages 19-26)

### Teacher Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Member of NDMTA Yes/No \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Name of accompanist (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Area entering (piano, woodwinds, brass, strings, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

### **Repertoire for Competition Performance**

This repertoire program must include title and number of each movement, tempo markings, the composer's full name, total performance time and period of music. Please type the complete program on a separate sheet of paper and attach to this application form.

Example:	<u>Composition</u>	<u>Composer</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Period</u>
	Sonata No 1 in g minor, BMV 1001	JS Bach	I. Adagio (4:17)	Baroque
			<u>IV Presto (2:48)</u>	
			Total 7:05	

Competition Agreement: It is the responsibility of the teacher and the entrant to abide by the rules listed in the NDMTA directory that are applicable to the Popplers Music Competitions. This form will be returned if there are any omissions or inaccuracies. The undersigned verify that the information submitted on this application form is complete and accurate and that the teacher paid state and national dues. All piano programs must be memorized.

Signature of Entrant \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Completed forms and check (payable to NDMTA) must be postmarked by July 1, 2026. Mail to:

Priscilla Keogh  
1089 Dell Avenue  
Dickinson, ND 58601

## Mini Conference Schedule, August 5-6

All events held Popplers Music Store, Grand Forks, ND  
1726 South Washington Street

### Wednesday, August 5th

2:00-4:00 Popplers Music Competition – Exact time determined by number of entrants

4:30-6:30 NDMTA Board Meeting, Paradiso

7:00           Opening of Conference  
                  Popplers Music Recital  
                  Commissioned Composer Premier  
                  Reception Sponsored by the Upper Valley MTA

### Thursday, August 6th

9:00-11:30 Popplers Fall Piano Clinic – Helen Marlais, Presenter

11:30-12:30 Popplers Lunch – Free

12:30-1:45    NDMTA Session – Helen Marlais, Presenter  
                  Topic: “Sounds, Physical Gesture, and Imagination”

1:45-2:00    Break

2:00-3:00    Annual Business Meeting and Awards Presentation

3:00-3:15    Break

3:15-4:30    IMTF Celebration – Dr. Beth Klingenstein & Upper Valley MTA, Presenters  
                  Topic: Celebrating 150 years of MTNA and 70 years of NDMTA –  
                  Heavy hors d'oeuvres and beverages will be served!

4:30           Conference Closing

**NDMTA Annual Conference**  
**Registration Form**  
**August 5-6, 2026**  
**Popplers Music, Grand Forks, ND**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

NDMTA Member (circle): Yes No      Local Association \_\_\_\_\_

Registration Fees:

Full Conference – member \$75 \_\_\_\_\_ +\$2.47 with PayPal  
Full Conference – non-member \$75 \_\_\_\_\_ +\$2.47 with PayPal  
Full Conference - First Time Attendee \$55 \_\_\_\_\_ +\$1.90 with PayPal  
Full Conference - Student \$35 \_\_\_\_\_ +\$1.32 with PayPal

Late Registration Fee: (Postmarked after July 10) \$15 \_\_\_\_\_ +\$.74 with PayPal  
Total Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Payment Options: Complete this registration form online and use PayPal to pay online at [www.ndmta.org](http://www.ndmta.org) OR  
Mail completed form and send check, payable to NDMTA, before July 10th to:

Michelle Kallod  
668 17th Ave E  
West Fargo, ND 58078

Refunds: Registration fees are non-refundable except for emergencies and illness. Should such a conflict arise, the registration fee, minus food costs, will be refunded. Please contact Michelle Kallod about cancelling your registration.

Hotel Reservations:

Sleep Inn & Suites Alerus Center  
1350 South 42nd Street Grand Forks, ND 58201  
(701) 757-2900  
NDMTA Group Rate: \$94.00 for a King or 2 Queens Room  
Deadline for Group Rate: July 26th

\*The \$94 rate may be used for August 4th-7th in case you would like to arrive a day early and stay a day later to enjoy more time in Grand Forks.