In June 2013, 4 individuals (Jerry Hanson, Suzanne Uselman, Dianne Ornberg and Susan Kempel), embarked on a collaborative journey offered by Valley City State University called “Collaborate 21”. We spent 4 days learning about collaboration and began a collaborative project. Since Dianne is a 4th grade teacher and teaching about North Dakota represents a continual challenge, we chose North Dakota as our focus.

We began by first thinking of our task for the students.

Students in 4th grade will use a variety of reference and technology tools to explore North Dakota. They will demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways including: writing questions to ask another 4th grade class elsewhere in the state, answering those same questions about Fargo, visiting with the 4th grade classes on Google Hangout, creating a clay map of ND and participating in a Geo-cache activity on a painted outline of North Dakota on our playground.

The 21st Century Skills have been incorporated in our project. Students access and evaluate information. They work collaboratively and display citizenship. Students demonstrate creative thinking by piecing information together in a new way. They will communicate knowledge and ideas. Students are responsible and accountable while they collaborate with their peers.

On the library side, students will develop good questions, read informational texts, locate resources in the library and online, and be organized in their information gathering.

On the classroom side, the students need to practice writing paragraphs, writing interview questions, and developing an understanding of places around North Dakota besides Fargo. Our gifted/talented teacher and 5th grade g/t students will assist with learning about places around North Dakota by creating riddles about various places in North Dakota.

Finally, we thought about the products that would be created from this project. The students will create a clay map that shows the regions of ND, landforms and places to visit. Our class will also visit with other 4th grade classes across the state using Google Hangout. At the completion of the project, they will complete a post-assessment showing their knowledge of places around the state.

We began the unit with a pre-assessment. We asked the students to locate certain places on a blank outline map. Then, the LMS worked with the students on developing good questions to ask the students in other schools via Google Hangout. Our students answered the same questions about our community. Students used print resources, interviews and surveys to answer the questions. The classroom teacher discussed
places to visit and landforms around ND.

While the 4th grade students were busy with the questions, discussions and Hangout, the G/T 5th grade students began working to create a compass activity the 4th grade students will complete once the snow clears from our playground area.