




Nebraska's Consolidated State Plan  
Under the  
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)  
Nebraska Department of Education  
May 22, 2018

Cover Page

<b>Contact Information and Signatures</b>	
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<p>By signing this document, I assure that:</p> <p>To the best of my knowledge and belief, all information and data included in this plan are true and correct. The SEA will submit a comprehensive set of assurances at a date and time established by the Secretary, including the assurances in ESEA section 8304.</p> <p>Consistent with ESEA section 8302(b)(3), the SEA will meet the requirements of ESEA sections 1117 and 8501 regarding the participation of private school children and teachers.</p>	
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<b>Signature of Authorized SEA Representative</b>  See previous submission	<b>Date:</b> 5/23/18
<b>Governor (Printed Name)</b> Governor Pete Ricketts	Date SEA provided plan to the Governor under ESEA section 8540: August 7, 2017
<b>Signature of Governor</b>	<b>Date:</b>

## Programs Included in the Consolidated State Plan

Instructions: Indicate below by checking the appropriate box(es) which programs the SEA included in its consolidated State plan. If an SEA elected not to include one or more of the programs below in its consolidated State plan, but is eligible and wishes to receive funds under the program(s), it must submit individual program plans for those programs that meet all statutory and regulatory requirements with its consolidated State plan in a single submission.

☒ Check this box if the SEA has included all of the following programs in its consolidated State plan.

Or

If all programs are not included, check each program listed below that the SEA includes in its consolidated State plan:

If all programs are not included, check each program listed below that the SEA includes in its consolidated State plan:

☐ Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies

☐ Title I, Part C: Education of Migratory Children

☐ Title I, Part D: Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk

☐ Title II, Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction

☐ Title III, Part A: English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement

☐ Title IV, Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants

☐ Title IV, Part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers

☐ Title V, Part B, Subpart 2: Rural and Low-Income School Program

☐ Title VII, Subpart B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (McKinney-Vento Act)





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## Assurances

Nebraska submitted its ESSA assurances to the United States Department of Education on May 31, 2017. A copy of the assurance is available on the NDE ESSA website ([ESSA Assurance Document](https://www.education.ne.gov/ESSA/assurance/ESSA_Assurance_Document)) at the hyperlink: <https://www.education.ne.gov/ESSA/index.html>

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) requires a state to provide a description of the steps it will take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, the programs included in its state plan for students, teachers, and program beneficiaries with special needs. The steps Nebraska will take are outlined below:

All of Nebraska's applications for funds under ESEA/ESSA will inform eligible recipients of the GEPA Section 427 statute and requirement, and will require them to annually review all of the local programs and activities planned for assistance with federal funds under ESSA to:

- Determine if any of these programs, based on local circumstances, has a gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age barrier which could prevent or impede the access or participation of any students, teachers, and/or other program beneficiaries with special needs;
- Identify any program(s) that has or have such a barrier, and;
- Provide a clear and succinct description of the actions that will be taken to ensure that the barrier is effectively removed.



## Executive Summary

Residents of Nebraska have long been known for living “the Good Life.” Certainly contributing to this good life is our state’s education system. From Scottsbluff to Falls City, our schools are the pride of our state, with educators dedicated to their profession, communities supporting their public schools, and students learning 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to make them successful. These attributes combine to create a vibrant education system in the state, with positive results for students like those seen below.

### Nebraska Schools by the Numbers (2014-15 School Year):

- 245 Public School Districts
- 312,281 PK - 12 Students
  - 44.2% economically disadvantaged
  - 6.2% English Learners
  - 14.7% Students with Disabilities
  - 32% Students of Color
  - 88.9% Graduation Rate
  - 76% College Going Rate
- 25,634 Educators

### Student Performance:

- Elementary School Students at or Above Proficiency:
  - Reading: 81%
  - Math: 77%
  - Science: 73%
  - Writing: 70%
- Middle School Students at or Above Proficiency
  - Reading: 79%
  - Math: 68%
  - Science: 70%
  - Writing: 71%
- High School Students at or Above Proficiency
  - Reading: 69%
  - Math: 61%
  - Science: 73%
  - Writing: 76%

Nebraska consistently ranks in the top 15 in the National Assessment of Education Progress, sometimes called the nation’s report card<sup>1</sup>.

**12<sup>th</sup>**  
in 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Math

**14<sup>th</sup>**  
in 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Math

**13<sup>th</sup>**  
in 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading

**11<sup>th</sup>**  
in 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading

However, glaring disparities exist between groups of students in Nebraska. While on average, 79 percent of students in Nebraska were proficient in reading in 2014-15, **only 50 percent of students with disabilities and 68 percent of economically disadvantaged students were proficient**. Similarly, in the 2014-15 school year, on average 72 percent of the state’s students were proficient in math, **but only 43 percent of African American and 57 percent of Latino students in Nebraska met the same benchmark**.

Graduation rates are also disparate. While on average Nebraska students graduate in four years at a rate of 89 percent, almost **half of English Learners and only three in four Native American students graduate on time**.

*These inequities should and have spurred action.* The NDE is committed to leading and supporting the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living. That commitment is reflected not only in this plan, but in the work previously developed in the creation of a more comprehensive accountability system, AQuESTT, and the establishment of ambitious goals in the state's education Strategic Vision and Direction Plan.

In order to support the state's strategic priorities, a suite of approaches is utilized that reflects the nuance of the work and the many stakeholders, systems, and partners that intersect to support a state education system. The various roles are:

**Champion:** NDE actively leads the strategic vision, goals, and policy direction to support learning, earning, and living by:

- Engaging key stakeholders and partners on emerging needs in the educational landscape and corresponding policy advocacy approach
- Exercising policy leadership and proactively engaging and partnering with the Unicameral and Governor on priority issues
- Advocating for necessary resources to meet needs and/or address issues to execute the vision

**Regulator:** NDE leverages policy authority to ensure delivery of high quality, equitable education and services beyond compliance with state and federal regulations by:

- Assuring access to fair, equitable, and high quality education and services
- Monitoring school and districts to ensure adherence to regulations and setting expectations beyond compliance for accountability and growth in learning
- Promoting best practices for leadership and using data and resources to ensure effective continuous improvement

**Capacity Builder:** NDE directs technical assistance and professional development opportunities and promotes the sharing of best practices by:

- Providing technical assistance and professional development opportunities for educators, staff, and community providers
- Actively engaging with priority and needs improvement schools as well as continuing to support the improvement of all schools
- Identifying schools and districts across the state with effective educational practices to gather data on successful practices
- Acting as a facilitator to connect schools to highlight learnings, sharing lessons learned, and communicating best practices
- Developing, maintaining, and leveraging strong working relationships with education and community partners to extend and enhance capacity across the state

**Connector:** NDE helps bridge the divide between learning, earning, and living, connecting schools, families, business, and communities by:

- Connecting, convening, and partnering with schools, businesses, out-of-school programs, postsecondary education, state agencies, and community providers to create a more comprehensive approach to education and service delivery
- Supporting other agencies and organizations in active engagement and relationship building among individuals, parents, and families

**Change Agent:** NDE explores and supports promising innovations by:

- Researching, promoting, and providing support for promising new initiatives and innovations in education across the state and nation (e.g., promising activities in rural areas, blended learning, personalized learning, adult basic education)
- Providing ongoing training, support, and resources to drive the adoption of new practices and to assure implementation

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is a bi-partisan federal education bill passed in 2015 focused on ensuring a quality education for *all* students regardless of race, zip code, language proficiency, or disability. The ESSA planning process provided Nebraska an opportunity to seamlessly blend its recently developed Strategic Vision and

Direction and accountability system, AQuESTT. Nebraska approached ESSA by considering where to focus federal resources to better support struggling schools, historically underserved students, and the recruitment and development of highly-effective educators.

The sections below provide a high-level analysis of Nebraska's plan for providing all students in the state an excellent and equitable educational experience.

### **Section 1: Long Term Goals**

ESSA calls for each state to establish "ambitious long-term goals and measurements of interim progress" for each accountability indicator. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) aligned these long-term goals with those established in the strategic plan. In the ESSA plan, the NDE outlined goals and benchmarks for all students and all major subgroups of students including students of color, students with disabilities, and students who are economically disadvantaged. Overall, Nebraska seeks to *reduce the number of non-proficient students in each subgroup by at least 50 percent in 10 years*. The NDE is also proposing a set of Challenge or Stretch goals to accelerate the closing of achievement gaps. If the Department notes student progress exceeding the 50 percent reduction model, then the NDE may consider using Challenge Goals as the state's long-term goals.

### **Section 2: Consultation and Performance Management – Feedback from Stakeholders**

ESSA requires extensive outreach and engagement efforts to everyone from policymakers to educators to tribal organizations to parents. The NDE's commitment to engaging stakeholders goes beyond compliance to two-way communication that allows shared decision-making and support of the Strategic Vision and Direction. Feedback from the development of AQuESTT in 2014 and Strategic Vision and Direction in 2016 provide the foundation for the ESSA plan. Specific ESSA outreach took place with a statewide listening tour held in seven locations from Scottsbluff to Omaha, online resources, ready-to-deploy engagement materials, and an online feedback survey.

### **Section 3: Standards and Assessments for English Learners (Title III)**

In 2016, 6.2 percent of Nebraska's student population were considered English Learners (ELs). For the first time, federal law under ESSA requires states to include measures of EL progress in state accountability systems, motivating states to attack the EL achievement gap. Nebraska has responded by highlighting its work with the ELPA21 consortium<sup>2</sup>, translating NeSA tests into major languages, and including EL proficiency as its own indicator. Using baseline data from the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years, the state set long-term goals for reducing the percentage of students not meeting growth targets measured by ELPA21 assessments.

### **Section 4: Accountability, Support, and Improvement for Schools (Title I)**

At its core, ESSA focuses on educational equity for all students. The law mandates states to create an accountability system that identifies schools most in need of support and intervention. Federal law requires five major components, or indicators, for state accountability systems. Indicators include academic achievement, academic progress, graduation rate, progress for English Learners, and a state-determined "fifth indicator" of school quality or student success.

The NDE proposes maintaining the basic structure and functionality of AQuESTT. Schools will still be rated on a one to four scale and ultimately classified as Excellent, Great, Good, or Needs Improvement. While additional indicators may be added at a later time, the proposed metrics to be used are seen in Table 1 below. Nebraska plans to include chronic absenteeism, science, and the Evidence-Based Analysis as the indicators for school quality or student success. Another new indicator is the inclusion of English Learner proficiency as a stand-alone indicator. A taskforce met in March 2018 to recommend updates to AQuESTT resulting from the ESSA requirements.

Table 1- AQuESTT - ESSA Crosswalk

ESSA Indicator:	Academic Achievement	Academic Progress	English Language Proficiency and Progress	Graduation Rate	School Quality or Student Success
AQuESTT Rating Area:	Status (High Schools: Improvement & Non Proficiency)	Growth, Improvement, Non-Proficiency	English Language Proficiency and Progress	4- and 7-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	Chronic Absenteeism, Science, Evidence-Based Analysis

Table 2- Indicator Definitions

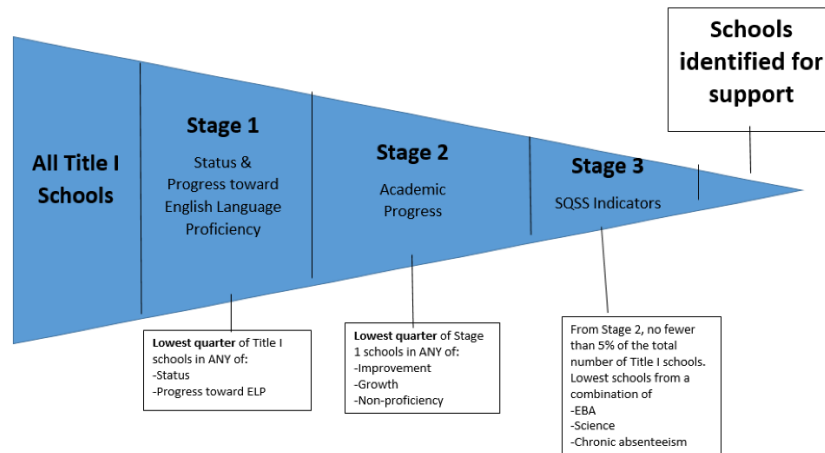
### School Designation

Schools needing improvement are categorized in three ways:

- Comprehensive Support and Improvement – Lowest performing five percent of Title I schools\*, public high schools with a four-year adjusted cohort grad rate of 67 percent or below, and/or schools participating in Targeted Support and Improvement that did not improve over a state-determined number of years.
- Targeted Support and Improvement – Schools with consistently underperforming subgroup(s) or low-performing subgroup(s) over a state-designated period of time.
- Additional Targeted Support and Improvement –Any school in which one or more subgroups of students is performing at or below the performance of all students in the lowest performing schools.

Indicator	Definition
Status	Rating based on percent of students' proficient NeSA test of ELA and math for grades 3-8, and ACT for high schools.
Growth	An adjustment to the Status rating may be made based on the percent of NeSA scores that showed improvement compared to the same individual's performance in the previous year. (Since high school students only take the ACT once, Growth does not apply.)
Improvement	An adjustment to Status is based on an upward trend in average NeSA scores across all subjects for the last three years. This adjustment can reward schools that are generally improving NeSA and ACT scores.
Non-Proficiency	An adjustment to the overall classification rating is made based on a decreasing or increasing three-year trend of the percentage of NeSA or ACT assessment scores that are defined as non-proficient.
English Language Proficiency	English Language Proficiency progress will be measured by the ELPA21.
Graduation Rate	For each school, a four- and seven-year cohort graduation rate in the previous year defines the maximum possible overall classification rating.
Chronic Absenteeism	A student is identified as chronically absent when a district reports that he or she has not been present for 10 percent or more of the days that he or she was "in membership" at a school. NDE staff in coordination with the Technical Advisory Council and the AQuESTT 2.0 task force will recommend a final method for evaluating reduction of chronic absenteeism in elementary, middle, and high schools.
Science	Stakeholders have been convened statewide to discuss the appropriate role of formative, interim, and summative assessment in the calculation of progress and proficiency in science. Work continues on this important topic.
Evidence-Based Analysis	The EBA is a tool used to obtain information about the measures of the six tenets of AQuESTT. Each public school completes an EBA questionnaire used to explain policies and practices. School classifications can be adjusted up due to promising practices evidenced by the EBA.

\*Since AQuESTT, by design, does not allow for the ranking of schools, models similar to the one below will be used to designate schools for CSI, TSI, and ATSI.



### *School Improvement*

New to ESSA, rather than separate school improvement grants and Title I dollars, state efforts must be unified and financed by a mandatory seven percent set-aside in Title I funding. The NDE has decided to use the bulk of its Title I funding to support the schools identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement. Schools identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement will complete a two-step process by first implementing a comprehensive needs assessment. The state then will distribute funding to applicants who show the greatest need. Improvement efforts will be supported by the NDE, Educational Service Units (ESUs), and capacity building at the school level.

The NDE is charged with identifying three Priority Schools among those classified as Needs Improvement. Supports and intervention in ESSA mirror the state's own efforts to improve its Priority Schools. In the future, three schools will be identified as Priority Schools (state-funded improvement activities) and roughly 24 schools identified as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (qualifying them for federally-funded improvement activities). This identification and improvement process will occur on a three-year cycle. Title I funding will be used for the lowest performing schools in the 2017-18 school year, but the NDE plans to carry over as much funding as possible to provide more significant support in the following round.

### **Section 5: Supporting Effective Educators (Title II)**

Nebraska's ESSA plan describes several state-level initiatives and activities that are expected to improve student achievement by way of influencing educator effectiveness and equitable access to high-quality teaching. The plan details the use of Title II-A funds to be used by Local Education Agencies for professional development, induction and other activities for new teachers, rigorous evaluation of educators, and strategies for recruiting, developing, and retaining teachers. The NDE recounts its 2015 Educator Equity Plan, and the work toward achieving many of the goals and recommendations outlined in it for achieving equitable distribution of effective teachers. Finally, the NDE describes how it will use an additional three percent set-aside from Title II-A funds to further statewide activities and efforts for supporting effective educators, with focused efforts directed toward school leadership.

### **Section 6: Supporting all Students – Well-Rounded Services (Title IV and VI)**

The final section in Nebraska's ESSA plan explains many of the other important federal programs targeting the academic and non-academic needs of the most disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities, the lowest-achieving students, homeless and at risk youth, immigrant students, and American Indian students. Highlighted activities include Nebraska's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, participation in the Rural Education Achievement Program, the McKinney-Vento Act for homeless youth, education of migratory children, and mini-grants for Title IV-A.



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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/>

<sup>2</sup> ELPA21 is a group of states that designed and developed an assessment system for English Learners. The system is based on the English Language Proficiency Standards and addresses language demands needed to be college and career ready.



## Instructions

*Each SEA must provide descriptions and other information that address each requirement listed below for the programs included in its consolidated State plan. Consistent with ESEA section 8302, the Secretary has determined that the following requirements are absolutely necessary for consideration of a consolidated State plan. An SEA may add descriptions or other information, but may not omit any of the required descriptions or information for each included program.*

In order to support State educational agencies (SEAs) to leverage their work developing a consolidated State plan, the U.S. Department of Education provides the following table as a guide to SEAs preparing to submit the Revised Consolidated State Plan Template published on March 13, 2017 under section 8302 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). An SEA may consider using its previously developed responses to requirements in the original November 29, 2016 template as a basis for responding to the requirements in the Revised Consolidated State Plan Template.

The Nebraska Department of Education began writing the statewide plan using the original Consolidated State Plan Template. When the Revised Consolidated State Plan Template was published on March 13, 2017, the NDE merged elements of the two templates provided by the U. S. Department of Education. The NDE participated in the CCSSO critical friends meeting on May 16, 2017, where feedback was provided on the plan to the NDE.

*Table 3 State Plan Requirements by Program*

State Plan Requirements by Program	Statutory and Regulatory Requirements	Item(s) from Revised Template	Item(s) from Original Template	Location in State Plan
<b>Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies (LEAs)</b>	<b>Citation to ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, and Part 200 regulations</b>			
Eighth Grade Math Exception	1111(b)(2)(C); 34 CFR 200.5(b)	A.2.i-iii	3.A	63
Native Language Assessments	1111(b)(2)(F); 34 CFR 200.6(f)(2)(ii) and (f)(4)	A.3.i-iv	3.B	63
Statewide Accountability System and School Support and Improvement Activities (1111(c) and (d))				

Subgroups	1111(c)(2)	A.4.i.a-d	4.1.B	100
Minimum N-Size	1111(c)(3)	A.4.ii.a-e	4.1.C	101
Establishment of Long-Term Goals	1111(c)(4)(A)	A.4.iii.a-c	1.A-C	17
Indicators	1111(c)(4)(B)	A.4.iv.a-e	4.1.A	77
Annual Meaningful Differentiation	1111(c)(4)(C)	A.4.v.a-c	4.1.D; 4.1.G	107
Identification of Schools	1111(c)(4)(C)(iii) and (D); 1111(d)(2)(C)-(D)	A.4.vi.a-g	4.2.A-B	118
Annual Measurement of Achievement	1111(c)(4)(E)(iii)	A.4.vii	4.1.E	115
Continued Support for School and LEA Improvement	1111(d)(3)	A.4.viii.a - f	4.2.A.ii; 4.2.B.iii; 4.3.B-D	125-129
Disproportionate Rates of Access to Educators	1111(g)(1) (B)	A.5	5.3.B-C	169
School Conditions	1111(g)(1)(C)	A.6	6.1.C	190
School Transitions	1111(g)(1)(D)	A.7	6.1.A-B	187
<b>Title I, Part C: Education of Migratory Children</b>				
Supporting Needs of Migratory Children	1304(b)(1)	B.1.i-iv	6.2.B.ii –iii and vi	198
Promote Coordination of Services	1304(b)(3)	B.2	6.2.B.iv	202
Use of Funds	1304(b)(4)	B.3	6.2.B.viii	205
<b>State Plan Requirements by Program</b>	<b>Statutory and Regulatory Requirements</b>	<b>Item(s) from Revised Template</b>	<b>Item(s) from Original Template</b>	<b>Location in State Plan</b>
<b>Title I, Part D: Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or</b>				
Transitions Between Correctional Facilities and Local Programs	1414(a)(1)(B)	C.1	6.2.C.i	210
Program Objectives and Outcomes	1414(a)(2)(A)	C.2	6.2.C.ii	213
<b>Title II, Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction</b>				
Use of Funds	2101(d)(2)(A) and (D)	D.1	5.2.A	137
Use of Funds to Improve Equitable Access to Teachers in Title I, Part A Schools	2101(d)(2)(E)	D.2	5.2.A; 5.3.E	137-180
System of Certification and Licensing	2101(d)(2)(B)	D.3	5.1.A	145
Improving Skills of Educators	2101(d)(2)(J)	D.4	5.2.B	151
Data and Consultation	2101(d)(2)(K)	D.5	2.C-D	161
Teacher Preparation	2101(d)(2)(M)	D.6	5.1.B	147
<b>Title III, Part A, Subpart 1: English Language Acquisition and Language</b>				

Entrance and Exit Procedures	3113(b)(2)	E.1	6.2.D.i	215
SEA Support for English Learner Progress	3113(b)(6)	E.2.i-ii	--	217
Monitoring and Technical Assistance	3113(b)(8)	E.3.i-ii	2.2.B and D	218
<b>Title IV, Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants</b>				
Use of Funds	4103(c)(2)(A)	F.1	6.1.A-E	195
Awarding Subgrants	4103(c)(2)(B)	F.2	--	196
<b>Title IV, Part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers</b>				
Use of Funds	4203(a)(2)	G.1	6.2.E.i	219
Awarding Subgrants	4203(a)(4)	G.2	6.2.E.ii	220
<b>Title V, Part B, Subpart 2: Rural and Low- Income School Program</b>				
Outcomes and Objectives	5223(b)(1)	H.1	6.2.F.i	222
Technical Assistance	5223(b)(3)	H.2	2.2.D	223
<b>Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title VII, Subtitle B</b>	<b>McKinney-Vento Citation</b>			
Student Identification	722(g)(1)(B)	I.1	6.2.G.i	224
Dispute Resolution	722(g)(1)(C)	I.2	6.2.G.iii	226
Support for School Personnel	722(g)(1)(D)	I.3	6.2.G.ii	224
Access to Services	722(g)(1)(F)(i)	I.4	6.2.G.v.1 and 2; 6.2.G.iv	226
Strategies to Address Other Problems	722(g)(1)(H)	I.5.i-v	6.2.G.vi	227
State Plan Requirements by Program	Statutory and Regulatory Requirements	Item(s) from Revised Template	Item(s) from Original Template	Location in State Plan
Policies to Remove Barriers	722(g)(1)(I)	I.6	6.2.G.vi	228
Assistance from Counselors	722(g)(1)(K)	I.7	--	228



## Glossary of Terms & Abbreviations/Acronyms

Term	Definition
4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	The percentage of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the cohort for the graduating class.
7-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	The percentage of students who graduate in seven years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the cohort for the graduating class.
ACT	Standardized college readiness assessments
AQuESTT	Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow; Nebraska's school and district accountability system
CCSSO	The Council of Chief State School Officers
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
Children with Disabilities	Children who require special education services or those who have one or more disabilities such as autism, communication disorders, deaf blindness, emotional disturbances, hearing impairments, intellectual disability, orthopedic impairments, other health impairments, specific learning disabilities, traumatic brain injuries, or visual impairments, including blindness.
Chronic Absenteeism	A student is identified as chronically absent when a district reports that he or she has not been present for 10 percent or more of the days that he or she was "in membership" at a school. "Membership" is defined as the number of school days in session in which the student is enrolled and registered during the annual reporting period from July 1 to June 30.
CTE	Career and Technical Education
Demographically Transitioning School	Schools typified by substantial populations of English Learner students and families
DHHS-CFS	Department of Health and Human Services – Division of Child and Family Services
EBA	Evidence based analysis – Tool to obtain information about the measures of the six tenets of AQuESTT. Each public school completes an EBA questionnaire used to explain policies and practices.
Economically Disadvantaged	Low-income students who qualify for free or reduced priced lunch and students who are homeless, migrant, or runaways.
Education Workforce Index	Value calculated at the state, district, and building levels to provide information about the strength of the educator workforce in relation to equitable access planning
ELA	English language arts
ELP	English language proficiency
ELPA21	ELPA21 is a group of states that designed and developed an assessment system for English Learners. The system is based on the English Language Proficiency Standards and addresses language demands needed to be college and career ready
English Learner (EL)	Students who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often come from non-English speaking homes and backgrounds, and who typically require specialized or modified instruction in both the English language and in their academic courses
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
ESU	Educational Service Unit
Formula Grant	Noncompetitive grant which awards funds based on a predetermined formula
Growth	An adjustment to the Status rating may be made based on the percent of NeSA scores that showed improvement compared to the same individual's performance in the previous year. (Since high school students only take the ACT once, Growth does not apply.)

Term	Definition
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act – law ensuring services to children with disabilities
IEP	Individualized Education Plan – plan or program developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives specialized instruction and related services
Improvement	An adjustment to Status is based on an upward trend in average NeSA scores across all subjects for the last three years. This adjustment can reward schools that are generally improving NeSA and ACT scores.
LEA	Local Education Agency – public school district
Native American School	Schools that are typified by significant percentages of students residing on tribal nation land and in primary tribal cultures
NDE	The Nebraska Department of Education
NeSA	Nebraska Statewide Assessment; proctored annually to students in grades 3-8 for Math, English language arts, and science.
Non-Proficiency	An adjustment to the overall classification rating is made based on a decreasing or increasing three-year trend of the percentage of NeSA or ACT assessment scores that are defined as non-proficient.
n-size	Minimum student group size
Participation Rate	The percentage of students participating in state assessments
Present	Title 92, Nebraska Administrative Code, Chapter 2 states “Students shall be counted in attendance when they are present on days when school is in session. A student shall be counted present only when he or she is actually at the school or is present at a school sponsored activity which is supervised by a member or members of the school staff. This may include authorized independent study, work-study programs, field trips, athletic contests, music festivals, student conventions, instruction for homebound students, or similar activities when officially authorized under policies of the local school board. It does not include "making up" school-work at home or activities supervised or sponsored by private individuals or groups.
Priority School	Nebraska state law allows for three schools identified as Needs Improvement by the AQuESTT classification system to be designated as Priority Schools. These three schools receive increased supports and guidance from Nebraska Department of Education, ESUs, and other stakeholders.
Rule 10	All public school districts in Nebraska that provide elementary and/or secondary instruction to children of compulsory attendance age are required to be accredited under the provisions of Rule 10.
SEA	State Education Agency (Nebraska Department of Education)
Small Community School	Typified by rural and possibly declining populations.
Status	Rating based on percent of students proficient on NeSA tests of ELA and math for grades 3-8, and ACT for high schools.
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
Subgroup	A group of students disaggregated from all students. Includes specific racial/ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English Learner students.
TEEOSA	Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act – Nebraska’s school finance system
Urban/Metro School	Schools typified by racial and ethnic diversity and populations in poverty.



## Section 1: Long-Term Goals

*Instructions: Each SEA must provide baseline data (i.e., starting point data), measurements of interim progress, and long-term goals for academic achievement, graduation rates, and English language proficiency. For each goal, the SEA must describe how it established its long-term goals, including its State-determined timeline for attaining such goals, consistent with the requirements in section 1111(c)(2) of the ESEA and 34 C.F.R. § 200.13. Each SEA must provide goals and measurements of interim progress for the all students group and separately for each subgroup of students, consistent with the State's minimum number of students.*

*In the tables below, identify the baseline (data and year) and long-term goal (data and year). If the tables do not accommodate this information, an SEA may create a new table or text box(es) within this template. Each SEA must include measurements of interim progress for academic achievement, graduation rates, and English language proficiency in Appendix A.*

### A. Academic Achievement

- i. **Description.** *Describe how the SEA established its ambitious long-term goals and measurements of interim progress for improved academic achievement, including how the SEA established its State-determined timeline for attaining such goals.*

The mission of the Nebraska Department of Education is to lead and support the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living. To accomplish this mission, Nebraska holds high expectations for **all** students, and has set ambitious long-term goals and interim benchmarks to match those expectations. These long-term goals also reflect an effort to align ESSA with the state's accountability system, AQuESTT, and its recently developed Strategic Vision and Direction (Strategic Plan).

In the fall of 2016, a strategic planning process developed goals around several areas established by baseline data. AQuESTT served as a starting point and guided much of the work of the Strategic Plan. In essence, the Strategic Plan was the vehicle to organize the work required in AQuESTT. While the Strategic Plan includes much more than just the academic achievement, any work at NDE that involves academic achievement accountability measures must be consistent and aligned.

The Strategic Plan was developed for a ten-year time span. The goals reflect baseline data around the 2014-15 school year with goals projected out to 2026-27 school year. Data from the 2011-12 through 2014-15 school years showed a four-year trend. Each goal area has trajectories plotted for interim measures based on the trends found in the baseline year and two to three prior years. More information on the 2017-2026 Strategic Vision and Direction<sup>3</sup> can be found [here](#) and in Appendix A.

### Alignment to Strategic Vision and Direction

Goal 6.3: By 2026, the percent of Nebraska students in grades 3-8 and 11 proficient in math will increase from 72% to 82%.

Goal 6.4: By 2026, the percent of Nebraska students in grades 3-8 and 11 proficient in reading will increase from 79% to 89%.

Goal 6.5: By 2026, the percent of Nebraska students in grades 3-8 and 11 proficient in science will increase from 72% to 82%.

**Alignment to AQuESTT Tenets:**

*Transitions* – The State Board believes that quality educational opportunities focus on supports for students transitioning between grade levels, programs, schools, districts, and ultimately college and careers.

*College and Career Ready* - The State Board of Education believes that every student upon completion of secondary education shall be prepared for postsecondary educational opportunities and to pursue his or her career goals.

*Establishing 10-year Goals*

The NDE has set its target as a 50 percent reduction in students that are not proficient on statewide tests. To calculate these goals, the current percentage of students proficient for any given sub-group would be subtracted from 100 percent and then divided by two. This figure is then added back to the current percent proficient to arrive at the 10-year goal. The state board will likely consider revising the Strategic Plan goals to more directly align with the goals identified in Nebraska’s ESSA plan.

*Nebraska seeks to reduce the number of students in each subgroup that are not proficient by at least 50 percent in ten years.*

*Rationale*

The goals of this model are meant to be ambitious, yet attainable and would narrow the achievement gaps between historically underserved groups statewide over the next 10 years. The interim goal charts show the narrowing of gaps in terms of the percent of students proficient at the state level. In many instances, the gaps between subgroups are narrowed to single digits. Another advantage of this model is that all groups and schools must see improvement in percentages of students proficient regardless of starting point. This prevents higher achieving groups from coasting and requires improvement from all students.

For the first time in 2016-17, Nebraska administered the ACT to all 11<sup>th</sup> graders in the state. A cut point setting process to determine proficiency levels based on scale scores is currently in progress. Once those cut points and proficiency levels have been established the same model illustrated here for English Language Arts (Reading, English, and Writing sections), Math, and Science can be applied to ACT with long term goals being established. These goals would reflect the same 50 percent reduction of non-proficient students.

- i. Provide the baseline and long-term goals in the tables below

**Baseline Proficiency for English Language Arts, Math, and Science and Projected 2026 Long-Term Goals.**

*Table 4 English Language Arts Long-Term Goals*

Subgroups	2014-2015 Baseline (% Proficient)	2026 Goal (% Proficient)
All students	79%	89%
Economically disadvantaged students	68%	84%
Children with disabilities	50%	75%
English learners	58%	79%
African American	59%	79.5%
American Indians or Alaska Native	55%	76%
Asian	76%	88%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	73%	87%
Hispanic or Latino	68%	84%
White	86%	93%

*Table 5 Math Long-Term Goals*

Subgroups	2014-2015 Baseline (% Proficient)	2026 Goal (% Proficient)
All students	72%	86%
Economically disadvantaged students	57%	78.5%
Children with disabilities	42%	71%
English learners	49%	74.5%
African American	43%	71.5%
American Indians or Alaska Native	44%	72%
Asian	73%	86.5%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	60%	80%
Hispanic or Latino	57%	78.5%
White	80%	90%

Table 6 Science Long-Term Goals

Subgroups	2014-2015 Baseline (% Proficient)	2026 Goal (% Proficient)
All students	72%	86%
Economically disadvantaged students	54%	77%
Children with disabilities	40%	70%
English learners	30%	65%
African American	41%	70.5%
American Indians or Alaska Native	44%	72%
Asian	64%	82%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	65%	82.5%
Hispanic or Latino	52%	76%
White	82%	91%

### Reading, Math, and Science Interim Methodology

To determine interim benchmarks for each group, the 10-year goal ending point is divided by the number of years between the baseline year and ending year to arrive at interim percentages. As the tables showing interim measures of progress depict, to meet the ambitious state goals, some student subgroups are required to grow at higher rates than others. For example, in math, to meet the state’s goals by 2026, an additional 2.38 percent of African American students must meet proficiency per year. For students in the Asian subgroup, this figure is 1.13 percent annual growth. Notably, each group is still improving, but these differential rates encourage a focus on the students that are most in need of improvement.

As detailed in tables, Nebraska’s ambitious state goals are designed to ensure rigorous expectations for all learners and all subgroups. All subgroups share the overarching goal of “50 percent reduction of non-proficient students”, though the manifestation of the 50 percent reduction is unique to each subgroup. The 50 percent reduction is grounded in baseline data specific to the subgroup, resulting in unique goals specific to subgroup needs. For example, in order to meet the state’s math goal, all subgroups must exhibit a 50% reduction of non-proficient students. This 50 percent reduction means that the African American student subgroup must improve proficiency by 28.5 percent (43% to 71.5%), the Hispanic student subgroup must improve proficiency by 21.5 percent (57% to 78.5%), and the White student subgroup must improve by 10 percent (80-90%). This approach relies upon a foundational understanding that less proficient student subgroups are more likely to improve at a faster rate when compared to those subgroups already manifesting a high degree of proficiency. Ultimately, this approach ensures a high degree of rigor and substantially closes achievement gaps across subgroups.

Table 7 English Language Arts Interim Measures of Progress through 2026

School Year	Economically Disadvantaged (ED)	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian	Black or African American	Pacific Islander	Hispanic	White	All	SPED	ELL	SPED All gap	ELL All gap	ED All gap
2011-12	60.00%	47.00%	74.00%	50.00%	63.00%	58.00%	81.00%	74.00%	45.00%	50.00%	29.00%	24.00%	14.00%
2012-13	63.00%	51.00%	75.00%	54.00%	66.00%	62.00%	84.00%	77.00%	47.00%	53.00%	30.00%	24.00%	14.00%
2013-14	64.00%	52.00%	74.00%	55.00%	68.00%	64.00%	84.00%	77.00%	47.00%	53.00%	30.00%	24.00%	13.00%
2014-15	68.00%	55.00%	76.00%	59.00%	73.00%	68.00%	86.00%	79.00%	50.00%	58.00%	29.00%	21.00%	13.00%
2016-17	70.67%	58.50%	78.00%	62.50%	75.33%	70.67%	87.17%	80.67%	54.17%	61.50%			
2018-19	73.33%	62.00%	80.00%	65.90%	77.67%	73.33%	88.33%	82.33%	58.33%	65.00%			
2020-21	76.00%	65.50%	82.00%	69.30%	80.00%	76.00%	89.50%	84.00%	62.50%	68.50%			
2022-23	78.67%	69.00%	84.00%	72.70%	82.33%	78.67%	90.67%	85.67%	66.67%	72.00%			
2024-25	81.33%	72.50%	86.00%	76.10%	84.67%	81.33%	91.83%	87.33%	70.83%	75.50%			
2026-27	84.00%	76.00%	88.00%	79.50%	87.00%	84.00%	93.00%	89.00%	75.00%	79.00%			
Goal	84.00%	76.00%	88.00%	79.50%	87.00%	84.00%	93.00%	89.00%	75.00%	79.00%	14.00%	10.00%	5.00%
Goal-Current	16.00%	21.00%	12.00%	20.50%	14.00%	16.00%	7.00%	10.00%	25.00%	21.00%			
2-year Growth	2.67%	3.50%	2.00%	3.40%	2.33%	2.67%	1.17%	1.67%	1.67%	4.17%			

Table 8 Math Interim Measures of Progress through 2026

School Year	Economically Disadvantaged (ED)	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian	Black or African American	Pacific Islander	Hispanic	White	All	SPED	ELL	SPED All gap	ELL All gap	ED All gap
2011-12	51.00%	36.00%	72.00%	36.00%	56.00%	49.00%	75.00%	67.00%	39.00%	44.00%	28.00%	23.00%	16.00%
2012-13	53.00%	38.00%	72.00%	37.00%	55.00%	51.00%	77.00%	68.00%	39.00%	44.00%	29.00%	24.00%	15.00%
2013-14	56.00%	43.00%	71.00%	41.00%	63.00%	55.00%	79.00%	71.00%	41.00%	47.00%	30.00%	24.00%	15.00%
2014-15	57.00%	44.00%	73.00%	43.00%	60.00%	57.00%	80.00%	72.00%	42.00%	49.00%	30.00%	23.00%	15.00%
2016-17	60.42%	48.67%	75.25%	47.75%	63.33%	60.58%	81.67%	74.33%	46.83%	53.25%			
2018-19	63.83%	53.33%	77.50%	52.50%	66.67%	64.17%	83.33%	76.67%	51.67%	57.50%			
2020-21	67.25%	58.00%	79.75%	57.25%	70.00%	67.75%	85.00%	79.00%	56.50%	61.75%			
2022-23	70.67%	62.67%	82.00%	62.00%	73.33%	71.33%	86.67%	81.33%	61.33%	66.00%			
2024-25	74.08%	67.33%	84.25%	66.75%	76.67%	74.92%	88.33%	83.67%	66.17%	70.25%			
2026-27	77.50%	72.00%	86.50%	71.50%	80.00%	78.50%	90.00%	86.00%	71.00%	74.50%			
Goal	77.50%	72.00%	86.50%	71.50%	80.00%	78.50%	90.00%	86.00%	71.00%	74.50%	15.00%	11.50%	8.50%
Goal-Current	20.50%	28.00%	13.50%	28.50%	20.00%	21.50%	10.00%	14.00%	29.00%	25.50%			
2-year Growth	3.42%	4.67%	2.25%	4.75%	3.33%	3.58%	1.67%	2.33%	4.83%	4.25%			

Table 9 Science Interim Measures of Progress through 2026

School Year	Economically Disadvantaged (ED)	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian	Black or African American	Pacific Islander	Hispanic	White	All	SPED	ELL	SPED All gap	ELL All gap	ED All gap
2011-12	47.00%	40.00%	62.00%	31.00%	48.00%	42.00%	77.00%	66.00%	39.00%	26.00%	27.00%	40.00%	19.00%
2012-13	51.00%	42.00%	65.00%	36.00%	53.00%	46.00%	80.00%	69.00%	39.00%	25.00%	30.00%	44.00%	18.00%
2013-14	54.00%	40.00%	66.00%	39.00%	52.00%	51.00%	82.00%	71.00%	41.00%	28.00%	30.00%	43.00%	17.00%
2014-15	54.00%	44.00%	64.00%	41.00%	65.00%	52.00%	82.00%	72.00%	40.00%	30.00%	32.00%	42.00%	18.00%
2016-17	57.83%	48.67%	67.00%	45.92%	67.92%	56.00%	83.50%	74.33%	45.00%	35.83%			
2018-19	61.67%	53.33%	70.00%	50.83%	70.83%	60.00%	85.00%	76.67%	50.00%	41.67%			
2020-21	65.50%	58.00%	73.00%	55.75%	73.75%	64.00%	86.50%	79.00%	55.00%	47.50%			
2022-23	69.33%	62.67%	76.00%	60.67%	76.67%	68.00%	88.00%	81.33%	60.00%	53.33%			
2024-25	73.17%	67.33%	79.00%	65.58%	79.58%	72.00%	89.50%	83.67%	65.00%	59.17%			
2026-27	77.00%	72.00%	82.00%	70.50%	82.50%	76.00%	91.00%	86.00%	70.00%	65.00%			
Goal	77.00%	72.00%	82.00%	70.50%	82.50%	76.00%	91.00%	86.00%	70.00%	65.00%	14.00%	21.00%	9.00%
Goal-Current	23.00%	28.00%	18.00%	29.50%	17.50%	24.00%	9.00%	14.00%	30.00%	35.00%			
2-year Growth	3.83%	4.67%	3.00%	4.92%	2.92%	4.00%	1.50%	2.23%	5.00%	5.83%			

### Nebraska's Challenge (Stretch) Goals

The NDE and State Board of Education wish for there to be no achievement gaps between subgroups, and aspire to have 100 percent proficiency for all students regardless of zip code, socioeconomic status, or demographic. In consultation with the Governor, the NDE is also proposing a series of “challenge” or “stretch goals” for the school systems in Nebraska. These goals can accelerate the closing of the achievement gaps. The NDE plans to continually reevaluate student progress towards goals. If the Department notes student progress exceeding the 50 percent reduction model, then the NDE may consider using these Challenge Goals as the state's long-term goals. These long term goals propose a *70 percent reduction in non-proficiency in five years*. These highly ambitious goals get all student groups to at least 80 percent proficiency by 2021 and above 95 percent proficiency by 2026 (See tables below). Ultimately, stakeholders believe in the students and educators of the state and think through supports for the lowest achieving students, and insistence upon raising the bar for all students, these goals could be achievable.

### Methodology

With Nebraska's Challenge Goals, the same methodology described above is used, except instead of a 50 percent reduction in non-proficiency, 70 percent reduction is used. Additionally, these Challenge Goals accelerate those gap closures by proposing 5 year windows for that 70 percent reduction.

Table 4.1 English Language Arts Challenge Goals

Subgroups	2014-2015 Baseline (% Proficient)	2021 Challenge Goal (% Proficient)	2026 Goal (% Proficient)
All students	79%	94%	98%
Economically disadvantaged students	68%	90%	97%
Children with disabilities	50%	85%	96%
English learners	58%	87%	96%
African American	59%	88%	96%
American Indians or Alaska Native	55%	87%	96%
Asian	76%	93%	98%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	73%	92%	98%
Hispanic or Latino	68%	90%	97%
White	86%	96%	99%

Table 5.1 Math Challenge Goals

Subgroups	2014-2015 Baseline (% Proficient)	2021 Challenge Goal (% Proficient)	2026 Challenge Goal (% Proficient)
All students	72%	92%	97%
Economically disadvantaged students	57%	87%	96%
Children with disabilities	42%	83%	95%
English learners	49%	85%	96%
African American	43%	83%	95%
American Indians or Alaska Native	44%	83%	95%
Asian	73%	92%	97%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	60%	88%	96%
Hispanic or Latino	57%	87%	96%
White	80%	94%	98%

Table 6.1 Science Challenge Goals

Subgroups	2014-2015 Baseline (% Proficient)	2021 Challenge Goal (% Proficient)	2026 Challenge Goal (% Proficient)
All students	72%	92%	98%
Economically disadvantaged students	54%	86%	96%
Children with disabilities	40%	82%	95%
English learners	30%	79%	94%
African American	41%	82%	95%
American Indians or Alaska Native	44%	83%	95%
Asian	64%	89%	96%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	65%	90%	97%
Hispanic or Latino	52%	86%	96%
White	82%	95%	99%

## ***B. Graduation Rate***

**i. Description.** *Describe how the SEA established its ambitious long-term goals and measurements of interim progress for improved four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates, including how the SEA established its State-determined timeline for attaining such goals.*

- i. *Provide the baseline and long-term goals for the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate in the table below.*

Another goal outlined by the Strategic Plan pertains to graduation rates. The plan identifies goals both in terms of a four-year cohort graduation rate and an extended rate goals for all students as well as individual subgroups.

The same process, described above, was also used to determine the four-year graduation rate goals. In this case, rather than basing the desired goal on the percentage of students proficient on statewide tests, the percentage was based on the students who graduated within the 4-year time frame.

### **Alignment to Nebraska's Strategic Vision**

Goal 2.2: By 2026, the dropout rate of all Nebraska students including subgroups will be less than 1%.

Goal 3.2: By 2026, the 4-year cohort graduation rates for all Nebraska students will be greater than 92 percent and not less than 85 percent for any one subgroup.

### **Alignment to AQuESTT**

Graduation rate is included in the classification of each school. For each district/high school, four or seven-year cohort graduation rates from the previous year are used to define the maximum overall classification. The Graduation rating limitation is determined by comparing the highest cohort rate against these cut rates, which will limit the school/district overall classification rating:

- No limitation: graduation rate  $\geq 90\%$
- Limit rating to 3: graduation rate  $< 90\%$  and  $\geq 80\%$
- Limit rating to 2: graduation rate  $< 80\%$  and  $\geq 70\%$
- Limit rating to 1: graduation rate  $< 70\%$

- ii. *Provide the baseline and long-term goals for the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate in the table below.*



Table 10 Four- Year Graduation Cohort

Subgroups	2014-15 Baseline	2026 Goal
All students	89%	94.4%
Economically disadvantaged students	82%	90.69%
Children with disabilities	70%	86%
English learners	55%	77%
African American	75%	87.72%
American Indian or Alaska Native	76%	88.19%
Asian	78%	88.89%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	95%	97.9%
Hispanic or Latino	82%	90.80%
White	93%	96.25%

#### Four- Year Graduation Interim Measures of Progress

The current (baseline year) percent of students graduating for any given sub-group would be subtracted from 100 percent and then divided by two and added back to the current percent graduating to arrive at the 10-year goal. That 10-year goal ending point was then divided by the number of years between the baseline year and ending year to arrive at interim percentages that would need to be attained to accomplish the 50 percent reduction of non-graduating students at the end of the 10-year cycle.

Table 11 Four-Year Graduation Interim Rates Interim Measures of Progress through 2026

School Year	Economically Disadvantaged (ED)	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian	Black or African American	Pacific Islander	Hispanic	White	All	SPED	ELL	SPED All gap	ELL All gap	ED All gap
2011-12	79.48%	66.67%	83.71%	73.47%	85.29%	77.81%	91.33%	87.63%	71.42%	64.03%	16.21%	23.60%	8.15%
2012-13	80.88%	72.39%	76.68%	76.94%	100.00%	78.60%	92.19%	88.49%	71.51%	59.69%	16.98%	28.80%	7.61%
2013-14	82.40%	68.75%	77.99%	80.85%	77.42%	82.72%	92.74%	89.66%	72.07%	60.35%	17.59%	29.31%	7.26%
2014-15	82.00%	76.38%	77.78%	75.44%	95.83%	81.63%	92.50%	88.89%	70.00%	54.67%	18.89%	34.22%	6.89%
2016-17	83.45%	78.35%	79.63%	77.49%	96.18%	83.16%	93.13%	89.81%	72.61%	58.45%			
2018-19	84.90%	80.32%	81.48%	79.53%	96.52%	84.69%	93.75%	90.73%	75.21%	62.22%			
2020-21	86.35%	82.29%	83.34%	81.58%	96.57%	86.22%	94.38%	91.65%	77.82%	66.00%			
2022-23	87.79%	84.25%	85.19%	83.63%	97.21%	87.74%	95.00%	92.56%	80.42%	69.78%			
2024-25	89.24%	86.22%	87.04%	85.67%	97.56%	89.27%	95.63%	93.48%	83.03%	73.55%			
2026-27	90.69%	88.19%	88.89%	87.72%	97.90%	90.80%	96.25%	94.40%	86.00%	77.33%			
Goal	90.69%	88.19%	88.89%	87.72%	97.90%	90.80%	96.25%	94.40%	86.00%	77.33%	8.77%	17.07%	3.71%
Goal-Current	8.69%	11.81%	11.11%	12.28%	2.07%	9.17%	3.75%	5.51%	15.63%	22.66%			
2-year Growth	1.45%	1.97%	1.85%	2.05%	00.34%	1.53%	0.63%	0.92%	2.61%	3.78%			

*If applicable, provide the baseline and long-term goals for each extended-year cohort graduation rate(s) and describe how the SEA established its ambitious long-term goals and measurements for such an extended-year rate or rates that are more rigorous as compared to the long-term goals and measurements of interim progress than the four-year adjusted cohort rate, including how the SEA established its State-determined timeline for attaining such goals.*

The same process, described above, that was used to determine the academic achievement goals and four-year graduation rate was also used to determine the seven-year graduation rate goals. In this case, rather than basing the desired goal on the percentage of students proficient on statewide tests, the percentage was based on the students who graduated within the 7-year time frame. The interim calculations are based on reducing the percentage of students not graduating in seven years as described in more detail below.

## Extended Graduation Rate

### Alignment to Strategic Vision and Direction

Goal 3.3: By 2026, the 7-year cohort graduation rates for all Nebraska students will be greater than 95% and not less than 90% for any one subgroup.

Table 12 Subgroup Data 2014-2026

Subgroup	2014-2015 Baseline	2026 Goal
All students	92%	96%
Economically disadvantaged students	88%	94%
Children with disabilities	88%	94%
English learners	80%	90%
African American	81%	90.5%
American Indian or Alaska Native	78%	89%
Asian	93%	93%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	88%	94%
Hispanic or Latino	85%	92.5%
White	94%	97%

## Seven- Year Graduation Rate Interim Goals Methodology

The current (baseline year) percent of students graduating in seven years for any given sub-group is subtracted from 100 percent and then divided by two and added back to the current percent graduating to arrive at the 10-year goal. That 10-year goal ending point was then divided by the number of years between the baseline year and ending year to arrive at interim percentages that would need to be attained to accomplish the 50 percent reduction of non-graduating students at the end of the 10-year cycle. This is how the statewide calculations are derived.

Table 13 Extended (7-year) Graduation Rate Interim Measures of Progress through 2026

School Year	Economically Disadvantaged (ED)	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian	Black or African American	Pacific Islander	Hispanic	White	All	SPED	ELL	SPED All gap	ELL All gap	ED All Gap
2013-14	87.00%	71.00%	91.00%	77.00%	97.00%	82.00%	93.00%	90.00%	85.00%	76.00%	5.00%	14.00%	3.00%
2014-15	88.00%	78.00%	93.00%	81.00%	88.00%	85.00%	94.00%	92.00%	88.00%	80.00%	4.00%	12.00%	4.00%
2016-17	89.00%	79.83%	93.58%	82.58%	89.00%	86.25%	94.50%	92.67%	89.00%	81.67%			
2018-19	90.00%	81.67%	94.17%	84.17%	90.00%	87.50%	95.00%	93.33%	90.00%	83.33%			
2020-21	91.00%	83.50%	94.75%	85.75%	91.00%	88.75%	95.50%	94.00%	91.00%	85.00%			
2022-23	92.00%	85.33%	95.33%	87.33%	92.00%	90.00%	96.00%	94.67%	92.00%	86.67%			
2024-25	93.00%	87.17%	95.92%	88.92%	93.00%	91.25%	96.50%	95.33%	93.00%	88.33%			
2026-27	94.00%	89.00%	96.50%	90.50%	94.00%	92.50%	97.00%	96.00%	94.00%	90.00%			
Goal	94.00%	89.00%	96.50%	90.50%	94.00%	92.50%	97.00%	96.00%	94.00%	90.00%	2.00%	6.00%	2.00%
Goal-Current	6.00%	11.00%	3.50%	9.50%	6.00%	7.50%	3.00%	4.00%	6.00%	10.00%			
2-year Growth	1.00%	1.83%	0.58%	1.58%	1.00%	1.25%	0.50%	0.67%	1.00%	1.67%			

## C. English Language Proficiency

**Description.** Describe the State's uniform procedure, applied consistently to all English learners in the State, to establish research-based student-level targets on which the goals and measurements of interim progress are based. The description must include:

1. How the State considers a student's English language proficiency level at the time of identification and, if applicable, any other student characteristics that the State takes into account (i.e., time in language instruction programs, grade level, age, Native language proficiency level, or limited or interrupted formal education, if any).
2. The applicable timelines over which English learners sharing particular characteristics would be expected to attain ELP within a State-determined maximum number of years and a rationale for that State-determined maximum.
3. How the student-level targets expect all English learners to make annual progress toward attaining English language proficiency within the applicable timelines.

Describe how the SEA established ambitious State-designed long-term goals and measurements of interim progress for increases in the percentage of all English learners in the State making annual progress toward attaining English language proficiency based on 1.C.i. and provide the State-designed long-term goals and measurements of interim progress for English language proficiency.

Nebraska is consulting with national partners and experts regarding accountability metrics for determining English Learner (EL) progress on their journey to English language proficiency (ELP) based on the English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21), the state's instrument for measuring progress and attainment of English proficiency. In review of the research, it was determined that applying a uniform growth standard is not necessarily best practice in terms of ensuring that all students are on track to exit EL services in six years. The plan is to develop differentiated growth standards that are dependent on a student's level of English proficiency in the prior year to better define support for students. On average, students with low levels of proficiency display the highest levels of growth on the ELPA, while students at higher levels of proficiency grow slower. The concept is known as "lower is faster, higher is slower" as growth in ELP is nonlinear as explained in literature. This is consistent from research findings, see below:

Research on second language learners has shown that language growth varies depending upon the starting year's proficiency level or grade level, Cook, Boals, Wilmes, & Santos (2008), established the following principle when looking at ELL student growth: Lower is faster, higher is slower. Basically, the language growth of students at lower grade levels or proficiency levels is faster than the language growth of students at higher grade levels or proficiency levels. The breadth and depth of academic language students are expected to comprehend and produce increases as they advance in proficiency level. Specifically, the language students need to demonstrate in terms of linguistic complexity forms and conventions, and vocabulary usage is greater and more complex at higher levels of proficiency level. The "lower is faster, higher is slower" concept is also evident as students advance in grade levels.<sup>4</sup>

The metric will be consistently applied to all ELs in Nebraska public schools. The initial data point on the first administration of the state's annual required English language proficiency assessment will determine the timeline to proficiency. For example, students scoring initially at the lowest proficiency levels will be on a trajectory to achieve proficiency in six years. Students scoring initially at higher levels of proficiency will have a reduced number of years to reach the goal. A state-determined timeline will be developed with the intent that the trajectory to proficiency will be understandable to stakeholders, meaningful, and achievable. A third year of ELPA21 (2017-18) data will be needed to refine the calculation. The model will include the following elements:

- Initial proficiency levels and subsequent data points will be derived from the state's ELP assessment.
- Interim targets will be based on annual growth as measured by data from the ELP assessment.
- Setting interim targets will be informed by language acquisition research. Expected amounts of annual growth may vary depending on the student's proficiency level.
- Timeline to proficiency will not exceed six years.

Students are proficient when they attain a level of English language skill necessary to

independently produce, interpret, collaborate on, and succeed in grade-level content-related academic tasks in English. This is indicated on ELPA21 by attaining a profile of level 4 or higher on a 1-5 scale on the domains of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Once Proficient on ELPA21, students are considered for reclassification.

Planned studies will ensure that the model is a good fit for Nebraska and will meet the needs of the state and the requirements of ESSA. Data from the ELPA21 assessment in school years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 was used to test the model and to determine the percentage of ELs making progress toward attaining English proficiency. Nebraska is currently receiving technical assistance in developing the model further and will garner stakeholder input along the way.

Between the 2015-16 school year (the first year ELPA21 was proctored) and 2016-17, 49.5 percent of English Learners had a projected 6-year score at or above proficiency. By 2026, there will be a 50 percent reduction in the percentage of students not meeting their growth targets as measured by ELPA21.

*Table 14 English Language Learners Data*

	Baseline (2015-16 to 2016-17 Growth)	2026 Goal
English Learners	49.5%	74.8%

*Table 15 Interim Measures of Progress through 2026*

School Year	% Meeting Growth Targets toward English Language Proficiency
2015-16 to 2026-27 Growth	49.5%
2018-19	54.56%
2020-21	59.62%
2022-23	64.68%
2024-25	69.74%
2026-27	74.8%
Goal	74.8%
Goal-Current	25.3%
2-year Growth	5.06%

#### **D. Chronic Absenteeism**

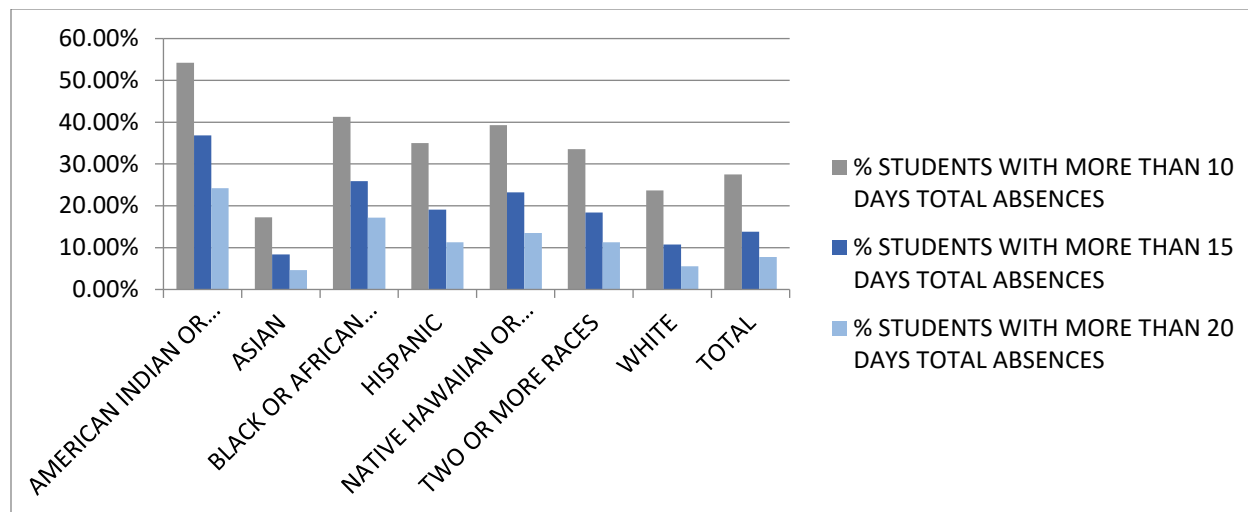
A student is identified as chronically absent when a district reports that he or she has not been present for 10 percent or more of the days that he or she was “in membership” at a school. “Membership” is defined as the number of school days in session in which the student is enrolled and registered during the annual reporting period from July 1 to June 30.

In the 2015-16 school year, 29,040 Nebraska students missed 18 days\* or more of school. This

equates to nearly one out of every 10 students in the state. Chronic absence disproportionately affects students of color, students with disabilities, and English Learner students.

\*Note: School year lengths in Nebraska vary from 165-180 days. Therefore, 10 percent represents a range between 16-18 days.

Figure 1 2015-16 Chronic Absenteeism by Race and Ethnicity



Sixty-one school districts in Nebraska had chronic absenteeism rates above eight percent. These schools serve large populations of historically underserved students, and represent urban, rural, demographically changing, and Native American schools.

Including chronic absence as an indicator of school quality and student success aligns to the State Board of Education's Strategic Vision and Direction.

#### Alignment to Strategic Plan:

Goal 2.4: By 2026, there will be a reduction in the percentage of students who are absent more than 10 days per year from 27.46% to 15%.

School Year	% of Membership Missing more than 18 Days
2015-16 Baseline	10.74%
2018-19	9.67%
2020-21	8.59%
2022-23	7.52%
2024-25	6.44%
2026-27	5.37%
Goal	5.37%

1-year Reduction	1.074%
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<sup>3</sup> Nebraska Department of Education (2016). 2017-2016 Strategic Vision and Direction.  
<https://nebraskaeducationvision.com/>

<sup>4</sup> *WIDA Focus on Growth*, Wisconsin Center for Education Research. University of Wisconsin-Madison, (11 March, 2009)

## Section 2: Consultation and Performance Management

### 2.1 Consultation

*Instructions: Each SEA must engage in timely and meaningful consultation with stakeholders in developing its consolidated State plan, consistent with 34 C.F.R. §§ 299.13 (b) and 299.15 (a). The stakeholders must include the following individuals and entities and reflect the geographic diversity of the State:*

- *The Governor or appropriate officials from the Governor's office;*
- *Members of the State legislature;*
- *Members of the State board of education,*
- *LEAs, including LEAs in rural areas;*
- *Representatives of Indian tribes located in the State;*
- *Teachers, principals, other school leaders, paraprofessionals, specialized instructional support personnel, and organizations representing such individuals;*
- *Charter school leaders, if applicable;*
- *Parents and families;*
- *Community-based organizations;*
- *Civil rights organizations, including those representing students with disabilities, English learners, and other historically underserved students;*
- *Institutions of higher education (IHEs);*
- *Employers;*
- *Representatives of private school students;*
- *Early childhood educators and leaders; and*
- *The public.*

*Each SEA must meet the requirements in 34 C.F.R. § 200.21(b)(1)-(3) to provide information that is:*

1. *Be in an understandable and uniform format;*
2. *Be, to the extent practicable, written in a language that parents can understand or, if it is not practicable to provide written translations to a parent with limited English proficiency, be orally translated for such parent; and*
3. *Be, upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. 12102, provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent.*

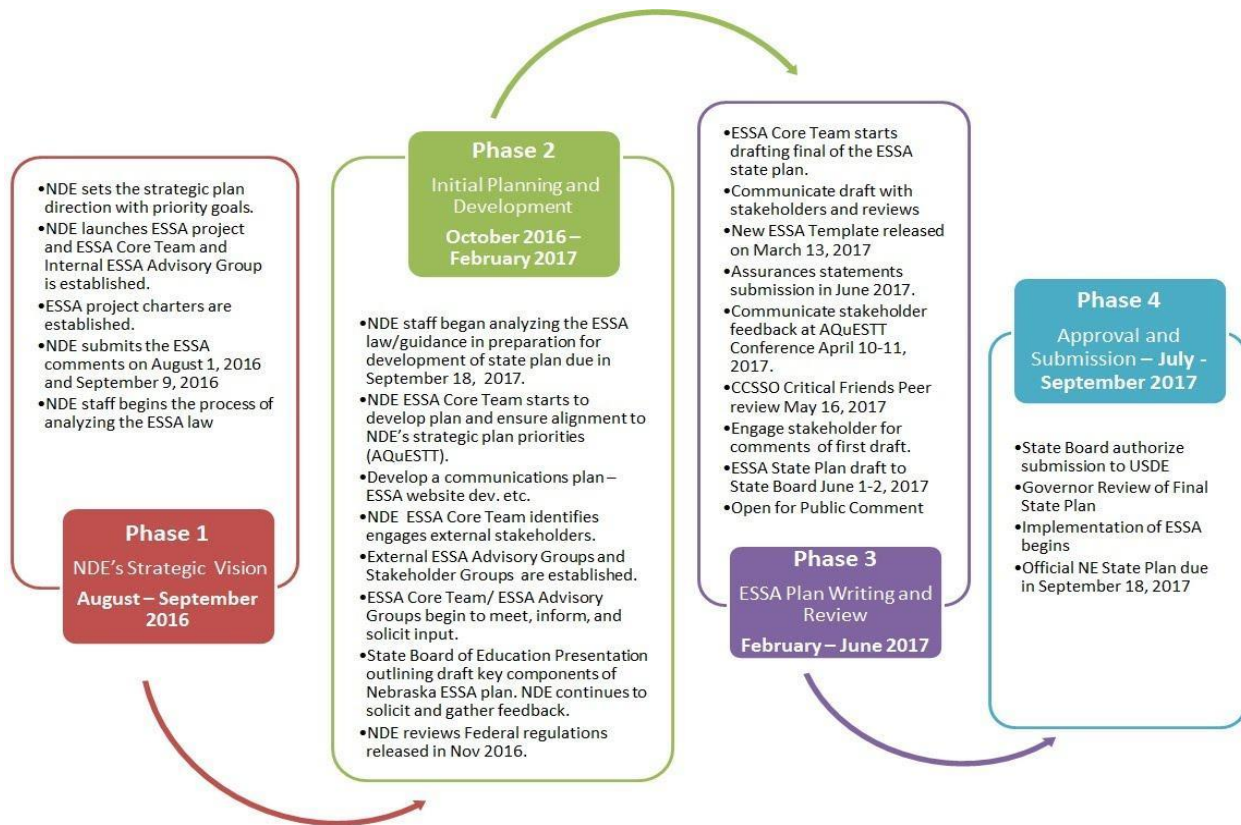
**A. Public Notice.** *Provide evidence that the SEA met the public notice requirements, under 34 C.F.R. § 299.13(b), relating to the SEA's processes and procedures for developing and adopting its consolidated State plan.*

The Nebraska Department of Education is committed to collaborating with stakeholders from a diverse set of backgrounds including educators, policymakers, business leaders, and community



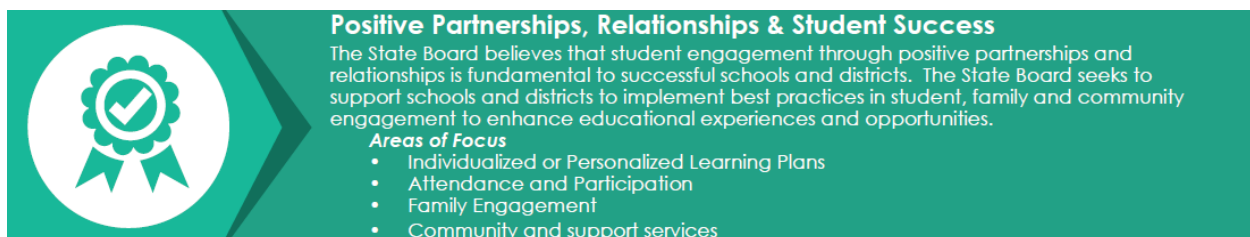
members. Figure 2 details the work plan associated to the state’s ESSA plan and implementation. As is evident, feedback was incorporated into every phase of drafting.

Figure 2 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction Phases



The Nebraska Department of Education’s engagement with stakeholders throughout this process is guided by the belief in accountability, continuous improvement, and collaboration and building relationships as evidenced by AQuESTT tenet: Positive Partnerships, Relationships, and Student Success (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Nebraska Department of Education Positive Partnerships Description



The state's outreach to varied stakeholders built upon strong relationships in communities to build a plan for the state.

Nebraska Department of Education used its web page, [ESSA Nebraska<sup>5</sup>](#), as its primary point of contact with the stakeholders listed above. Social media and outreach efforts directed individuals to the webpage for more information, serving as the primary means for statutory public notice.

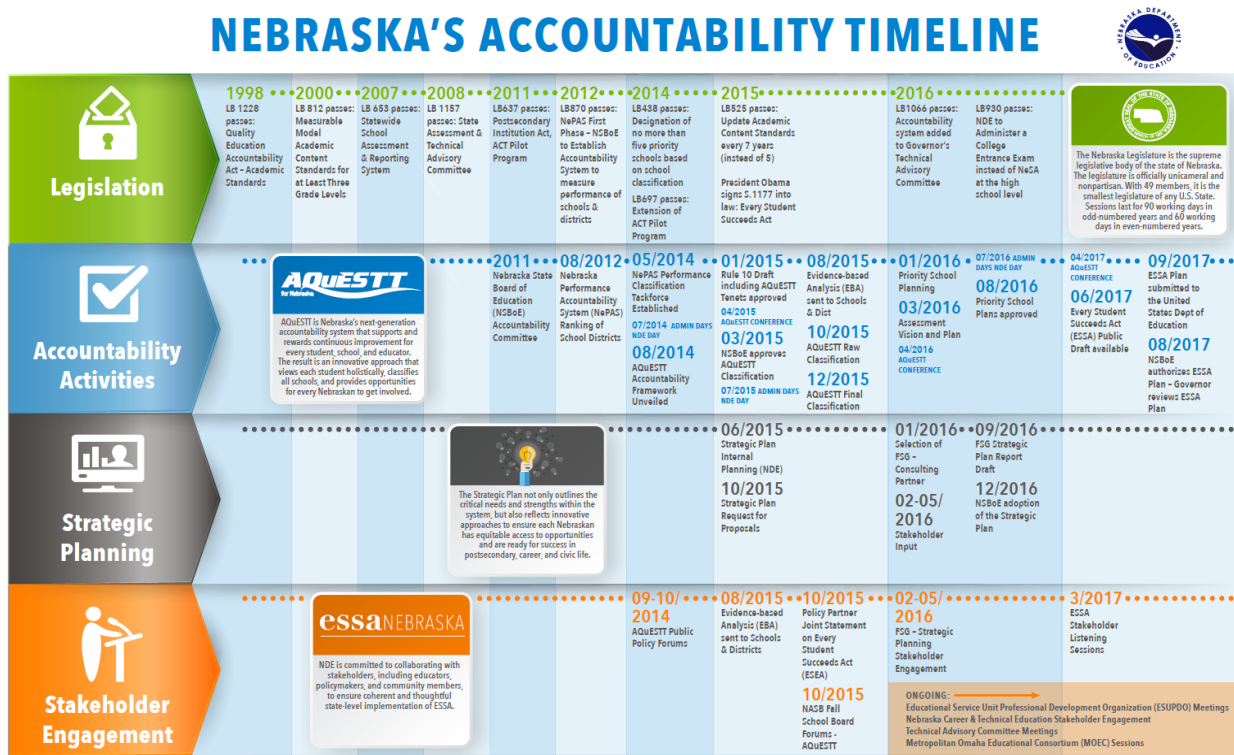
**B. Outreach and Input.** *For the components of the consolidated State plan including Challenging Academic Assessments; Accountability, Support, and Improvement for Schools; Supporting Excellent Educators; and Supporting All Students, describe how the SEA:*

*Conducted outreach to and solicited input from the individuals and entities listed above, consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 299.13(b), during the design and development of the SEA's plans to implement the programs that the SEA has indicated it will include in its consolidated State plan; and following the completion of its initial consolidated State plan by making the plan available for public comment for a period of not less than 30 days prior to submitting the consolidated State plan to the Department for review and approval.*

Since Nebraska's ESSA plan is seamlessly integrated with the recently developed Strategic Vision and accountability system, AQuESTT, the input from stakeholders commenced many years before ESSA was passed. Thousands of stakeholders contributed to online and in-person feedback sessions outlining their visions for a vibrant Nebraska education system. Similarly, broad stakeholder feedback was gathered in the State Board's Strategic Vision and Direction document. Input from stakeholders recently through ESSA has reaffirmed this work.

This feedback and input can be viewed in three stages: AQuESTT, Strategic Planning, and ESSA as illustrated in the *Nebraska's Accountability Timeline in Figure 4*.

Figure 4 Nebraska's Accountability Timeline



### AQuESTT Stakeholder Engagement

In April 2014, the Nebraska Legislature Passed LB 438, resulting in Sections 79-760.06 and 79-760.07, which required the Nebraska Department of Education to classify every school and district into a performance level and to identify three schools in the lowest performance category as priority schools.

A task force was assembled representing Nebraska Department of Education staff, superintendents, teachers, and support staff from varied school districts across the state, and Educational Service Unit staff (See Appendix B for full list of participants). This group met multiple times over a two-year span to establish priorities, develop guiding principles of the new model, review research, consider models used in other states, and to participate in the Dominant Profile Judgment method of accountability development, which resulted in several models being developed.

#### AQuESTT Stakeholder Engagement Timeline:

September - October 2014 → AQuESTT Public Policy Forums

August 2014 → AQuESTT Framework unveiled

Fall 2014 → Nebraska Association of School Boards Forum on AQuESTT

2014 to Present (Biannually) → Technical Advisory Committee feedback on AQuESTT

March 2016-June 2016 → Evidence Based Analysis Survey to Districts

Furthermore, exploratory work was conducted as a part of the [ESEA Flexibility No Child Left Behind Waiver](#)<sup>6</sup> request in March 2015. In this waiver, Nebraska requested flexibility from the federal requirements of ESEA to implement AQuESTT. Feedback and support from stakeholders guided this process.

A quality education system helps make Nebraska and its communities strong. By collaborating and focusing on AQuESTT's six investment areas, Nebraska can help enhance the education system, positively impact children and schools, and create a better Nebraska. In 2016-17, the Nebraska Department of Education and the Nebraska State Board of Education started asking for additional input on the system and publicly asked for participation in the AQuESTT process. The theme for the year was, "You Are Part of Something: Broader. Bolder. Better." The message was promoted at the statewide administrators' conference and promoted throughout the school year. Groups from early childhood to expanded learning programs such as Beyond School Bells saw the connection. Additionally, the major education stakeholder groups in Nebraska from school administrators, school board, and teachers have engaged and embraced the efforts of AQuESTT. And still, there are more groups to reach, more stakeholders to engage, and more great things to happen.

Revision of the current classification system is scheduled for the spring of 2018 due to changes in state tests and the selection of additional indicators as part of ESSA. This work will be completed by spring 2018.

### **2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction Stakeholder Engagement**

In January of 2016, the Board and the Nebraska Department of Education initiated the development of a Strategic Plan to guide the vision and direction of education in Nebraska for the next ten years. The 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction<sup>7</sup> represents the evolution of a philosophical and practical approach to supporting education in Nebraska. This commitment unifies and strengthens positive outcomes for all Nebraskans through bold and achievable goals.

The plan outlines the critical needs and strengths within the Nebraska education system, and reflects innovative approaches to ensure each Nebraskan has equitable access to opportunities and are ready for success in postsecondary, career, and civic life. The plan guides the Board and the Nebraska Department of Education to address some of the most urgent priorities within Nebraska. With an intentional and comprehensive focus on ensuring a reduction in educational inequities for the most vulnerable populations, the Strategic Plan directs focus on student-centered outcomes, high quality opportunities, and a strong system of support. More information about the Strategic Plan is found here: <https://nebraskaeducationvision.com/about/>

The Strategic Plan aligns with the AQuESTT framework. AQuESTT provides a fundamental focus on achievement and opportunity gaps and ensures strategies produce equitable outcomes

for each and every learner. The Strategic Plan, then includes goals with benchmarks that measure disaggregated data to ensure equity and access; the outcome statements in the Strategic Plan were shaped from the AQuESTT tenets.

The development of Strategic Plan was shaped from the input of key influencers and stakeholders. Key influencers are defined as individuals who represent a statewide group or a specific group with interests in education. Stakeholders are defined as individuals who represent external entities that the Nebraska Department of Education engages with on a regular basis.

Twenty-five external stakeholders were interviewed to understand their perspectives on where and how the Nebraska Department of Education could have the most impact in supporting education. (See Appendix B for a list of stakeholders).

Thirty key influencers were engaged to provide input on the Strategic Plan, as well as ideas for strategic positioning for the Nebraska Department of Education. (See Appendix C for a list of key influencers.)

Two strategic priorities emerged from the strategic planning process:

- Ensure all Nebraskans, regardless of background or circumstances, have equitable access to opportunities for success.
- Increase the number of Nebraskans who are ready for success in postsecondary education, career education, and civic life.

Specific outcome statements in the Strategic Plan include:

- Increase student, family, and community engagement to enhance educational experiences and opportunities.
- Provide high quality educational opportunities for student success through transitions between grade levels, programs, school, postsecondary institutions, and careers.
- Ensure that all students have access to comprehensive instructional opportunities to be prepared for postsecondary education and career.
- Ensure every student upon completion of secondary education is prepared for postsecondary education, career, and civic opportunities.
- Use assessments to measure and improve student achievement and inform instruction.
- Assure students are supported by qualified/credentials, effective teachers and leaders throughout their learning experiences.

The Nebraska Department of Education further engaged stakeholders in 2016 in support of the state's ambitious college and career ready goals, standards, and programming. The Career and Technical Education (CTE) staff at Nebraska Department of Education facilitated eight stakeholder meetings for those in business, industry, and education to gather feedback to craft a vision for the future of Nebraska college, career, and technical education. Meetings were conducted in the communities of Broken Bow, Fremont, Hastings, Lincoln, McCook, North Platte, Omaha, and Scottsbluff.

Key topics at these sessions included instructional delivery for career education, teacher supply and qualifications, work-experiences and career readiness for students, financing CTE, and CTE goals and standards. Feedback from participants was used to craft a plan for the state's Perkins funding, and to refine the state's strategic planning around college and career readiness and transitions. Stakeholder feedback was also critical when considering college and career readiness in Nebraska's ESSA plan. Information from listening sessions was used to help the Nebraska Department of Education craft this plan's long-term goals, and to develop the sections on effective educators and supporting all students.

The AQuESTT framework, and the 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction provided a foundation for continued outreach and input specific to the ESSA plan.

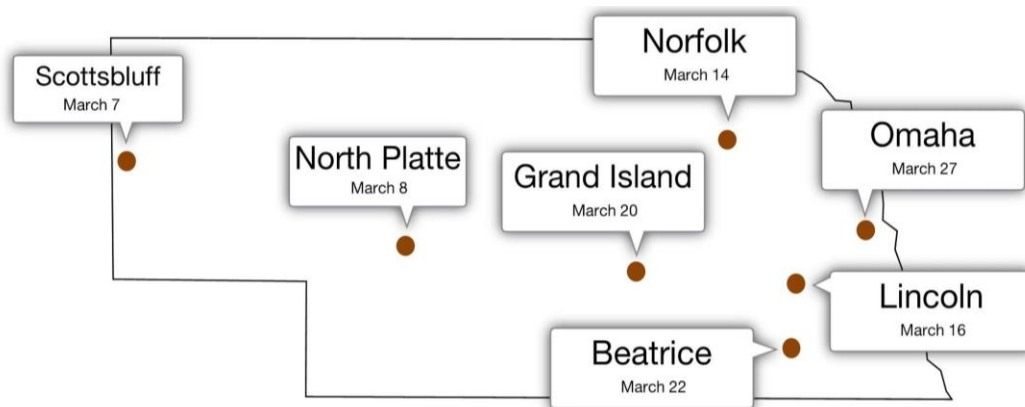
### **ESSA Engagement**

In addition to Nebraska Department of Education's prior engagement with stakeholders surrounding AQuESTT and the 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction, significant feedback was gathered through the ESSA writing process. While ESSA requires extensive outreach and engagement efforts to everyone from policymakers to educators to tribal organizations to parents, Nebraska Department of Education is committed to engaging stakeholders not simply out of compliance but, rather, through two-way communication that allows shared-decision-making and support of the state's vision and plan.

#### **ESSA Listening Tour (Figure 5)**

ESSA Stakeholders Listening Tour meetings were held in March of 2017 at seven locations across the state: Scottsbluff, North Platte, Norfolk, Lincoln, Grand Island, Beatrice, and Omaha.

*Figure 5 ESSA Listening Tour Cities*



The objective of the seven statewide listening tours was to:



- provide stakeholders a better understanding of the history of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA),
- share the differences between the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA),
- develop an understanding of how ESSA impacts their child and the community, and
- share tools and resources to involve stakeholders in the implementation of ESSA, and
- describe work outlined in the Strategic Plan and AQuESTT and discuss how Nebraska Department of Education is seeking to align these with ESSA.

At each regional meeting, parents, teachers, and community members engaged in a two-way collaborative dialogue about how the ESSA plan can support education for every student, every day across Nebraska. Participants shared concerns, priorities, and expectations that helped the Nebraska Department of Education shape the plan. In many cases, members of the ESUs provided additional feedback and helped facilitate the sessions.

#### *Toolkit-Facilitated Engagement Sessions*

In addition to in-person engagement sessions held around the state, Nebraska Department of Education staff created an [ESSA Engagement Toolkit](#) to provide further opportunities to engage stakeholders. Using this toolkit, sessions were facilitated around the state and virtually. Overall, nearly 60 stakeholders learned about ESSA, the 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction, and AQuESTT, and provided feedback on key ESSA sections such as the qualities of effective educators, how schools should be held accountable, and how the state should address equity concerns. These stakeholders included parents, teachers, and administrators. Feedback on ESSA also came from Educational Service Unit personnel, an important stakeholder for delivering many services to the state's schools.

#### *State Board-Facilitated Engagement*

The State Board of Education also played a role in soliciting feedback and input about ESSA from their constituents. Listening sessions again brought together a diverse group including parents, educators, business people, members of the fine arts community, and other community members. The State Board used this feedback to in turn provide meaningful suggestions for the Nebraska Department of Education team developing the ESSA plan. Stakeholders emphasized evidence that supports the Arts and STEM as core, interdisciplinary, well-rounded education. The NDE will continue to support robust inclusion of the fine arts into schools.

#### *Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council*

Several statutorily established expert groups provided input for Nebraska's ESSA plan. The Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC) was established by Nebraska Revised Statutes ([Neb.Rev.Stat.](#)) 43-3401 to 43-3403 to advise and assist collaborating agencies in carrying out the provisions of state and federal statutes pertaining to early childhood care and education initiatives under state supervision. Stakeholders participated in a prioritization exercise noting the importance of supporting educators with professional development, transitioning students from pre-k to kindergarten, sharing resources, and encouraging integration of

technology, science, engineering, math and career and technical education content across curricula.

#### *Nebraska Committee of Practitioners and Nebraska Council on Teacher Education*

The Nebraska Committee of Practitioners (CoP) advises the Nebraska Department of Education on carrying out its responsibilities under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The Nebraska Council on Teacher Education (NCTE) advises the state Board of Education on issues such as certification and educator preparation. Each of these groups meets regularly and works closely with the Nebraska Department of Education. Input was deliberately sought on multiple occasions from each of these groups to inform the content of the ESSA plan.

#### *Superintendent Advisory Council*

The Superintendent Advisory Council is comprised of 24 district leaders from across the state. This group's purpose is to advise the commissioner on policies and practices for improving educational outcomes of students across the state. Throughout the ESSA writing process, the commissioner sought input on various provisions, shared drafts with members, and incorporated feedback. These school leaders were invaluable in providing insights into the needs of schools and how programming in ESSA could approach them.

#### *Policymaker Engagement*

Formal presentations to and review by the State Legislature Education Committee occurred on June 23, 2017. A productive dialogue with the Commissioner, his staff, and the Education Committee enabled the NDE to share plans for ESSA and the proposed alignment of state and federal systems for accountability and support. The Commissioner answered questions relative to ESSA, and noted areas for improving the plan. Additionally, the State Board of Education discussed Nebraska's ESSA Plan in their June and July meetings. These sessions provided the Nebraska Department of Education an opportunity to explain ESSA and how its resources align with the state's efforts for improving schools. These engagement sessions were also an avenue to share long-term goals and discuss further supports needed from the state level.

Additionally, US Senator Deb Fischer reviewed the Nebraska state plan in August. Senator Fischer wrote a letter affirming the Nebraska ESSA plan and the NDE's vision and systems of support. Senator Fischer's letter can be found in Appendix H.

#### *Consultation with Disability Rights Nebraska*

Disability Rights Nebraska offered feedback and input to the plan. This organization was represented as a key influencer in the development of the 2017-2026 Strategic Vision and Direction, and continued input from Disability Rights Nebraska is appreciated. Much of the feedback was focused on inclusion of language related to Response to Intervention (RTI) and aversive behavioral interventions. The NDE is committed to continuing engagement with Disability Rights Nebraska to explore opportunities in state statute and rulemaking processes to continue to serve learners with disabilities.



### *Building Awareness*

In September 2016, Nebraska Department of Education created the [ESSA Nebraska<sup>8</sup>](#) page (Figure 6) on its website. This page included a video from the Commissioner of Education, helpful resources for citizens to understand ESSA, and a detailed explanation of the timeline, the teams and groups helping draft the plan, and a section highlighting Frequently-Asked Questions (FAQ) on ESSA. The webpage also included an e-mail address where Nebraska community members could send questions or comments.

*Figure 6 ESSA Website Photo*



### *ESSA Email, Newsletter, and Social Media*

Using Nebraska Department of Education's diverse educator network, the planning team was able to send out emails regarding ESSA to principals and administrators, Educational Service Unit staff, and district email listservs. Through these emails, the planning team could share progress on the ESSA draft process and solicit responses through the dedicated [nde.essa@nebraska.gov](mailto:nde.essa@nebraska.gov) e-mail. This email address was also available on the website.

Similarly, using its extensive [Nebraska Department of Education Bulletin<sup>9</sup>](#) weekly newsletter, the Nebraska Department of Education could share its plan and development with almost 2,400

educators, including superintendents, principals, and other school administrators.

Finally, the Nebraska Department of Education Communications team has worked through social media networks to share information on ESSA, how the state approached the draft plan process, and how the public could give input.

#### *Native American Tribal Consultation*

Collaboration is a critical part of improving academic outcomes for all learners. The Nebraska State Board of Education and the Nebraska Department of Education has ensured Native American Tribal engagement through several initial processes. Representatives of the Department met with the Nebraska Commission of Indian Affairs for a state-wide perspective of needs and priorities for American Indian students served in school districts throughout Nebraska. The four schools serving American Indian students on three reservations in Nebraska are represented by one member of the Nebraska State Board of Education. The State Board member representing the schools on reservations met with members of two tribal councils to engage these critical stakeholders in the process. General themes that emerged from these sessions included:

- Expand curricular opportunities for post-high school transitions, including life skills and adult living needs.
- Develop specific strategies to help improve graduation rates of Native American students, including processes to re-engage students who have dropped out of school.
- Utilize graduate follow-up statistics to help improve high school outcomes and transitions.
- Collaborate on addressing special needs relative to mental health and substance abuse.
- Collaborate on strategies to engage parents, especially parents who may not have been successful in school.
- Establish an on-going process to facilitate collaboration and professional development for school board members and tribal council members.

Meetings are pending with two other tribal councils. Furthermore, the Department worked specifically with LEAs having 50% or more of the student enrollment consisting of American Indian students or those that received a Title VI Indian education formula grant exceeding \$40,000. Through these activities, the Nebraska Department of Education sought to establish a solid foundation and shared understanding upon which to build ongoing engagement and collaboration around the unique opportunities and challenges facing Native students. The State Board of Education and the Nebraska Department of Education will continue to build relationships and opportunities for dialogue in an effort to collaboratively improve academic outcomes for our Native learners.

#### *Stakeholder Survey*

In June, a first draft of Nebraska's ESSA plan was submitted to the State Board of Education. Simultaneously, the first draft of the ESSA plan was posted online. A stakeholder survey (Appendix E) was also posted to allow another round of feedback from the citizens of the state. The survey asked participants about the changes they would like to see in the ESSA plan, what

was most important, and what, if anything, was missing from the plan.

Over the month-long survey period, 1,484 citizens from across the state provided feedback on the ESSA plan. These stakeholders included parents, educators, and community members. This stakeholder feedback was extremely helpful in making critical decisions for the plan (Detailed below).

#### *AQuESTT Recommendation and Revision Team*

On March 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, the Nebraska Department of Education convened 50 stakeholders representing the education community of the state. These stakeholders included principals, superintendents, local school board members, district-level administrators, and teachers from across the state and representing small and large schools. This group was called to fill the following four objectives:

- Develop deeper understanding of AQuESTT system and factors influencing its function
- Create a set of recommendations for the Commissioner to update and align AQuESTT to ESSA requirements and the state's strategic vision and direction
- Partner in sharing recommendations with broader NE community
- Envision additional or expanded accountability indicators

The team made a series of recommendations and reaffirmed the use of the indicators and operationalization of the AQuESTT system, and “filter” system used to designated CSI and TSI schools.

#### *Engagement After Approval*

The Nebraska Department of Education will continue to work with districts, ESUs, and advocacy partners during the implementation of the ESSA plan. This outreach will include presentations on changes to AQuESTT resulting from the ESSA plan. Similarly, an information campaign sharing what ESSA means for communities, parents and students, and educators will be developed, including one-page informational flyers and a social media campaign. Nebraska Department of Education will continue to solicit feedback from stakeholders during the implementation stage to further the commitment to continuous improvement of processes.

### **C. Timeline of Engagement**

The goal of the stakeholder engagement plan was to update the public as more regulations and laws regarding ESSA were developed through rulemaking.

This happened in four phases.

#### **Phase 1: August 2016 - October 2016**

##### **Strategic Vision**

- Nebraska Department of Education sets the Strategic Plan direction with priority goals
- Nebraska Department of Education launches ESSA project, ESSA Core Team is appointed

- ESSA Plan project charter is established
- Nebraska Department of Education submits ESSA comments to proposed regulations on Aug. 1, 2016 and Sept. 9, 2016
- Nebraska Department of Education staff begins the process of analyzing the ESSA law
- ESSA web page development starts

## **Phase 2: October 2016 - February 2017**

### **Initial Planning and Development**

- Nebraska Department of Education staff begins analyzing the ESSA law/guidance in preparation for development of state plan
- Nebraska Department of Education ESSA Core Team starts to develop plan and ensure alignment to 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction priorities and AQuESTT
- Nebraska Department of Education ESSA Core Team identifies and engages external stakeholders and solicits input through various forums
- Nebraska Department of Education reviews Federal regulations published in Nov/Dec 2016
- ESSA Core Team aligns to the revised regulations and prepares first draft of the ESSA Plan

## **Phase 3: February 2017 - June 2017**

### **ESSA Plan Writing and Reviews**

- Presentation of a public-ready ESSA Plan draft for review and input June 1 - 2, 2017.
- The Nebraska Department of Education continues to solicit and gather feedback
- Assurance statements submissions in June 2017 to U.S. Dept. of Education
- Communicate with stakeholders and solicit feedback (e.g., AQuESTT Data Conference, April 10-11, 2017)
- Peer review exercise with CCSSO in May 2017

## **Phase 4: June 2017 - September 2017**

### **Submission and Implementation**

- Final draft of ESSA State Plan for State Board Review August 3-4, 2017
- Presentation to Governor August 7, 2017 (See consultation section for further details)
- Official Nebraska ESSA Plan submitted to U.S. Department of Education by September 13, 2017
- Begin full implementation of ESSA in Fall 2017

## **D. Engagement**

The Nebraska Department of Education held forums after the work/school day so that working parents, teachers, school leaders, and other professionals were best able to participate:

- Hosted forums at multiple sites across the state, enabling stakeholder groups from across the state to participate

- Invited a broad range of stakeholders, including those who have been traditionally left out of such conversations
- Encouraged all stakeholders who participated in forums to provide written, substantive input
- Ensured transparency on the process, timeline, and opportunities to engage by providing advance notice and clear descriptions of the opportunities for feedback on implementation of the new law, including by sharing information on the Nebraska Department of Education's website
- Presented at statewide convening and regional meetings to engage stakeholders representing a variety of groups across the state.

*Considered the input obtained through consultation and public comment. The response must include both how the SEA addressed the concerns and issues raised through consultation and public comment and any changes the SEA made because of consultation and public comment for all components of the consolidated State plan.*

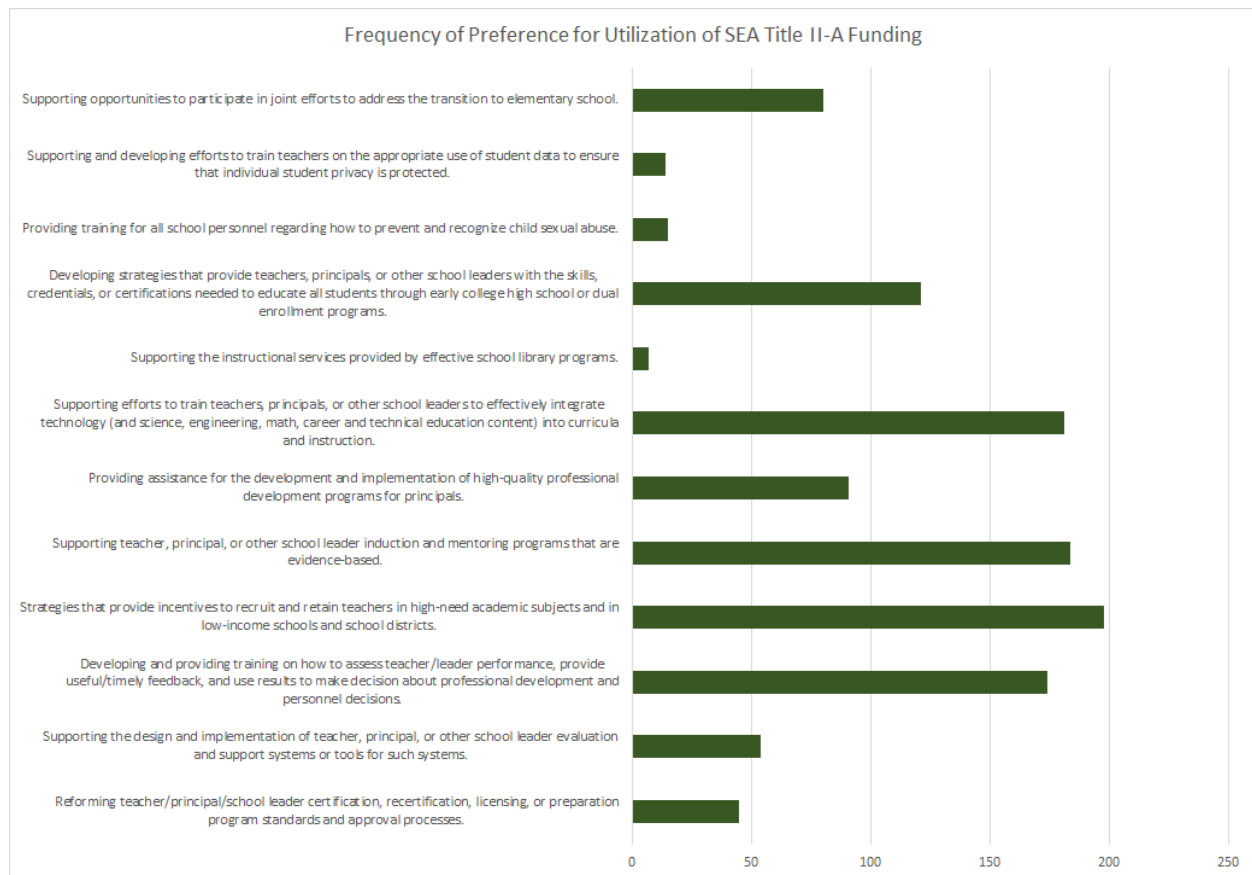
#### *Findings from Listening Sessions*

The Nebraska Department of Education has worked to include much of the valuable feedback from the varied listening sessions detailed above to inform and update the state plan. Below are some of the key findings from stakeholders:

When asked about the most important item to consider in ESSA, most respondents indicated equity, educator training, and student health as their greatest areas of concern. This feedback was especially helpful in drafting Section 6: Supporting All Students.

Stakeholders were also asked about Title II-A funding, and how to support educator equity, development, and preparation. The results below (Figure 7) show the feedback from stakeholders, and were used to inform the development of Section 4: Advancing Equity Supporting Excellent Educators.

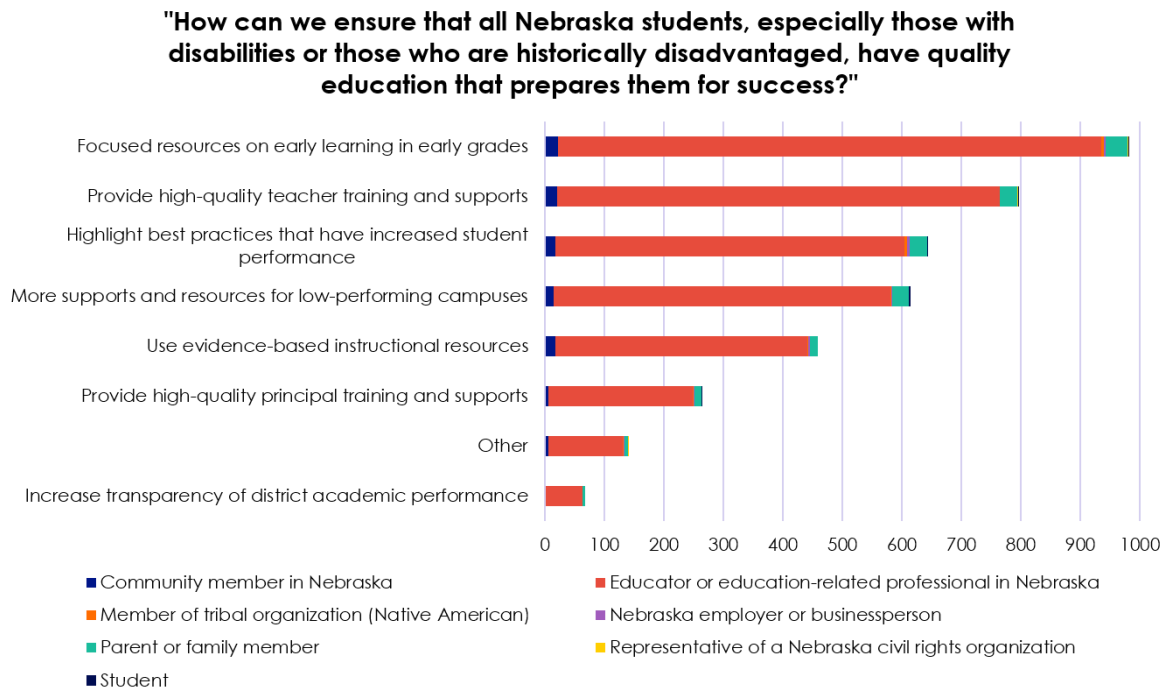
Figure 7 Frequency of Preference for Utilization of SEA Title II-A Funding



Stakeholder feedback was also used to inform decisions around optional funding “set-asides.” Specifically, district leaders and others were opposed to additional funding being withheld from Title I funding for the non-compulsory 3 percent set-aside for Direct Student Services. Furthermore, stakeholders indicated the importance of school leaders, suggesting the Nebraska Department of Education should use Title II-A set asides (3 percent) for supporting leadership efforts at the district and school level. More details about this initiative can be found in the Supporting Effective Educators section of the plan.

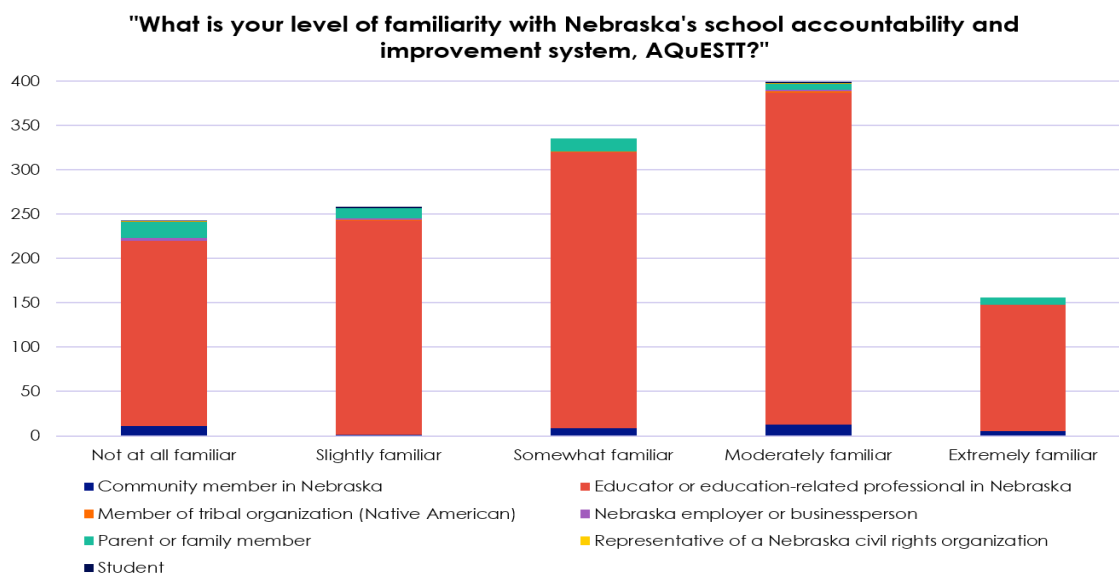
Several findings from the ESSA Stakeholder Survey (Figure 8) reaffirm efforts included by Nebraska Department of Education in the state plan.

Figure 8 ESSA Stakeholder Survey Findings



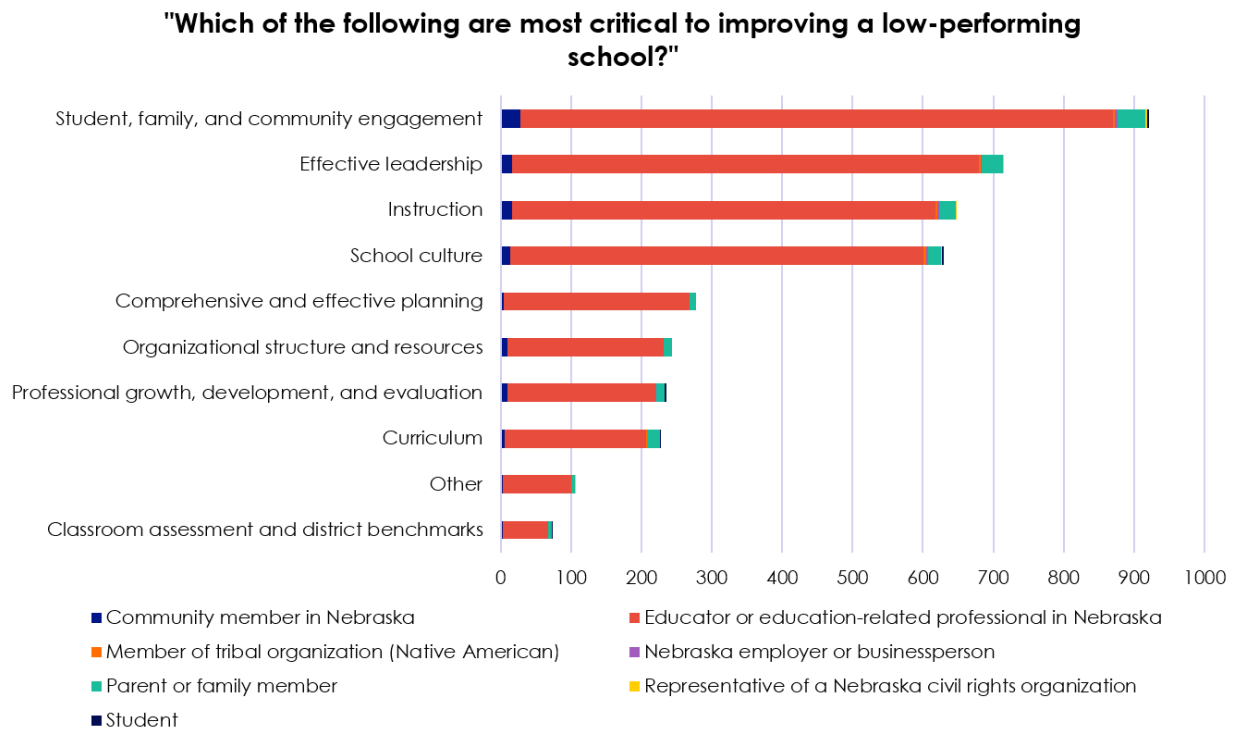
The Nebraska Department of Education is responding to survey feedback by investing in high-quality teacher training and support systems for educators in the state. The focus of these efforts is around equitable distribution of high-quality teachers and leaders.

Figure 9 ESSA Stakeholder Survey Findings 2



Since the Nebraska Department of Education is using AQuESTT for district and school accountability, Figure 9 above shows the opportunity the state has in informing the public on school classification, supports, and improvement. This information campaign will occur during the implementation phase of ESSA.

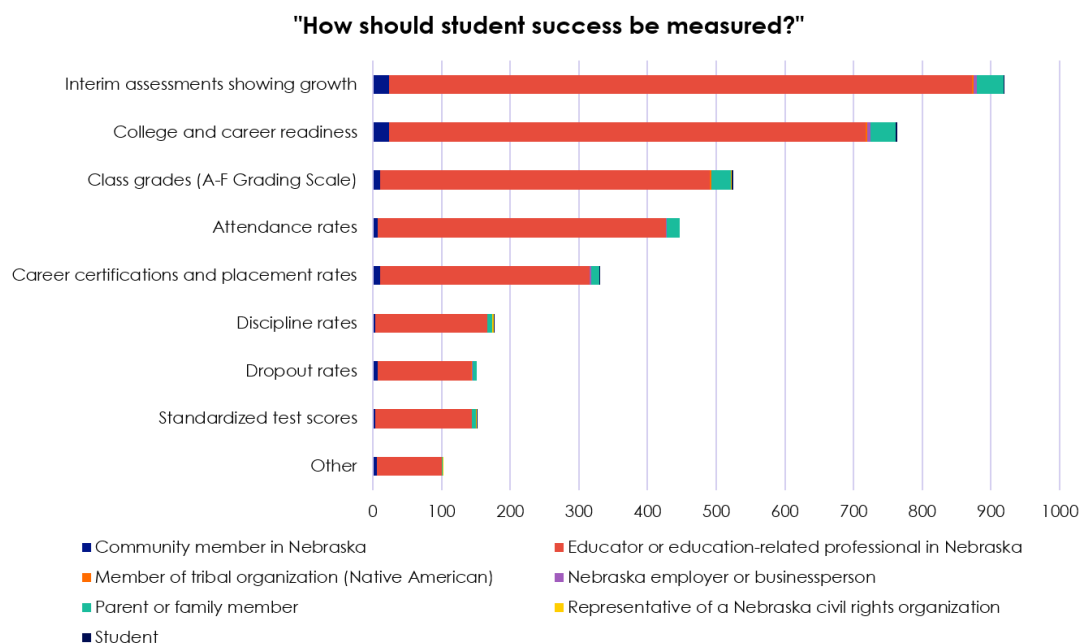
Figure 10 ESSA Stakeholder Survey Findings 3



Data from the graph (Figure 10) above helped inform many parts of the state plan. First, the emphasis on effective leadership again shines through. This call to action is evident in Section 5: Advancing Equity. Additionally, one AQuESTT Tenet, Positive Partnerships, is clearly aligned with the greatest feedback from stakeholders regarding the importance of student, family, and community engagement in improving low performing schools.



Figure 11 ESSA Stakeholder Survey Findings



NDE also looked to stakeholders to help determine the additional indicator for student success and school quality (Figure 11). The state is currently exploring additional indicators based on broad stakeholder feedback. The state's inclusion of chronic absenteeism as an additional indicator of school quality and student success is a reflection of this feedback, research conducted on the negative effects of being chronically out of school, and other stakeholder feedback. Other indicators are being explored including:

- The inclusion of the MAP test (interim assessments showing growth)
- College and career readiness indicators

**E. Governor's consultation.** *Describe how the SEA consulted in a timely and meaningful manner with the Governor consistent with section 8540 of the ESEA, including whether officials from the SEA and the Governor's office met during the development of this plan and prior to the submission of this plan.*

The Commissioner of Education engaged in productive dialogue with Governor Pete Ricketts on July 17, 2017 and August 30, 2017 regarding the state's ESSA plan. The plan was submitted to the Governor for his 30 day review on August 7, 2017. The NDE is committed to working closely with the Governor to explore changes to current policies in addition to better engaging stakeholders. Concerns from the Governor were focused primarily in four areas:

### 1) Long-Term Goals

In consultation with the Governor, the idea of a stretch or challenge goal was reintroduced. The

NDE and Governor believe in the ability of Nebraska's students and educators, and think that an even more ambitious goal, challenging the current system of 50 percent reduction of non-proficiency could also be achievable. As such, the NDE will consider reevaluating or resetting the state's long-term goals for the 2021-2026 period. If students are meeting or exceeding the requisite interim growth measures set by the state, the NDE will consider increasing the goal. One such proposal is to accelerate the reduction of non-proficiency to 70 percent reduction. In the long-term goals section, readers will find the achievable and ambitious long-term goals with the addition of the Challenge (Stretch) Goals discussed here.

## **2) Achieving Growth and Ensuring Accountability in All Schools**

The Governor expressed concerns over monitoring and supports for all schools and districts to meet long-term goals. The Governor's recommendation aligns with NDE's focus on supporting schools most needing improvement. NDE's theory of action (pg. 57) describes the increased resources focused on *Needs Improvement* schools. As the NDE develops supports for Needs Improvement schools, these strategies can be used with all schools in the other three classification levels.

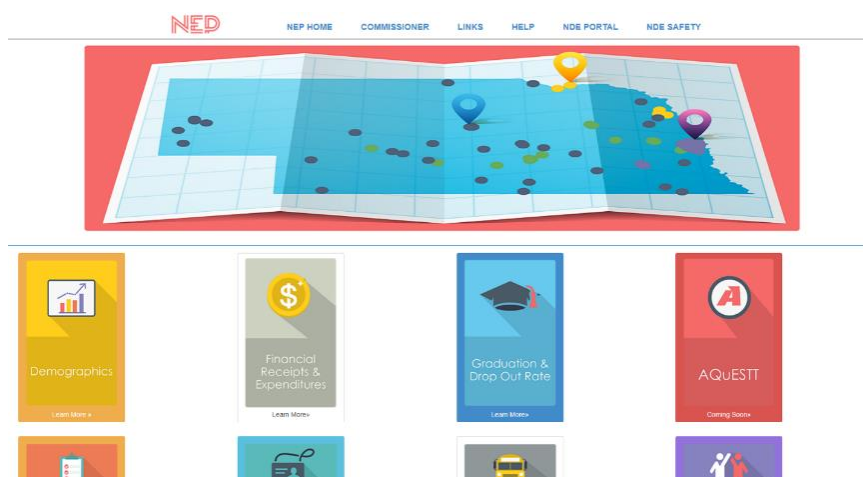
## **3) Parent and Family Engagement**

Another concern expressed from the Governor centered on family and community engagement. The Governor was concerned that parents and the community do not have ready or easy access to understandable resources for determining the quality of schools. Part of the Governor's recommendation included an accountability system using A-F ratings. In particular, the Governor expressed a need for communicating information to families and communities in a user friendly way and ensuring that these data are readily and easily accessible. This feedback mirrors input from the ESSA stakeholder survey which indicated a lack of general understanding of AQuESTT and a desire for greater family and community engagement.

The NDE recognizes it needs to more intentionally engage families and communities, especially around accountability practices. As a result of these conversations with the Governor, the Department will explore more resources for engaging parents, and sharing school and district data in a clear way.

One such strategy for better communication is through the rollout of the [Nebraska Education Profile \(NEP\)](#)<sup>10</sup>. This tool, launched in the fall of 2016, details demographic data, achievement levels, and other measures of school and district quality. The tool is more user friendly than previous state report cards. Data can be sorted by district, school, and state-levels, and is presented in a way that parents and community members will understand. NDE will work to advance efforts to ensure parents and community members are aware of the resources included in the NEP, and focus on revisions to and development of this valuable tool. These data are available in the fall of each year.

Figure 12 Nebraska Education Profile



Additionally, the NDE has revised the information sent to parents to report student performance on the state's NeSA tests. This information, seen below, includes student, district, and state performance comparisons, as well as graphical depictions of the student's outcomes. For more details, see page 105.

Figure 13 Student performance (two pages)

PERFORMANCE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS – GRADE 8			
	DEVELOPING	ESTABLISHED	DISTINGUISHED
<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA)</b>	<b>SCALE SCORE RANGE: BELOW 085</b> <b>STATE PERCENT: 21</b> Overall student performance in ELA reflects unsatisfactory performance on the standards and insufficient understanding of the content at eighth grade. A student scoring at the Below the Standards level inconsistently utilizes a variety of reading skills and strategies to comprehend and interpret narrative and informational text at grade level.	<b>SCALE SCORE RANGE: 085-134</b> <b>STATE PERCENT: 43</b> Overall student performance in ELA reflects satisfactory performance on the standards and sufficient understanding of the content at eighth grade. A student scoring at the Meets the Standards level generally utilizes a variety of reading skills and strategies to comprehend and interpret narrative and informational text at grade level.	<b>SCALE SCORE RANGE: 135-200</b> <b>STATE PERCENT: 36</b> Overall student performance in ELA reflects high academic performance on the standards and a thorough understanding of the content at or above eighth grade. A student scoring at the Exceeds the Standards level consistently utilizes a variety of reading skills and strategies to comprehend and interpret narrative and informational text at or above grade level.
	BELOW THE STANDARDS	MEETS THE STANDARDS	EXCEEDS THE STANDARDS
<b>MATHEMATICS</b>	<b>SCALE SCORE RANGE: BELOW 085</b> <b>STATE PERCENT: 32</b> Overall student performance in mathematics reflects unsatisfactory performance on the standards and insufficient understanding of the content at eighth grade. A student scoring at the Below the Standards level inconsistently draws on a broad range of mathematical knowledge and utilizes a variety of mathematics skills and strategies to solve real-world mathematical problems.	<b>SCALE SCORE RANGE: 085-134</b> <b>STATE PERCENT: 46</b> Overall student performance in mathematics reflects satisfactory performance on the standards and sufficient understanding of the content at eighth grade. A student scoring at the Meets the Standards level generally draws on a broad range of mathematical knowledge and utilizes a variety of mathematics skills and strategies to solve real-world mathematical problems.	<b>SCALE SCORE RANGE: 135-200</b> <b>STATE PERCENT: 22</b> Overall student performance in mathematics reflects high academic performance on the standards and a thorough understanding of the content at or above eighth grade. A student scoring at the Exceeds the Standards level consistently draws on a broad range of mathematical knowledge and utilizes a variety of mathematics skills and strategies to solve real-world mathematical problems.
<b>SCIENCE</b>	<b>SCALE SCORE RANGE: BELOW 085</b> <b>STATE PERCENT: 30</b> Overall student performance in science reflects unsatisfactory performance on the standards and insufficient understanding of the content at eighth grade. A student scoring at the Below the Standards level inconsistently draws on a broad range of scientific knowledge and skills in the areas of inquiry, physical, life, and Earthspace sciences.	<b>SCALE SCORE RANGE: 085-134</b> <b>STATE PERCENT: 48</b> Overall student performance in science reflects satisfactory performance on the standards and sufficient understanding of the content at eighth grade. A student scoring at the Meets the Standards level generally draws on a broad range of scientific knowledge and skills in the areas of inquiry, physical, life, and Earthspace sciences.	<b>SCALE SCORE RANGE: 135-200</b> <b>STATE PERCENT: 23</b> Overall student performance in science reflects high academic performance on the standards and a thorough understanding of the content at eighth grade. A student scoring at the Exceeds the Standards level consistently draws on a broad range of scientific knowledge and skills in the areas of inquiry, physical, life, and Earthspace sciences.

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION NEBRASKA STATE ACCOUNTABILITY (NeSA) INDIVIDUAL STUDENT REPORT SPRING 2017				
<b>STUDENT NAME:</b>				
<b>BIRTH DATE:</b>				
<b>DISTRICT:</b>				
<b>REPORTED SCHOOL:</b>				
<b>ENROLLED SCHOOL:</b>				
<b>TESTED GRADE:</b>				

Student's Overall Performance				
	Student's Scale Score	State Average Scale Score	Student's Performance Level	Student's State Percentile Rank
English Language Arts	141	117	Distinguished	71
Mathematics	125	105	Meets the Standards	71
Science	144	106	Exceeds the Standards	85

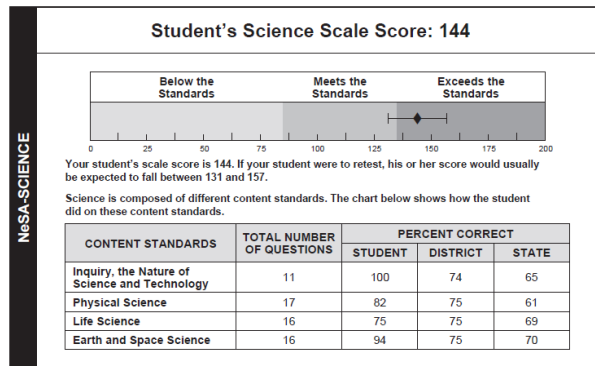
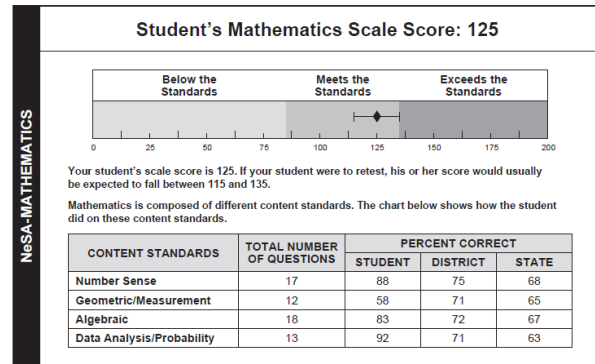
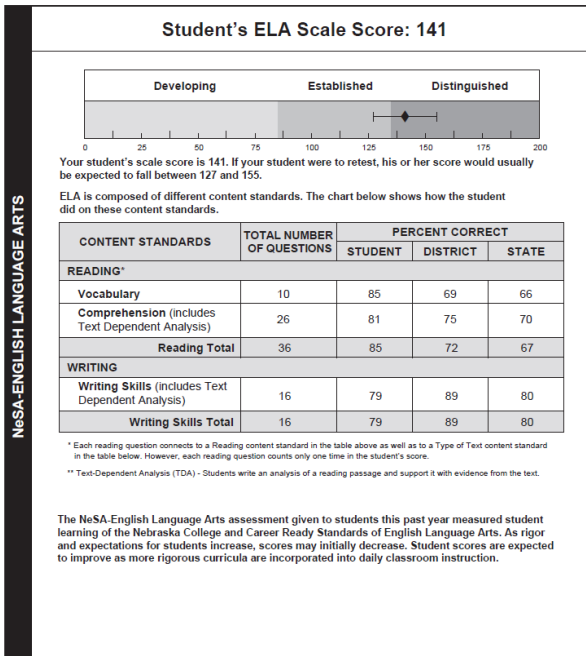
  

This report provides a record of student results on the Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) tests. A student's **scale score** is a transformed version of the raw score. It provides comparable meaning across grades and across years, but only within the same subject area. Scores should not be compared across content standards or years because the items vary in difficulty level. No score means the student did not test.

Refer to page 4 for more information related to the NeSA performance levels.

A student's **percentile rank** is the percentage of the peer group (e.g., grade) that the student surpassed.

Nebraska State Accountability — the NeSA tests are intended to measure, report, and compare student performance on academic content standards in all Nebraska public school buildings. More information about the NeSA testing program including the curriculum standards, performance level descriptors, and converting your child's scale score to a percentile rank can be found on the Nebraska Department of Education website at [www.education.ne.gov](http://www.education.ne.gov)



The NDE will continue to work with the Governor to develop strategies for engaging parents and communities.

#### 4) More Rigorous Interventions

The final element of feedback from the Governor related to accountability for schools that are not making progress. The Governor was concerned both about schools that are in Priority Status under Nebraska Statute that do not improve and those schools in other categories that are not making progress over time. Nebraska statute outlines the response to Priority Schools remaining in that status for five years, but current state regulations do not further define what more could be done to address Priority Status schools that are not making sufficient progress after five years. The Department is committed to working with the Governor to further define in regulation what steps will be taken, including defining “alternative administrative structure”, when addressing Priority Status schools that have not shown sufficient progress after five years.

Through continued consultation and conversations with the Governor, the NDE was affirmed in the proposed plan to hold CSI schools accountable in the same way as Priority Schools (pg 111-112), as detailed in the ESSA plan. Currently, Priority Schools that remain in priority for five years are subject to any of three conditions:

- Significant revisions to the continuous improvement plan

- An entirely new continuous improvement plan
- Alternative administrative structure

For schools identified for *Targeted Support and Improvement* the Nebraska Department of Education will annually review any progress plans and determine whether any modifications are needed. If a school has not met the exit criteria for needing targeted support and improvement by the fourth consecutive school year, the Nebraska Department of Education shall reevaluate the progress plan to determine if (a) a significant revision of the progress plan is necessary, (b) an entirely new progress plan is developed, or (c) the school should be identified for *Comprehensive Support and Improvement*.

## Conclusion

In summary, the NDE appreciated the Governor's engagement and feedback on the state's ESSA plan. The Department looks forward to continuing conversations with the Governor on how to continue to improve Nebraska's already strong education system.

Check one:

- ☐ The Governor signed this consolidated State plan.
- ☒ The Governor did not sign this consolidated State plan.

## 2.2 System of Performance Management

*Instructions: In the text boxes below, each SEA must describe consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 299.15 (b) its system of performance management of SEA and LEA plans across all programs included in this consolidated State plan. The description of an SEA's system of performance management must include information on the SEA's review and approval of LEA plans, monitoring, continuous improvement, and technical assistance across the components of the consolidated State plan.*

### A. Review and Approval of LEA Plans

*Describe the SEA's process for supporting the development, review, and approval of LEA plans in accordance with statutory and regulatory requirements. The description should include a discussion of how the SEA will determine if LEA activities align with: 1) the specific needs of the LEA, and 2) the SEA's consolidated State plan.*

Beginning in the 2005-2006 school year, Nebraska's first consolidated application was put into place. Included in the application were Title I-A, Title I-C, Title I-D, Title II-A, Title II-D, Title III-LEP, Title III-IE, Title IV-A, and Title V. Following a Title I-C federal monitoring visit, it was decided to pull that section of the application and make it a stand-alone application. All other grant programs remained as part of the NCLB Consolidated Application, dependent on continued funding.

Individual LEA formula grant applications are processed by the SEA annually for Migrant, 21st

Century, Homeless and RLIS (REAP) funds, either via an electronic submission on the SEA's Portal, or a paper and pencil application.

SEA staff members within the Federal Programs Division of Nebraska Department of Education are designated as the Federal Programs Consultant for technical support to each LEA in their development and submission of the ESEA Consolidated Application. In addition, certain Nebraska Department of Education staff members are identified as specialists in their respective areas of expertise (Title I-V) for additional support beyond that available through the Consultant assigned to the LEA.

All funding for Title I -V programs is provided on a reimbursement basis to the LEA, by filing requests for such reimbursement with the SEA. SEA staff members review all requests, accompanied by any required documentation to ensure that approvable expenses align with the original, or subsequently amended version, of the LEA's grant application. Requests for reimbursement of Title I-V funds must be made within the federal deadlines prescribed for the grant period for which the grant is valid.

Each Federal Programs Consultant is assigned to review and recommend for final approval both the NCLB Consolidated Applications and separate LEA applications for other Title programs not contained in the Consolidated Application for their designated LEA. Review and approval of each application is made based on the ESEA Consolidated Application Review Checklist containing all components required under ESEA for each Title program. These Checklists ensure that all goals and activities contained within each LEA application align with the comprehensive needs assessment conducted by the LEA, as well as the overall goals for school improvement contained within AQuESTT and the 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction. LEAs are required to document their identified needs through the collection and reporting of student performance data. Such data must also be linked to a reliable means of evaluating the level of success obtained by the LEA in meeting the goals listed in the ESEA Consolidated Application.

Any corrections or additions required as a result of not meeting all components of these respective checklists are made through returning, correcting, and submitting the entire grant application for review and approval. This review/correction and approval process is typically completed within a 30-45-day window to ensure that each LEA can make the most efficient use of the ESEA approved funds and have the greatest amount of time to implement its programs with fidelity. Each LEA application is evaluated on its own merit, with respect to the unique identified needs of the LEA, but regardless of the size of the ESEA allocations, or the capacity of the district to implement evidence-based strategies as a means of addressing its unique needs, all required components of the ESEA Review Checklists must be met before an LEA can receive approval for the use of these funds.

Once the final LEA application is approved by the Nebraska Department of Education Federal Programs Director, each LEA is allowed to make amendments to their original grant application, as needed, with the technical support of their assigned Federal Programs Consultant.

Amendments may be filed at any time during the grant period, prior to submission of the LEA's final request for reimbursement of grant funds. Each amendment is further reviewed upon submission to Nebraska Department of Education, using a specific Amendment Review Checklist, and is forwarded to the Federal Programs Director for final approval of the amendment.

## **2.2(B) Monitoring**

*Describe the SEA's plan to monitor SEA and LEA implementation of the included programs to ensure compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements. This description must include how the SEA will collect and use data and information which may include input from stakeholders and data collected and reported on State and LEA report cards (under section 1111(h) of the ESEA and applicable regulations), to assess the quality of SEA and LEA implementation of strategies and progress toward meeting the desired program outcomes.*

At the same time that the Consolidated Grant Application was created, a consolidated monitoring protocol was implemented. Prior to this time, State Auditors required Title I monitoring to be changed from every 5 -years to a 3-year cycle. The 3-year cycle was continued as consolidated monitoring of all ESEA programs was put into place.

Each LEA has a Nebraska Department of Education Federal Programs staff member assigned to review their application and complete onsite monitoring of their ESEA programs. This was intentional to simplify things for the LEAs, rather than having seven or eight Nebraska Department of Education contacts for all Federal Programs. Each LEA, ESU, and sub-recipient receiving funds from any of the ESEA formula grants is monitored at least once every three years with an on-site visit or desk-audit. LEAs and sub-recipients with multiple programs may have their review spread over more than one year. Each SEA staff member assigned to conduct the 3-year monitoring review is assigned to approximately 50 LEAs and/or Educational Service Unit (ESU) Consortia, resulting in about 16 LEAs being monitored by each SEA Consultant annually. Monitoring visits are scheduled, whenever possible, to accommodate the LEA's school calendar and to avoid possible conflicts with other critical events occurring throughout the school year at the local level.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Monitoring Guide Checklist provides the requirements of the programs in the ESEA Consolidated Application and other formula grants funded under this legislation. It is provided to each LEA, ESU and sub-recipient in advance of the on-site visit or desk audit as a means to ensure programs are operated in compliance with the law and guidance. All ESEA programs are also monitored through the application and financial reporting approval processes, as well as the state's continuous school improvement process, requiring development and approval of a Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) through either the AdvancED, or the Nebraska Frameworks system.

The proposed three-year monitoring schedule is posted on the [Nebraska Department of Education Federal Programs<sup>11</sup>](#) webpage. At least one month prior to the visit, the district or ESU



will be contacted by the Nebraska Department of Education reviewer to arrange the details of the monitoring. After being notified, the district or ESU is to complete the appropriate sections of the Monitoring Guide Checklist and submit the completed Checklist to the reviewer (at least one week prior to the scheduled visit). The form is designed to identify areas where technical assistance may be needed, as well as to determine options for documentation to support compliance with the requirements. The SEA requires that some pieces of evidence/documentation be submitted prior to or during the monitoring visit. In some cases, only specified documentation will be accepted to meet compliance requirements of the federal law. These are clearly identified in the Checklist. All other documentation should be available for review. Required components of this monitoring process include the review of LEA report card data and student performance data collected by the SEA and reported on the SEA website.

Monitoring visits include a review of documentation and a conversation with appropriate program directors and/or staff members. Depending on the programs being reviewed, this may also include nonpublic school staff, multi-district project members, parents, and representatives of other agencies. All participants to be involved in the visit are identified during preliminary planning by the LEA, ESU, or agency and the reviewer. Where applicable, the LEA is also required to demonstrate that they have complied with requirements under ESEA for tribal consultation as well as non-public school consultation in the development, implementation and evaluation of its respective program plans.

Following the review, the LEA or other sub-recipient is given 30 days to submit any documentation or evidence that was not available during the review as requested by the reviewer. The LEA receives a written report within 90 days if additional evidence was submitted. If a review report includes a finding of non-compliance, a plan for correcting the issue is required within 60 days of receipt of the report and may involve a follow-up visit. In unique cases of an LEA that fails to meet a large percentage of the required ESEA components, or has demonstrated a history of non-compliance, additional documentation and/or evidence of how federal funds are being used and monitored may be required, and/or more frequent on-site monitoring may be conducted.

### **2.3. A. Continuous Improvement**

*Describe the SEA's plan to continuously improve SEA and LEA plans and implementation. This description must include how the SEA will collect and use data and information which may include input from stakeholders and data collected and reported on State and LEA report cards (under section 1111(h) of the ESEA and applicable regulations), to assess the quality of SEA and LEA implementation of strategies and progress toward meeting the desired program outcomes.*

All public school districts in Nebraska that provide elementary and/or secondary instruction to children of compulsory attendance age are required to be accredited under the provisions of [Rule 10<sup>12</sup>](#). Accredited school systems are also considered to be approved for legal operation for purposes of state law. Approved private or parochial schools are eligible to apply for and maintain accreditation under the provisions of this chapter.



As part of this accreditation process, Nebraska also requires LEAs to implement a continuous improvement plan (Figure 14). Districts may use the AdvancED or the Nebraska Frameworks models for continuous school improvement. Integral to this accreditation process is the collection of student achievement data by the SEA. Student achievement data is reported on State and LEA report through the Nebraska Staff and Student Records System, (NSSRS) as well as collection and analysis of student achievement data on state assessments (NeSA) through AQuESTT. In addition, each LEA is required to identify its greatest needs for improvement, and to set goals and activities for utilizing federal funds to meet these needs through a comprehensive needs assessment, as part of the ESEA Consolidated Application and the 3-year, on-site monitoring process.

The school system also develops and implements a continuous school improvement process to promote quality learning for all students. This process includes procedures and strategies to address quality learning, equity, and accountability. In all school systems, the continuous school improvement process includes the following activities at least once every five years:

- Review and update of mission and vision statements.
- Collect and analyze data about student performance, demographics, learning climate, and former high school students.
- Select improvement goals. At least one goal is directed toward improving student academic achievement.
- Develop and implement an improvement plan which includes procedures, strategies, actions to achieve goals, and an aligned professional development plan.
- Evaluate progress toward improvement goals.

*Figure 14 Nebraska Department of Education Continuous Improvement Graphic*



A systematic, on-going process guides planning, implementation, and evaluation and renewal of continuous school improvement activities to meet local and statewide goals and priorities. The school improvement process focuses on improving student learning. The process includes a

periodic review by a team of visiting educators who provide consultation to the local school/community in a continuous review and evaluation of plans, goals, and accomplishments.

This culture of continuous improvement is guided by the state's accountability system described below:

AQuESTT Tenet: All students experience success through a continuous improvement process that builds student, parent, guardian, family, and community engagement in order to enhance educational experiences and opportunities for all students.

**B. Differentiated Technical Assistance.** *Describe the SEA's plan to provide differentiated technical assistance to LEAs and schools to support effective implementation of SEA, LEA, and other subgrantee strategies.*

The Nebraska Department of Education has created various levels of supports for districts and schools based on school performance and classification in AQuESTT. This process begins by collecting student achievement, graduation, and EBA data to create a district and school profile (below). Using this data, the state identifies schools in four categories, "Excellent, Great, Good, and Needs Improvement."

Differentiated technical assistance to LEAs is based on personalized supports and needs of each district. This process begins by the development, implementation and evaluation of Continuous Improvement Plans (CIP) in collaboration with SEA staff members. These staff cross-cut the agency and include members from Nebraska Department of Education teams, including, Federal Programs, Accreditation, School Finance, Early Childhood, Special Education, Data Research and Evaluation, Teaching and Learning, and Adult Program Services. SEA staff are assigned to each LEA to address questions and to provide training and on-going technical support in the continuous improvement process. This comprehensive system of technical support to each LEA ensures that a consistent, consolidated model is in place for reviewing data, documenting needs, identifying areas of improvement and evaluating progress, as well as holding each LEA accountable for the efficient use of federal funds in meeting their goals.

#### *Summary of Monitoring and Continuous Improvement*

The Governor's recommendation for holding all schools accountable for improvement aligns with NDE's focus on supporting schools most needing support. NDE's theory of action, seen below, describes the increased resources focused on *Needs Improvement* schools. As the NDE develops supports for Needs Improvement schools, these strategies can be used with all schools in the other three classification levels.

Figure 15 AQuESTT Support Level



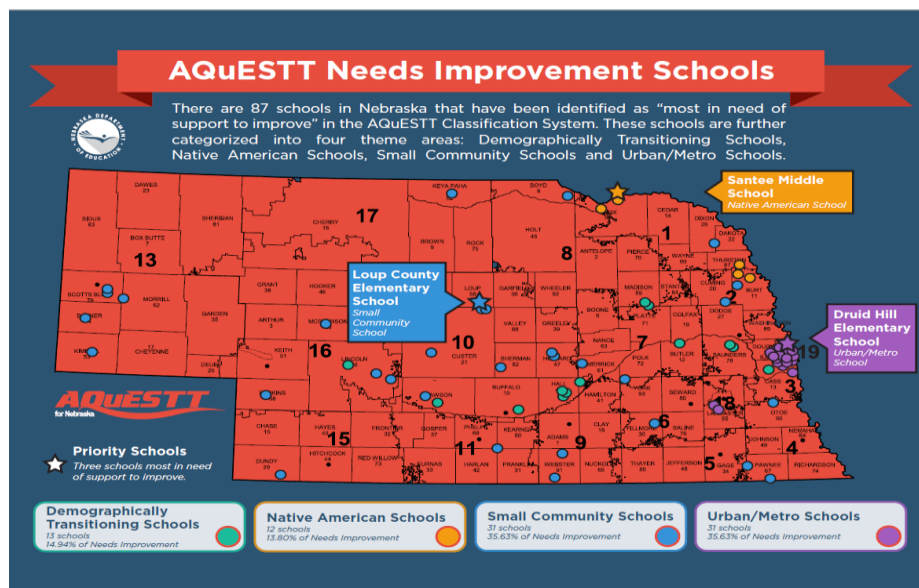
Through consultation with the Governor, the NDE will continue to explore opportunities for policies which could affect school improvement and accountability for all schools.

To meet Nebraska's long term goals, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) will use existing student data reporting tools under AQuESTT to identify districts that need differential levels of support.

#### *Supports for Schools in Need of Improvement*

In 2016, 87 schools were identified as Needs Improvement (Figure 16). These schools are categorized as Demographically Transitioning Schools, Native American Schools, Small Community Schools, and Urban/Metro Schools. From this categorization, three schools that are most need of assistance are chosen as the state's Priority Schools.

Figure 16 2016 AQuESTT Needs Improvement Schools



### Priority Schools

Schools in Priority status receive the most intensive state support. State law requires the Nebraska Department of Education to designate no more than three Priority Schools at a time. Department staff leads an intervention team in collaboration with the school principal. The intervention team determines the areas of focus for improvement after conducting a comprehensive needs assessment and draft a progress plan. The progress plan includes strategies for improvement in the focus areas, metrics and other indicators of success, timelines and resources. The Department also continues support through the implementation phase to build local capacity through professional development for teachers and school leadership, the effective use of data, discipline, and other efforts to improve school culture and increase student achievement.

School districts containing a Priority School also receive individualized district supports from the Department, generally provided in a face-to-face setting. The goal is to provide both the school and district with supports and plans based on analysis of student, school, and district data and resources. NDE will work with these districts to continue to expand local capacity to support the Priority School progress plan. Ultimately, the Department would assist districts to create local teams to reflect, discuss, monitor the work in Priority Schools to replicate effective interventions in other school buildings within the district, starting with other Needs Improvement schools.

The Nebraska Department of Education will document successful practices in Priority Schools assemble them into toolkits that can be shared with all schools needing comprehensive or targeted supports.

### Comprehensive Support

Identification of schools for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) follows the same

steps of evaluation and accountability that are used to designate the three Priority Schools above. While Title I schools have access to federal school improvement funds and related requirements below, schools that do not receive Title I funds can still be identified but would not receive federal funds. The department will require non-Title I schools to review and revise their continuous improvement plans to include the information reported by Title I schools discussed immediately below.

Each school identified for CSI will be required to demonstrate they have met the following requirements in the development of their local plan for effective use of Title I school improvement funds in addressing the academic achievement gap(s) that caused the school to be identified:

- Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment with technical assistance from NDE and the appropriate ESU;
- Select measurable goals targeted to the achievement gaps based on the needs assessment;
- Select and implement evidence based intervention strategies;
- Implement an evaluation system to monitor the effectiveness of selected interventions in improving academic achievement and narrow the achievement gaps.

Title I schools selected for CSI will also receive additional support in development of a custom school improvement plan. Successful applicants for assistance will be assigned an improvement assistance team based on the needs assessment and improvement plan. Schools will be eligible for annual support for up to three years.

School districts containing schools identified for CSI will also be provided with district supports. The supports and plans will be based on analysis of student, school, and district data and resources to identify opportunities to create or enhance systems-level conditions needed to accelerate and sustain school improvement.

Supports for professional development, including Title IIa and other funds, may be used for schools under Priority Status and schools in need of Comprehensive Support and Improvement.

NDE will annually review any progress plans for schools identified for CSI and determine if modifications are needed. If the school has not met exit criteria by the fourth year, NDE shall determine if an alternative administrative structure is warranted.

#### Targeted Support

Schools identified for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) are selected by non-proficient subgroups based on all indicators. Schools with identified non-proficient subgroups will be eligible for TSI. Regardless of a school's overall AQuESTT status or classification, the schools with subgroups that are non-proficient will be required to create interventions, with technical assistance from NDE and the relevant ESU, as part of the school's continuous improvement plan.

For all Priority, Comprehensive Support and Improvement, and Targeted Support schools, NDE will also connect schools and districts with common identified areas for improvement. An example of this would be to connect a group of districts to improve ELL student performance. This will allow identified cohorts to potentially pool resources to address common issues.

#### Continuous Improvement Plans Reporting

For districts with no schools that are identified as Priority, Comprehensive Support and Improvement, or Targeted Support and Improvement, the NDE will explore the idea of the district filing their continuous improvement plans annually with the NDE.

The NDE will explore expanded levels of support for all schools. Examples include analysis of trend data, newsletters, and department staff in all areas that are available for technical assistance as needed. The NDE may also work with the Governor's Office and other stakeholders to revise *The Nebraska Framework: A Handbook for Continuous Improvement in Nebraska Schools* or the creation of companion resources for parents, families, and communities.

Other examples of supports could include providing additional trend data to schools with negative three-year proficiency rates. These schools could be asked to update their continuous improvement plan if such an update was not completed within the prior 12 months.

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<sup>5</sup> Nebraska Department of Education (2017). *ESSA Nebraska*. <https://www.education.ne.gov/ESSA/>

<sup>6</sup> Nebraska Department of Education (2015). *Elementary Secondary Education Act Flexibility: Nebraska's Waiver from NCLB*. <https://www.education.ne.gov/eseaflex/>

<sup>7</sup> Nebraska Department of Education (2016). *2017-2016 Strategic Vision and Direction*. <https://nebraskaeducationvision.com/>

<sup>8</sup> Nebraska Department of Education (2017). *ESSA Nebraska*. <https://www.education.ne.gov/ESSA/>

<sup>9</sup> Nebraska Department of Education (2017). *NDE Bulletin*. <https://www.education.ne.gov/ndebulletins/>

<sup>10</sup> Nebraska Department of Education (2017). <http://nep.education.ne.gov/>

<sup>11</sup> Nebraska Department of Education (2017). Federal Programs. [https://www.education.ne.gov/federalprograms/ESEA\\_NCLB%20Updates.html](https://www.education.ne.gov/federalprograms/ESEA_NCLB%20Updates.html)

<sup>12</sup> Nebraska Department of Education (2015). Accreditation. <https://www.education.ne.gov/APAC/Accreditation.html>



### Section 3: Academic Assessments

*Instructions: As applicable, provide the information regarding a State's academic assessments in the text boxes below.*

#### **A. Advanced Mathematics Coursework.**

*Does the State: 1) administer end-of-course mathematics assessments to high school students in order to meet the requirements under section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(I)(bb) of the ESEA; and 2) use the exception for students in eighth grade to take such assessments under section 1111(b)(2)(C) of the ESEA?*

☐ *Yes. If yes, describe the SEA's strategies to provide all students in the State the opportunity to be prepared for and to take advanced mathematics coursework in middle school consistent with section 1111(b)(2)(C) and 34 C.F.R. § 200.5(b)(4).*

☒ *No.*

Nebraska does not administer such assessments.

#### **B. Languages other than English**

*Describe how the SEA is complying with the requirements in section 1111(b)(2)(F) of the ESEA and 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(f) in languages other than English.*

*i. Provide the SEA's definition for "languages other than English that are present to a significant extent in the participating student population," consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(f)(4), and identify the specific languages that meet that definition.*

The Nebraska Department of Education definition of "languages other than English that are present to a significant extent in the participating student population" is: *Any language that represents 15 percent or more of the native languages spoken by identified English Learners statewide is considered a language present to a significant extent in the participating student population.*

In the 2016-2017 school year, approximately 7% of Nebraska students were English Learners. Of this population, 69% indicated Spanish as their native language. The remaining 31% reported a variety of languages, however, no other languages represented more than 15 percent of native languages spoken within the English learner population. Following Spanish, the next largest percentages of languages spoken are Karen (7%) followed by Arabic (5%), Somali (3%), and Kurdish (3%). In reviews of individual districts, none were found to have a language other than Spanish present that would meet or exceed 15 percent of the district's population.

*ii. Identify any existing assessments in languages other than English, and specify for which grades and content areas those assessments are available.*



Nebraska currently offers and provides math (NeSA-Math) and science (NeSA-Science) content assessments in Spanish for students in grades 3-8. General directions are provided in Spanish for the English language arts (NeSA-ELA) assessment. In 2016-2017 the high school content tests were replaced by the administration of the ACT to all students to meet the “once in high school” testing requirement of ESSA. ACT does not currently provide any translations that would result in a college reportable score for 2016-2017. It is expected that ACT will be providing English Learner Accommodations for its assessment for the 2017-2018 administration.

LEAs are currently allowed a local option to translate the math (NeSA-Math) and science (NeSA-Science) content assessments as well as the language arts (NeSA-ELA) directions into languages other than Spanish for ELs who are literate in their native language.

In addition to the translated assessment option, Nebraska Department of Education allows linguistically supportive accommodations for ELs taking content tests. Documents include the 2016-2017 NeSA Approved Accommodations Document<sup>13</sup> and the 2016-2017 Guide for Including English Language Learners in the NeSA Tests.<sup>14</sup>

Examples include:

- Clarification of directions in English or native language
- Audio or read aloud presentation in English or native language
- Word to word bilingual word lists and dictionaries
- Flexible scheduling and breaks

*iii. Indicate the languages other than English identified in B.i. above for which yearly student academic assessments are not available and are needed.*

None at this time.

*iv. Describe how the SEA will make every effort to develop assessments, at a minimum, in languages other than English that are present to a significant extent in the participating student population by providing:*

*1. The State’s plan and timeline for developing such assessments, including a description of how it met the requirements of 34 C.F.R. § 200.6(f)(4);*

State required assessments in the content areas of math and science are currently translated into Spanish and made available to districts by Nebraska Department of Education. Spanish is the only native language that is present to a significant extent in Nebraska schools. LEAs have the option to translate the math (NeSA-Math) and science (NeSA-Science) content assessments as well as the language arts (NeSA-ELA) directions into languages other than Spanish based on local needs.

*2. A description of the process the State used to gather meaningful input on the need for assessments in languages other than English, collect and respond to public comment, and consult with educators; parents and families of English learners; students, as appropriate; and other stakeholders; and*

On an annual basis, the Nebraska Department of Education gathers data regarding languages spoken in districts. The assessment advisory committee of stakeholders annually reviews data related to languages spoken that meet the definition articulated above of languages present to a significant extent and makes a recommendation at that time on assessments to be offered in languages other than English. There is currently only one predominant language in Nebraska's population of ELs and the service is already being provided. Nebraska has been providing translated content assessments to LEAs since 2010.

*3. As applicable, an explanation of the reasons the State has not been able to complete the development of such assessments despite making every effort.*

The Nebraska Department of Education has met this requirement.

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<sup>13</sup> Nebraska Department of Education (2016). *2016-2017 NeSA Approved Accommodations Document*.  
[https://www.education.ne.gov/Assessment/NeSA\\_Accommodations.htm](https://www.education.ne.gov/Assessment/NeSA_Accommodations.htm)

<sup>14</sup> Nebraska Department of Education (2016). *Guide for Including English Language Learners in the NeSA Tests*.  
[https://www.education.ne.gov/Assessment/NeSA\\_Accommodations.htm](https://www.education.ne.gov/Assessment/NeSA_Accommodations.htm)



## Section 4: Accountability, Support, and Improvement for Schools

*Instructions: Each SEA must describe its accountability, support, and improvement system consistent with 34 C.F.R. §§ 200.12-200.24 and section 1111(c) and (d) of the ESEA. Each SEA may include documentation (e.g., technical reports or supporting evidence) that demonstrates compliance with applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.*

### 4.1 Accountability System

**A. Indicators.** *Describe the measure(s) included in each of the Academic Achievement, Academic Progress, Graduation Rate, Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency, and School Quality or Student Success indicators and how those measures meet the requirements described in 34 C.F.R. § 200.14(a)-(b) and section 1111(c)(4)(B) of the ESEA.*

- The description for each indicator should include how it is valid, reliable, and comparable across all LEAs in the State, as described in 34 C.F.R. § 200.14(c).*
- To meet the requirements described in 34 C.F.R. § 200.14(d), for the measures included within the indicators of Academic Progress and School Quality or Student Success measures, the description must also address how each measure within the indicators is supported by research that high performance or improvement on such measure is likely to increase student learning (e.g., grade point average, credit accumulation, performance in advanced coursework).*
- For measures within indicators of School Quality or Student Success that are unique to high school, the description must address how research shows that high performance or improvement on the indicator is likely to increase graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment, persistence, completion, or career readiness.*
- To meet the requirement in 34 C.F.R. § 200.14(e), the descriptions for the Academic Progress and School Quality or Student Success indicators must include a demonstration of how each measure aids in the meaningful differentiation of schools under 34 C.F.R. § 200.18 by demonstrating varied results across schools in the State.*

### Accountability System Indicators, Measures, and Descriptors

Nebraska's existing accountability system is in transition with the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act, and a new statewide assessment system including the use of the ACT as the 11<sup>th</sup> grade assessment. Nebraska's accountability system, Accountability for a Quality Education System Today and Tomorrow (AQuESTT), was developed by the Nebraska Department of Education to collect data from public schools and districts across Nebraska in support of processes associated with school accountability Neb. Rev. Stat. §79-760.06 and Neb. Rev. Stat. §79-760.07.

Nebraska is revisiting the AQuESTT system to update accountability indicators and designation processes resulting from ESSA. However, some of these changes are described below, and in the business rules as an appendix.

## **Background**

Since 1955, the Nebraska State Board of Education has operated as the policy-forming, planning, and evaluative body for the state school program (Neb. Rev. Stat. Section 79-301-(2)). Although the Nebraska Legislature has over the past sixty years set forth numerous duties for the State Board to act, it remains the responsibility of the State Board to take each of those prescribed duties and set forth policy, planning and evaluation systems to ensure that Nebraska's school program is the best it can be. As such, Nebraska State Board Policy G19, Standards, Assessment, and Accountability (SAA) Belief Statements adopted in 2012 and most recently LB 438, The Quality Education and Accountability Act, frame the foundation for AQuESTT.

The drivers for development of this accountability model included: fairness and sensitivity to change, transparency, ability to support school and district improvement and student achievement, multiple indicators derived from key tenets of successful schools and districts, incorporation of trend data, all grounded in student growth.

Following is the conceptual framework established by the State Board as the framework for AQuESTT.

## **AQuESTT Tenets**

### ***Positive Partnerships, Relationships & Student Success***

The State Board believes that student engagement through positive partnerships and relationships are fundamental to successful schools and districts. The State Board seeks to support schools and districts to implement best practices in student, parent/guardian and community engagement to enhance educational experiences and opportunities.

Areas of Focus:

- Individualized or Personalized Learning Plans
- Attendance and Participation
- Family Engagement
- Community and Support Services

### ***Transitions***

The State Board believes that quality educational opportunities focus on supports for students transitioning between grade levels, programs, schools, districts and ultimately college and careers.

Areas of Focus:

- Early Childhood-Elementary
- Elementary-Middle School
- Middle School-High School
- High School-Post High School

### ***Educational Opportunities and Access***

The State Board believes that all students should have access to comprehensive instructional opportunities to be prepared for postsecondary education and career goals.

Areas of Focus:

- Early Childhood Education
- Comprehensive Learning Opportunities
- Expanded Learning Opportunities
- Blended Learning Opportunities

### ***College & Career Ready***

The State Board of Education believes that every student upon completion of their secondary education shall be prepared for postsecondary educational opportunities and to pursue their career goals.

Areas of Focus:

- Rigorous College & Career Ready Standards for All Content Areas
- Technological & Digital Readiness
- Support for Career Awareness and Career/College Goals

### ***Assessment***

The State Board believes the results of multiple assessment sources (national, state, and classroom-based) should be used to measure student achievement of college and career ready standards, and be used as an integral part of the instructional process.

Areas of Focus:

- Individualized/Adaptive Assessments
- Classroom-Based Assessments
- State Assessments
- National/International Assessments

### ***Educator Effectiveness***

The State Board believes that students should be surrounded by effective educators throughout their learning experiences such that schools and districts develop effective teachers and leaders that establish a culture of success.

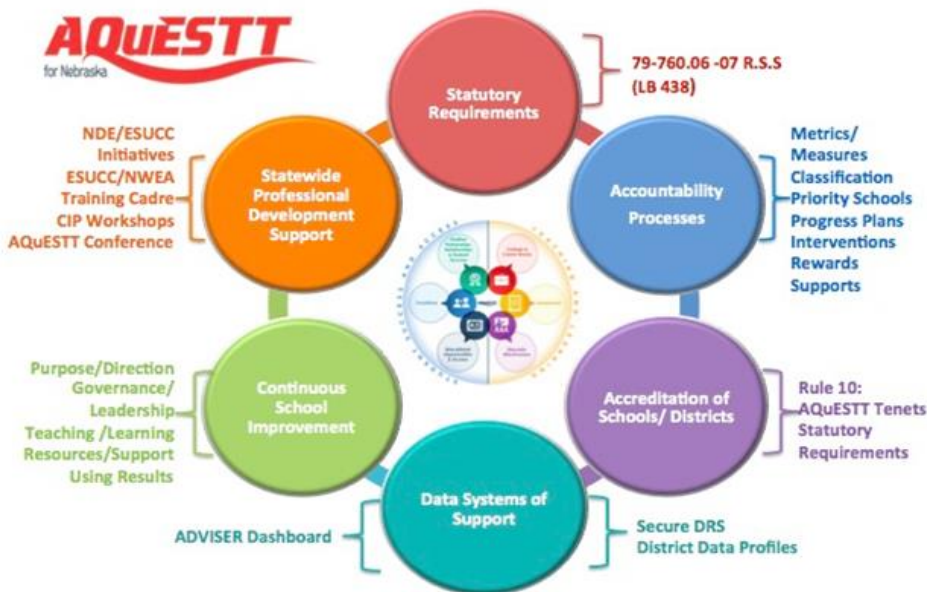
Areas of Focus:

- Nebraska Teacher & Principal Performance Framework
- Professional Development
- Building Leadership Supports
- Effective Local Policy Makers & Superintendents

Based on this framework, AQuESTT exceeds Nebraska's minimum statutory requirements for accountability (79-760.06-.07 R.S.S). These statutory requirements include the performance classification of all public schools and districts and the designation of up to three priority schools. AQuESTT also aligns with Nebraska's requirements for public school and district

accreditation (Rule 10). AQuESTT and accreditation intersect in that accreditation is tied to adherence to Rule 10 which contains standards/regulations the state board feels are necessary ensure quality, continuous school improvement, and the provision of equitable opportunities for all Nebraska students. A cross-walk with the AQuESTT tenets is within each section of Rule 10 which reflects accountability standards. Rule 10 also requires schools to submit reports on student achievement and testing results which is a part of accountability and AQuESTT. AQuESTT supports the effective use of data and professional learning for educators into a comprehensive system focused on continuous school improvement which is also a substantial part of Rule 10.

Figure 17 AQuESTT Model (Nebraska Systems of Support)



## Origins of the AQuESTT Accountability Framework

AQuESTT’s systematic approach to differentiated recognition and support, to both identify schools in need of support and schools successfully building capacity, focuses accountability on continuous improvement.

AQuESTT broadens the scope of accountability from Nebraska’s original NePAS (Nebraska Performance Accountability Model). In 2012, the Nebraska State Legislature outlined an initial blueprint for accountability that included measurements for school buildings and districts that would include graduation rates, growth and improvement on state assessments along with other indicators established by the State Board of Education (Nebraska Revised Statute Section 79-760.06.01). Nebraska Department of Education developed an initial accountability system and in August 2012, the State Board of Education adopted the Nebraska Performance Accountability System (NePAS), which was based on student scale scores within grades, buildings, and

districts. The system was intended to inform educators, parents, school board members, community members and policymakers about the learning progress of Nebraska schools and school districts.

The Nebraska State Legislature passed LB438 (now Nebraska Revised Statute Sections 79-760.06 and .07) on April 10, 2014, amending the State's Quality Education and Accountability Act to include a new way to use statewide assessment data from the Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) system. According to state statute, performance indicators including "graduation rates, student growth and student improvement on the assessment instruments and other indicators of the performance of public schools and school districts as established by the state board" (79-760.06.01) that are combined into a single measure that will be used to place schools in one of four classification categories: Needs Improvement, Good, Great, and Excellent. (Figure 18).

*Figure 18 AQuESTT Classification*



In January 2014, in response to pending legislation, the Nebraska Department of Education gathered a NePAS Task Force comprised of superintendents, district assessment contacts, school principals, teachers, program directors, Educational Service Unit representatives, policy partners, and Nebraska Department of Education personnel to work on an accountability model. The Task Force included representation from schools and districts with varying size, student membership and demographics, and geographic location in the state. National assessment experts including Chad Buckendahl from Alpine Testing Solutions, Bill Auty from Education Measurement, and Brian Gong from the National Center for Improvement of Educational Assessment supported the group as they drafted an initial classification system.

The group designed a system that combined multiple indicators into a single measure for each school building and district, set goals, assigned a classification for each building and district, set consequences for the lowest performing school buildings, and recognized high-performing schools. They met in a series of four in-person meetings in 2014 in Lincoln, NE: February 24-25, March 20-21, April 16-17, and July 23-24.

The NePAS Taskforce began by developing guiding principles for a new Nebraska accountability model. A system that would:

- Improve outcomes for all students
- Effectively identify student, schools, and districts that need to improve learning
- Be valid and reliable



- Be fair
- Be equitable for the range of sizes and distribution of demographics in Nebraska schools
- Be easy to understand and explain
- Meet Nebraska's needs

From there, the group looked at other state accountability models and classification levels. They considered US Department of Education's ESEA Flexibility guidance regarding accountability models, reduction of achievement gaps, and goals of 100% proficiency by 2020. The group proposed 20 different potential models. The task force then narrowed 20 potential models to two final models under consideration. Both were based on the [Dominant Profile Judgment Method and Some Field-Test Results \(Plake, Hambleton, & Jaeger, 1997, Sage Journals\)](#).<sup>15</sup>

This initial accountability draft with its classification component (NePAS 1.1) has become a part of a broader system of accountability of support in Nebraska's AQuESTT (Accountability for a Quality Education System Today and Tomorrow). A next-generation accountability system for Nebraska public schools and districts, AQuESTT is designed to support college-, career- and community-readiness for all students by integrating the components of accountability, assessment, accreditation, career education, and the effective use of data into a system of school improvement and support that is imperative for the good of Nebraska students and for the state to have a vibrant and economically successful future.

In February 2015, Nebraska's Rule 10, *Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Schools*, was revised to include the AQuESTT model; its tenets, classification rounds, and protocols (Title 92, *Nebraska Administrative Codes*, Chapter 10). On February 6, 2015, Nebraska State Board of Education unanimously adopted the provisions in this draft.

AQuESTT's broad theory of action utilizes strategies to provide increased support to lowest performing schools and greater freedom for innovation for excellent schools resulting in increased community and student engagement, growth in student performance, and collaboration across the system.

*"It is about everyone doing their part in two aspects: being as good as one can be during individual and collaborative work, and being aware that everyone needs to make a contribution to improve the larger system."*<sup>16</sup>

AQuESTT aligns with the processes of state accreditation of school districts and serves as a blueprint for continuous improvement for each school and school district in Nebraska. With a vision to improve teaching and learning and student success and access in all Nebraska public schools and districts AQuESTT is built upon the following tenets: College and Career Readiness; Assessment; Positive Partnerships, Relationships, and Student Success; Educator Effectiveness; Transitions; and Educational Opportunities and Access.

### AQuESTT Goals

1. Ensure all students are college and career ready upon high school graduation
2. Ensure all educators are effective in preparing all students to be college- and career-ready
3. Empower stakeholders to take action in the support of success for all students
4. Continuously empower and innovate for higher levels of achievement

### AQuESTT Components

1. Performance objectives for schools and districts
2. Measures and metrics
3. Annual determinations and reporting of performance of schools and districts
4. Classification of school and district performance
5. Designation of priority, comprehensive and targeted schools
6. Rewards, consequences, and supports for schools and districts
7. Statewide professional learning support for schools and districts
8. Evaluation and review for continuous improvement

### AQuESTT Measures and Metrics

AQuESTT relies on the measurement, collection and analysis of a variety of indicators used to classify the performance of public schools and districts. These indicators include status, growth (including English Learner proficiency), and improvement as measured by student performance on the statewide assessments in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science. New to AQuESTT, beginning in the 2017-18 school year, chronic absenteeism rates will be used to set goals for the 2018-19 school year, and schools held accountable and supported toward that growth during the 2018-19 school year.

### **Annual Determinations and Reporting of Performance of Schools and Districts**

AQuESTT uses the measures previously discussed (i.e., status, improvement, student growth and participation on state assessments, chronic absenteeism, and graduation rates) to annually characterize and differentiate between schools and districts as Excellent, Great, Good, or Needs Improvement. Annual classification will be publically reported to all stakeholders.

Annual, clear and accurate reporting of the performance of public schools and districts ensures that stakeholders; students, families, educators, policymakers and the public; receive information that can be “used to identify and replicate best practices; recognize and correct deficiencies, continuously improve performance” (CCSSO<sup>17</sup>). AQuESTT relies on the annual reporting of school and district performance primarily through Nebraska’s AQuESTT website (<https://aquestt.com/>) and through direct reports to schools and districts of student, school and district performance prior to the public release of performance results. These reports and website displays provide state assessment results for all students and disaggregated student subgroups, as well as other data relevant to student achievement.

The Nebraska Education Profile (NEP) website (<http://nep.education.ne.gov/>) provides reports of student performance on national norm referenced assessments required for reporting purposes,

school and district profiles that provide a context for better understanding the performance results, information related to career education programs and career education performance, and teacher qualifications. Data are presented in the fall of the year for public release but are provided to schools and districts in the summer, prior to the public release to allow educators time to analyze the results and address next steps for continuous improvement.

### **Classification of School and District Performance**

The indicators which will be detailed later in this section (i.e., NeSA status, growth, improvement, English language proficiency/progress, chronic absenteeism, participation, and graduation rates) are used to initially classify public schools and districts into one of four performance levels: Needs Improvement, Good, Great, and Excellent.

Once the initial school and district performance level ratings, based on status, have been determined, compensatory and limiting adjustments are applied to the performance level classification for schools and districts.

### **Designation of Priority Schools**

#### **Priority Schools**

Nebraska statute (N.R.S. 79-760.06.) requires the designation of no fewer than three Priority Schools from the lowest performance level classification. These schools receive supports from the Nebraska Department of Education to address and diagnose issues negatively affecting student achievement and to aid in developing a progress plan to guide improvement efforts. Nebraska defines these three Priority Schools as those in most need of assistance to improve student achievement. Schools designated as Priority Schools may or may not be schools currently receiving Title I funding.

#### **Process for Designating Priority Schools**

Once the school and district classification of performance is completed, the process for designating three Priority Schools is conducted. The process for designating Nebraska's Priority Schools relies on the use of indicators represented by data and processes that are both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Nebraska's rationale for this approach is based on the belief that making accurate determinations about school performance ultimately requires a comprehensive review of school effectiveness that goes beyond student performance on state assessments and graduation rates.

Measureable indicators represented by quantitative data currently reported to the Nebraska Department of Education through the Nebraska Staff and Student Record System (NSSRS) by all public schools and districts is used to develop a profile for each school in the lowest (Needs Improvement) performance classification level. The profiles are used by Nebraska Department of Education staff to review the performance of each school in the Needs Improvement classification level.

### School Profiles:

The following additional, measureable indicators are used to develop the school profiles for schools in the Needs Improvement classification level:

- Attendance rate
- Percent of classes taught by appropriately endorsed staff
- Dropout rate
- Instances of disciplinary action (i.e., suspension and expulsion)
- Student entry rate (mobility in)
- Percent of students eligible for free and reduced meals
- Percent of students learning English
- Percent of student receiving special education services
- Title I status
- Supplemental program supports

### Origins of the Evidence-Based Analysis

Statutory requirements (79-760.06 R.S.S.) prescribe indicators of performance that must be included in the AQuESTT classification model: status on the Nebraska state assessments (NeSA); measures of NeSA improvement, growth, and participation; graduation rate; and “other indicators of the performance of public schools and school districts as established by the state board.” With input from the Nebraska Department of Education Assessment and Accountability Task Force and approval from the Nebraska State Board of Education, an additional indicator included in the AQuESTT classification model relates to student non-proficiency measured by NeSA.

To further align the performance classification model to the AQuESTT tenets, the State Board chose to include additional indicators of school quality and student success that are aligned to the six tenets into the model for classifying school and district performance. The method approved by the State Board for collecting data related to additional indicators is the AQuESTT Evidence-based Analysis (EBA).

### Purpose and Content of the AQuESTT Evidence-Based Analysis

The overall purpose of the EBA is to obtain information about measures of the six tenets to support statutory requirements of school and district classification and the designation of priority schools. Additionally, the EBA is designed to obtain information to inform the strategic development and prioritization of statewide systems of support for schools and districts.

The EBA includes two questionnaires - one for individual public schools and one for public school districts. The school EBA employs variations in item wording across school types in acknowledgement of the distinct circumstances and best educational practices recommended across different levels of student development (i.e., elementary grades, middle grades, and high school grades). These variations are represented in questionnaire items with the prefix “E” for elementary grades, “M” for middle grades, and “H” for high school grades. The EBA questionnaires and other related information may be found at: <https://aquestt.com/resources/>

## **District/School Evidence-Based Analysis**

The District/School EBA includes six sections; one for each of the six tenets of AQuESTT. Following is an outline of the District/School EBA.

### **Section I – Positive Partnerships, Relationships, and Student Success**

Subsection I.I – Policies, Practices, and Procedures

Subsection I.II – System of Support

Subsection I.III – Other Resources (conditionally displayed)

### **Section II – Transitions**

Subsection II.I – Policies, Practices, and Procedures

Subsection II.II – System of Support

Subsection II.III – Other Resources (conditionally displayed)

### **Section III – Educational Opportunities and Access**

Subsection III.I – Policies, Practices, and Procedures

Subsection III.II – System of Support

Subsection III.III – Other Resources (conditionally displayed)

### **Section IV – College and Career Ready**

Subsection IV.I – Policies, Practices, and Procedures

Subsection IV.II – System of Support

Subsection IV.III – Other Resources (conditionally displayed)

### **Section V – Assessment**

Subsection V.I – Policies, Practices, and Procedures

Subsection V.II – System of Support

Subsection V.III – Other Resources (conditionally displayed)

### **Section VI – Educator Effectiveness**

Subsection VI.I – Policies, Practices, and Procedures

Subsection VI.II – System of Support

Subsection VI.III – Other Resources (conditionally displayed)

## **Target Populations**

The target populations for the 2015 EBA are described below.

- **Public School Districts.** The target population included all public school districts that operate in Nebraska other than Interim, State Operated, ESU, and Non-Public schools. For a full description, see the AQuESTT Final Classification Business Rules document located in Appendix F.
- **Public Schools.** The target population included all public schools other than wholly SPED, wholly prekindergarten programs, and wholly alternative programs. Schools buildings are split into schools according to the process outlined in the AQuESTT Final Classification Business Rules located in Appendix F.

## **Periodicity of the Evidence-Based Analysis**

The data collection and processing cycle for the AQuESTT EBA is designed to occur annually, opening each January and closing the following June 30th.

## ESSA – AQUESTT Indicators

ESSA Indicator:	Academic Achievement	Academic Progress	English Language Proficiency/ Progress	Graduation Rate	School Quality & Student Success
AQuESTT Rating Area:	Status (High Schools: Improvement & Non Proficiency)	Growth, Improvement, Non-Proficiency	English Language Proficiency/Progress	4- and 7-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	Chronic Absenteeism, Science, Evidence-Based Analysis (EBA)

Table 16 ESSA-AQuESTT Indicators by Grade Level

ESSA	Indicator	Elementary Measure	Middle School Measure	High School Measure
Academic Achievement	Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NeSA-ELA (grades 3-8)</li> <li>• NeSA-Mathematics (grades 3-8)</li> <li>• NeSA-Alternate ELA (grades 3-8)</li> <li>• NeSA-Alternate Mathematics (grades 3-8)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACT (grade 11)</li> <li>• NeSA-Alternate Mathematics (Grade 11)</li> <li>• NeSA-Alternate ELA (Grade 11)</li> </ul>
	High School Growth			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACT (grade 11) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Non-Proficiency</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Improvement</li> </ul>
Academic Progress	Growth Improvement Non-Proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NeSA-ELA &amp; Math (3-8) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Growth – Percentage of students that show growth on their individual NeSA tests from the previous year.</li> <li>○ Improvement-Based on a district's average NeSA score over a</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

		<p>three year period.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Non-Proficiency – Rating based the school’s increase or decrease in the percentage of students scoring non-proficient.</li> </ul>	
English Language Proficiency/Progress	English Language Proficiency/Progress	<p>ELPA21 (K-8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English Language Proficiency/Progress is determined by measuring students’ progress to proficiency on the ELPA21</li> </ul>	<p>ELPA21 (9-12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English Language Proficiency/Progress is determined by measuring students’ progress to proficiency on the ELPA21</li> </ul>
Graduation Rate	Graduation Rate	<p>While graduation rate does not apply to elementary or middle schools, the skills gained in these grades are foundational to success later in a student’s academic life. Elementary schools focus on well-rounded education. Middle schools begin the focus on college and career readiness. Skill attainment and academic knowledge are measured under “Academic Achievement” and “Academic Progress.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a low Graduation rate at a school/district can limit raw classification to a 3, 2 or 1.</li> <li>• If the graduation rate is high enough, or if the school is an elementary or middle school, then there is no effect. The graduation rate is calculated using lag data.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

School Quality and Student Success	Chronic Absenteeism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A student is identified as chronically absent when a district reports that he or she has not been present for 10 percent or more of the days that he or she was “in membership” at a school. “Membership” is defined as the number of school days in session in which the student is enrolled and registered during the annual reporting period from July 1 to June 30.</li> <li>The NDE is proposing to use reduction in chronic absenteeism as the basis for this indicator. The NDE, in coordination with each school, will analyze three years of chronic absenteeism data to set a baseline. The goal for each school will be to reduce their rate of chronic absenteeism by half in 10 years. As such, each school will have an annual reduction rate necessary to achieve this goal. Schools that meet the reduction target will be awarded a bump in the classification system.</li> </ul>
School Quality and Student Success	Science Indicator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NeSA – Science (grades 3-8)</li> <li>NeSA – Alternate Science (grades 3-8)</li> <li>ACT Science (grade 11)</li> </ul>
School Quality and Student Success	Evidence Based Analysis	The EBA Total Score is an additive measure of the responses to each of the five “policies, practices, and procedures” questions for each of the six AQUESTT tenets. If a school EBA Total Score meets or exceeds specified percentiles, the classification is eligible to be increased by one level. The EBA adjustment only applies to school classifications, not districts.

### **Academic Achievement:**

**Status** is calculated by determining the percent of students proficient on state assessments for all available grade levels for Math and English Language Arts for the current year. The denominator will be the greater of 95 percent of all students, or the number of students participating in the assessments. The Status indicator will earn an initial score of 1, 2, 3, or 4, with 1 being the lowest, and 4 the highest. Some schools with a small number of eligible assessment scores will have their district’s Status score substitute as their school Status score.

Included in the academic achievement indicator for high schools only are two measures of academic progress: Non-Proficiency and Improvement. These indicators are calculated separately and may lead to two separate adjustments to a school’s raw score.



### **Academic Progress:**

The following measures of academic progress are calculated separately as described below. The three measures of progress in the AQuESTT system, Improvement, Growth, and Non-Proficiency, rely on the same reliable, valid, and comparable assessment instruments used in the Academic Achievement indicator, but provide information on how well a school helps students to grow from year to year.

Below, please find detailed information on the calculation of each growth indicator:

#### **Improvement(+1 or 0 Rating Adjustment) – 3-Year NSCAS Performance**

Improvement is based on a school or district's average statewide assessment scores over three years. If there is an upward trend of a certain amount then the raw classification will be increased by one level, regardless of status. Proposed weighting between 3 and 8 percent. (High School between 5 and 12 percent)

Trend: For each school/district an adjustment to the rating generated in the Status area may be made based on an upward trend in average NSCAS scores in the school/district across all subjects for the last three school years. This adjustment can reward schools that are generally improving their NSCAS scores across all students.

a. The trend for Improvement at a school/district is determined by calculating a linear regression for available average NSCAS scores across three years using all available subjects and grade levels, this being equivalent to the score used in the Status rating.

i. Details about the linear regression formula used can be found in this document –

ii. As in the Status area, for each school year used in the trend calculation: assessment scores from students that weren't enrolled for the full academic year in the corresponding school year(s) will be excluded from this calculation as well as the previously mentioned writing assessment scores.

iii. Unlike Status, all assessments with a score of 0 will be excluded from Improvement calculations, regardless of the Reason Not Tested.

b. A minimum of 10 students are required for any of the three school years included in the calculation. A school year may be available to be used in the trend line calculation independently of the other two school years.

i. If a school/district has only two years of score data the equivalent of the linear regression slope calculation can still be performed.

ii. If a school/district has only a single year for score data, then the slope will be 0 and the Improvement rating adjustment will be 0.

c. If the slope of the trend line (representing the change in average NSCAS scores per year) is greater than or equal to the calculated cut score for the corresponding school/district, then the school/district overall rating is increased by one, otherwise it is unchanged.

i. The cut scores for the Improvement rating adjustment use a formula that is based on the number of eligible assessments available for each school/district. The cut score is not represented by a single value, but by slope and intercept values that describe a cut score line for each school type. For each school/district: the count of all Improvement-eligible assessments in the current year, across all four

subjects, is multiplied by the given slope value and the result is added to the intercept value to create this school/district's specific Improvement cut score.

Elementary

Cut score line slope: -0.003164845

Cut score line intercept: 10.57234

Middle School

Cut score line slope: -0.001393162

Cut score line intercept: 9.768585

High School

Cut score line slope: -0.001646391

Cut score line intercept: 11.91494

For designation of CSI, TSI, and ATSI, the raw scores will be used to rank and select the requisite percentage of schools for the filtering process. See below for more details.

**Growth (+1 or 0 Rating Adjustment) – Rate of Individual Student NSCAS**

Growth is currently based on the percentage of students at a school or district who were present for the full year and showed “growth” on their individual NeSA reading or math scores compared to a year ago. If a certain percentage of a school/district's students show growth, then the raw classification will be increased by one level. Proposed weighting between 3 and 8 percent. (High school – Not included)

Improvements: For each district/school an adjustment to the rating may be made based on the percent of NSCAS assessment scores that showed improvement compared to the same individuals' performance in the previous year.

a. Only reading and math scores will be used in Growth rate calculations

i. Each individual student may be counted up to two times in the Growth percentage, one for math and one for reading.

b. Each district/school will calculate a Growth rate, which is the percentage of Growth-eligible assessment scores that showed an improvement (as defined in the table below) compared to the performance level/score in the previous year for that same student and subject area.

i. Since the Growth calculation uses data from individual students across multiple years, it will attempt to match the current Student ID against any retired IDs for the same student.

ii. Any scores from students that were not enrolled for the full academic year in the current school year are excluded from the Growth rate calculation. This is not checked for in the previous year however.

1. School Growth scores require a full academic year at that particular school, while district Growth scores only require a full academic year in the district. Students that move between schools within the same district during the school year are still eligible for district Growth.

iii. Unlike Status calculations, an assessment will be excluded from the Growth rate if it has a score of 0 in the current year, regardless of the Reason Not Tested.

iv. Any student that didn't have an assessment score in the previous year for the corresponding

NSCAS subject areas, or that had a score of 0 for any reason, is excluded from the Growth rate.

1. Because of this rule and the grade levels that participate in NSCAS assessments, all 3rd and 11th graders are excluded. This also means that all high schools are excluded from receiving an adjustment for Growth.

v. For both school and district Growth calculations, if a student's NSCAS assessments were not located at a school within the same district in the previous year, any school scores for that student are excluded.

vi. A school/district must have a minimum of 25 growth-eligible assessment scores to take part in the growth calculation.

c. For all Growth-eligible NSCAS assessments, the following table is used to determine whether or not that assessment is assigned a Growth point by comparing the current year NSCAS performance level and score against the previous year for the same subject area. An "X" indicates when an assessment qualifies for a Growth point:

		Current Year			
Previous Year	Performance Levels	Exceeds	Met		Not Met
	Exceeds	X	-		-
	Met	X	Score Gain < 0	Score Gain ≥ 0	-
			-	X	
	Not Met	X	X		Score Gain ≤ 0
					Score Gain > 0
					-
					X

d. The Growth is determined by finding the percentage of eligible assessments that qualify for a Growth point at each school/district. If that percentage is greater than or equal to the calculated cut score, the school/district overall rating is increased by one, otherwise it is unchanged.

i. The cut scores for the Growth rating adjustment use a formula that is based on the number of eligible assessments available for each school/district. The cut score is not represented by a single value, but by slope and intercept values that describe a cut score line for each school type. For each school/district: the count of all Growth-eligible assessments in the current year is multiplied by the given slope value and the result is added to the intercept value to create this school/district's specific Growth cut score.

Elementary

Cut score line slope: -0.003292874

Cut score line intercept: 85.63568

Middle School

Cut score line slope: 0.0003376768

Cut score line intercept: 76.97569

High School: N/A

For designation of CSI, TSI, and ATSI, the raw scores will be used to rank and select the requisite percentage of schools for the filtering process. See below for more details.

**Non-Proficiency (+1, 0, or -1 Rating Adjustment) – 3-Year NSCAS Non-Proficiency Trend:**

For each district/school an adjustment to the overall classification rating may be made based on a decreasing or increasing three-year trend of the percentage of NeSA assessment scores that are defined as non-proficient according to the NeSA cut scores. School/district classification can be reduced, stay the same, or be increased based on the trend line. All students are included in the denominator of this measure. Proposed weighting between 3 and 8 percent. (High School between 5 and 12 percent)

The Task Force selected the Non-Proficiency Indicator as a way to measure school/districts progress towards reducing the achievement gap. The Task Force considered a more traditional super subgroup and having each subgroup with its own individual indicator. The groups selected the Non-Proficient groups for the following reasons:

- All schools/districts were included in the indicator as all schools/districts have non-proficient students. Not all districts have students in all of the traditional subgroups and many schools/districts in Nebraska have less than the minimum n of 25 which would cause these students to be excluded from the calculation.
- AQuESTT calculation would be tied to reporting and subgroup data would continue to be reported to the public.
- Schools/Districts would still need to analyze and disaggregate the students who made up the non-proficient group in order to serve those students and move the student toward proficiency.
- Avoided individual student scores from being counted multiple times like in the old AYP model.
- Gave all schools/districts, regardless of demographic make-up, an incentive to reduce the non-proficient group.
- Allows the AQuESTT system to tie all indicators to subgroups instead of focusing subgroup attention on a single indicator.

For each district/school an adjustment to the overall classification rating may be made based on a decreasing or increasing three year trend of the percentage of NSCAS assessment scores that are defined as non-proficient according to the yearly NSCAS score cutoffs determined by the assessments team.

a. The non-proficiency rate uses only reading and math scores from the set of assessments used in the Status calculation earlier.

i. As in the Status area, for each school year used in the trend calculation: assessment scores from students that weren't enrolled for the full academic year in the corresponding school year(s) will be excluded from this calculation as well as the previously mentioned writing assessment scores.

ii. Unlike Status, all assessments with a score of 0 will be excluded from Non-Proficiency calculations, regardless of the Reason Not Tested.

b. The non-proficient rate is calculated by dividing the number of reading/math assessments with scores in the Below Expectations range by the total number of reading/math assessments. This rate is calculated

for the current year as well as the two previous years for each school/district, and this data will be combined into non-proficiency trend lines using linear regressions.

i. The linear regression will be performed using the same formula detailed in the Improvement area above.

ii. A minimum of 10 students are required for any of the three school years included in the calculation. A school year may be available to be used in the trend line calculation independently of the other two school years.

iii. If a school/district has only two years of score data, the equivalent of the linear regression can still be performed.

iv. If a school/district has only the current year for score data, then the slope will be 0 and the Non-Proficiency rating adjustment will be 0.

c. The slope of the Non-Proficiency rate trend line is compared against the calculated cut scores as describe below. This determines the school/district Non-Proficient rating adjustment.

i. The cut scores for the Non-Proficiency rating adjustment use a formula that is based on the number of eligible assessments available for each school/district. The cut score is not represented by individual values, but by slope and intercept values that describe two cut score lines for each school type. For each school/district: the count of all Non-Proficiency-eligible assessments in the current year is multiplied by the given slope value and the result is added to the intercept value to create this school/district's specific Non-Proficiency cut scores.

#### Elementary

+1 adjustment: cut score line slope: 0.004615919

+1 adjustment: cut score line intercept: -11.5498

-1 adjustment: cut score line slope: -0.004971438

-1 adjustment: cut score line intercept: 8.073698

#### Middle School

+1 adjustment: cut score line slope: 0.0004769387

+1 adjustment: cut score line intercept: -8.284611

-1 adjustment: cut score line slope: -0.002725164

-1 adjustment: cut score line intercept: 8.591097

#### High School

+1 adjustment: cut score line slope: 0.004569985

+1 adjustment: cut score line intercept: -11.64624

-1 adjustment: cut score line slope: -0.00787609

-1 adjustment: cut score line intercept: 9.396319

For designation of CSI, TSI, and ATSI, the raw scores will be used to rank and select the requisite percentage of schools for the filtering process. See below for more details.

## **Graduation Rate**

The Nebraska Constitution provides for the “free instruction in the common schools of this state of all persons between the ages of five and twenty-one years.” [Nebraska Constitution, Article VII (1)]. As such, the Task Force determined that the 7-year cohort graduation rate should be allowed to give schools/districts credit for students that they continued to work with, especially

students with disabilities that may require services until they are 21 years-old. The four year graduation rate will be used in the calculation for this indicator and the seven year graduation rate may also be used as a minor adjustment. In both the classification and designation process, 4-year graduation rate will be weighted at 51% while 7-year will be weighted at 49%.

### **English Language Proficiency/Progress**

The English Language Proficiency/Progress indicator is a stand-alone indicator that focuses on EL students' progress toward English language proficiency. Like the academic indicator, it is calculated based on an N-size of 10.

Nebraska is consulting with national partners and experts regarding finalizing accountability metrics for determining English Learner (EL) progress on their journey to English language proficiency (ELP) based on the English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21), the state's instrument for measuring progress and attainment of English proficiency. In review of the research, it was determined that applying a uniform growth standard is not necessarily best practice in terms of ensuring that all students are on track to exit EL services in six years. The plan includes differentiated growth standards that are dependent on a student's level of English proficiency in the initial year of ELP testing to better define support for students. Generally, students with low levels of proficiency display the highest levels of growth on the ELPA, while students at higher levels of proficiency grow slower. The concept is known as "lower is faster, higher is slower" as growth in ELP is nonlinear as explained in literature. This is consistent from research findings, see below:

Research on second language learners has shown that language growth varies depending upon the starting year's proficiency level or grade level. Cook, Boals, Wilmes, & Santos (2008), established the following principle when looking at ELL student growth: Lower is faster, higher is slower. Basically, the language growth of students at lower grade levels or proficiency levels is faster than the language growth of students at higher grade levels or proficiency levels. The breadth and depth of academic language students are expected to comprehend and produce increases as they advance in proficiency level. Specifically, the language students need to demonstrate in terms of linguistic complexity forms and conventions, and vocabulary usage is greater and more complex at higher levels of proficiency level. The "lower is faster, higher is slower" concept is also evident as students advance in grade levels.<sup>18</sup>

The metric will be consistently applied to all ELs in Nebraska public schools. The initial data point on the first administration of the state's annual required English language proficiency assessment will determine the timeline to proficiency. For example, students scoring initially at the lowest proficiency levels will be on a trajectory to achieve proficiency in six years. Students scoring initially at higher levels of proficiency will have a reduced number of years to reach the goal. A state-determined timeline has been developed with the intent that the trajectory to proficiency will be understandable to stakeholders, meaningful, and achievable. A third year of ELPA21 (2017-18) data will be needed to refine the calculation. The model will include the

following elements:

- Initial proficiency levels and subsequent data points will be derived from the state's ELP assessment.
- Interim targets will be based on annual growth as measured by data from the ELP assessment.
- Setting interim targets will be informed by language acquisition research. Expected amounts of annual growth may vary depending on the student's proficiency level.
- Timeline to proficiency will not exceed six years.

Students are proficient when they attain a level of English language skill necessary to independently produce, interpret, collaborate on, and succeed in grade-level content-related academic tasks in English. This is indicated on ELPA21 by attaining a profile of level 4 or higher on a 1-5 scale on the domains of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Once Proficient on ELPA21, students are considered for reclassification.

Planned studies will ensure that the model is a good fit for Nebraska and will meet the needs of the state and the requirements of ESSA. Data from the ELPA21 assessment in school years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 was used to test the model and to determine the percentage of ELs making progress toward attaining English proficiency. Nebraska is currently receiving technical assistance in developing the model further and will garner stakeholder input along the way.

Nebraska is part of the ELPA21 consortium that developed a new English language proficiency assessment with four domains (reading, writing, listening and speaking) aligned to a common set of English language proficiency standards. Nebraska first administered the ELPA21 annual assessment in 2015-2016

Nebraska's definition is as follows:

The ELP indicator is based on the percentage of students making adequate progress to proficiency within six years. The ELP will be calculated by comparing each student's current level to their expected level, which is based on their Baseline Year level. Table 1 shows the expected level for each Baseline Level

Table 1. Expected ELP levels to be on track to proficiency in six years

<b>Baseline Level</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Year 5</b>	<b>Year 6</b>
<b>Emerging Low</b>	Emerging High	Progressing Low	Progressing High	Progressing High	Proficient
<b>Emerging High</b>	Progressing Low	Progressing High	Progressing High	Proficient	
<b>Progressing Low</b>	Progressing High	Progressing High	Proficient		

<b>Progressing High</b>	Progressing High	Proficient			
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Table 2 shows the definitions for three proficiency levels used in Nebraska. For the ELP indicator, the Progressing and Emerging levels are split into High and Low levels to provide sufficient precision to differentiate schools.

Table 2. Policy Definition for the Proficiency Determination

<b>Proficient</b>	Students are Proficient when they attain a level of English language skill necessary to independently produce, interpret, collaborate on, and succeed in grade-level content-related academic tasks in English. This is indicated on ELPA21 by attaining a profile of Level 4 or higher in all domains. Once Proficient on ELPA21, students can be considered for reclassification.
<b>Progressing</b>	Students are Progressing when, with support, they approach a level of English language skill necessary to produce, interpret, and collaborate, on grade-level content-related academic tasks in English. This is indicated on ELPA21 by attaining a profile with one or more domain scores above Level 2 that does not meet the requirements to be Proficient. Students scoring Progressing on ELPA21 are eligible for ongoing program support.
<b>Emerging</b>	Students are Emerging when they have not yet attained a level of English language skill necessary to produce, interpret, and collaborate on grade-level content-related academic tasks in English. This is indicated on ELPA21 by attaining a profile of Levels 1 and 2 in all four domains. Students scoring Emerging on ELPA21 are eligible for ongoing program support.

To calculate the percent of students who made progress to proficiency, the number of students for whom we have matching scores (from Current and Baseline years) will be the denominator and the number of students who met or exceeded their expected level (from Table 1) will be the numerator.

Table 3 is a summary of results for students in grade 1 who first took the ELPA21 assessment the prior year. The Baseline Level is the achievement level at which the student scored the first time he or she took the assessment. In this case, these first graders were first tested as kindergarteners in 2015-2016. The columns labeled “Emerging Low” to “Proficient” indicate the achievement



level at which students scored in the current year. In this case, the students are first graders in 2016-2017. The table cells display the number of students at each Baseline and current year level. For example, there were 129 students who scored at the “Emerging High” level as kindergarteners and then scored at the “Progressing Low” level in first grade.

Table 3. Progress to Proficiency of Grade 1 students in 2016-17 – Number of Students

<b>Baseline Level</b>	<b>Emerging Low</b>	<b>Emerging High</b>	<b>Progressing Low</b>	<b>Progressing High</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>Emerging Low</b>	20	33	102	16	2
<b>Emerging High</b>	1	25	129	41	4
<b>Progressing Low</b>	3	27	643	445	55
<b>Progressing High</b>	1	3	218	735	301

Nebraska has only two years of ELPA21 data so far. When results from 2017-2018 are available the state will conduct several studies to determine if this method is the best indicator of schools’ success in moving students to English proficiency. The plan is to investigate the effect of the student’s grade level or the length of time in an English learner program on time to proficiency. The possible use of scale scores instead of achievement levels will also be analyzed to determine if the added measurement precision is useful.

### **School Quality and Student Success Indicators:**

The three indicators proposed below will annually measure the results for all students and separately for each subgroup. The details for how each is valid and reliable, and how each meaningfully differentiates among schools is described below.

### **Chronic Absenteeism**

There is a significant body of research showing the negative effects of students who are chronically absent. A student is identified as chronically absent when a district reports that he or she has not been present for 10 percent or more of the days that he or she was “in membership” at a school. “Membership” is defined as the number of school days in session in which the student is enrolled and registered during the annual reporting period from July 1 to June 30.

The NDE is proposing to use reduction in chronic absenteeism as the basis for this indicator. The NDE, in coordination with each school, will analyze three years of chronic absenteeism data to set a baseline. The goal for each school will be to reduce their rate of chronic absenteeism by half in 10 years. As such, each school will have an annual reduction rate necessary to achieve

this goal. Schools that meet the reduction target will be awarded a bump in the classification system.

The state average chronic absenteeism rate for 2016-17 school year was 10.74%. Nebraska's 1100 schools range from 0% chronically absent students to 91.6%. The median percent chronic absence is 5.27%.

Two examples of the proposed scheme are below:

<b>2014-15 Rate</b>	<b>2015-16 Rate</b>	<b>2016-17 Rate</b>	<b>Three Year Average</b>	<b>50% Reduction Goal by 2026</b>	<b>Percent Reduction Necessary (per year)</b>
17.5%	18.2%	15.3%	17%	8.5%	.85%

<b>2014-15 Rate</b>	<b>2015-16 Rate</b>	<b>2016-17 Rate</b>	<b>Three Year Average</b>	<b>50% Reduction Goal by 2026</b>	<b>Percent Reduction Necessary (per year)</b>
38%	40%	39%	39%	19.5%	1.95%

The chronic absenteeism indicator will follow the same scheme as Non-Proficiency above. Cuts will be set on the requisite amount of growth for each school. Schools meeting these requirements will receive a +1, schools maintaining their current rate of chronic absence a 0, and schools that have chronic absence rates that worsen by a set cut will receive a -1

### **Science Achievement**

Due to requirements in ESSA, the NDE removed science from the Academic Achievement indicator (Status) in AQuESTT. Instead, it will be a stand-alone indicator. Nebraska adopted college and career ready science standards in 2017. Since the new standards are fundamentally different from previous versions, Nebraska will proctor the first new science examinations in 2021. Stakeholders have been convened statewide to discuss the appropriate role of formative, interim, and summative assessments in the calculation of progress and proficiency in science. Work continues on this important topic.

However, for now, the NDE will use science proficiency as the measure for achievement in science. Much like the calculation used prior to pulling science from the status indicator, a school's proficiency in science will be used, with cut scores set, and bumps awarded accordingly.

For discussion of validity, reliability, and comparability of this indicator, please see below (pg 95).

**Cut Scores:**

Nebraska has set the following cut scores for science proficiency:

- Exceeds the standards: 135-200
- Meets the standards: 85-134
- Below the standards: 0-84

Results from the past three years are below:

**5<sup>th</sup> Grade**

	Below the Standards	Meet the Standards	Exceed the Standards
2014-15	27%	55%	18%
2015-16	26%	54%	20%
2016-17	28%	53%	18%

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

	Below the Standards	Meet the Standards	Exceed the Standards
2014-15	30%	47%	23%
2015-16	32%	48%	20%
2016-17	32%	46%	22%

Students are clearly meaningfully differentiated by the use of this examination. Aggregating to a school level would therefore additionally create differentiation among schools.

**Evidence-Based Analysis (EBA)**

An adjustment to the AQuESTT classification may be made based on results of the EBA total score. The EBA total scores is an additive measure of responses to each of the five “policies, practices, and procedures” questions used to measure each of the six AQuESTT tenets – yielding 30 total items (5 items x 6 tenets). Likert scale responses are used for each item ranging from 0 to 3 (note: subsequent EBA fielding will employ a five point response scale ranging from 0 to 4). If a school’s EBA total score meets or exceeds specified percentiles relative to other schools of the same AQuESTT raw classification (i.e., relative to other schools classified as “Needs Improvement,” “Good,” or “Great”), the school may be eligible to receive an adjustment up in their classification by one level. If this percentile is not met, the school classification remains unaffected. The EBA adjustment applies only to school classification, not to those of districts. While the EBA total score may result in a school being *eligible* for an adjustment, *application* of the adjustment will be subject to an audit of evidence provided by the school in support of their responses. A panel of educational experts must audit and certify a school’s EBA responses as consistent with the evidence provided in order to apply the EBA adjustment.

A technical evaluation of the EBA in 2016 by the Nebraska Department of Education provided evidence of the EBA as a tool for meaningful differentiation. In particular, the evaluation identified statistically significant (i.e.,  $p < 0.05$ ) differences in EBA total score and tenet score means between schools with a raw classification of “Needs Improvement” – the lowest classification level – and those of “Good,” “Great,” and “Excellent” schools across the six AQuESTT tenets.

The school principal is responsible for submitting data for the school’s EBA. The school EBA employs variations in item wording across school types in acknowledgement of the distinct circumstances and best educational practices recommended across different levels of student development (i.e., elementary grades, middle grades, and high school grades).

The school itself is the unit of analysis for the school EBA. As such, in order to provide reporting of this indicator for subgroups created from student-level characteristics, a school’s EBA total score is assigned to all students enrolled in said school. Doing so allows for the necessary reporting of this indicator for all students and each subgroup created from student-level characteristics. At the same time, it allows for a more comprehensive assessment of “school quality”—accounting for additional factors beyond just student-level outcomes – while meeting the requirements for this indicator established in ESSA 1111(c)(4)(B)(V).

Below we have constructed a hypothetical example of this process using aggregations of 27 students into nine schools (elementary, middle, or high school) and three school districts.

Using the sample dataset below, the school EBA total score can be disaggregated as follows:

Statewide EBA Results:

- Overall = 75.5
- Asian = 77.0
- Black = 69.4
- Native American = 45.0
- Native Hawaiian = 80.7
- White = 85.0
- Hispanic = 77.4
- Economically Disadvantaged = 60.1
- With Disability = 74.8
- English Learners = 77.5

This same process can be done at the district- and school-level of aggregation. However, since the school EBA is a school-level measure, disaggregation at the school-level will yield uniform results across any student-level characteristics.

*Example Dataset for Determining the Disaggregation of School EBA Total Scores by Student Subgroups*

Stu. ID	School	District	School EBA Total Score	Race	Ethnicity	Economic Disadvantage Status	Disability Status	English Learner Status
1	Alpha Elem.	One	87	White	NA	No	Yes	No
2	Alpha Elem.	One	87	White	NA	No	No	No
3	Alpha Elem.	One	87	Black	NA	No	No	No
4	Beta Middle	One	78	White	Hispanic	No	No	Yes
5	Beta Middle	One	78	Asian	NA	No	No	Yes
6	Beta Middle	One	78	White	Hispanic	No	Yes	Yes
7	Gamma High	One	60	Native Hawa.	NA	Yes	No	No
8	Gamma High	One	60	White	Hispanic	Yes	No	No
9	Gamma High	One	60	Asian	NA	Yes	No	Yes
10	Red Elem.	Two	45	Native Amer.	NA	Yes	No	No
11	Red Elem.	Two	45	Native Amer.	NA	Yes	No	No
12	Red Elem.	Two	45	Native Amer.	NA	Yes	No	No
13	Yellow Middle	Two	97	White	NA	No	No	No
14	Yellow Middle	Two	97	Native Hawa.	NA	Yes	Yes	No
15	Yellow Middle	Two	97	White	Hispanic	No	No	Yes
16	Blue High	Two	116	White	NA	No	No	No
17	Blue High	Two	116	White	NA	No	No	No
18	Blue High	Two	116	White	NA	No	No	No
19	North Elem.	Three	38	Black	NA	Yes	Yes	No
20	North Elem.	Three	38	White	NA	No	No	No
21	North Elem.	Three	38	White	NA	Yes	No	No
22	East Middle	Three	74	Black	Hispanic	No	No	Yes
23	East Middle	Three	74	Black	NA	Yes	Yes	No
24	East Middle	Three	74	Black	NA	Yes	No	No
25	West High	Three	85	Asian	NA	No	No	No
26	West High	Three	85	Asian	NA	Yes	No	No
27	West High	Three	85	Native Hawa.	NA	No	No	No

For the complete EBA tool, please see the following:

<https://aquestt.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2017-2018-AQuESTT-EBA-School-Watermarked-Version.pdf>

### **Combining the SQSS Indicators**

In the final stage of the designation process, the three School Quality and Student Success Indicators employ different scales (i.e. Science = 0-200, EBA = 0-120, and chronic absenteeism = 0%-100%). As such, after standardizing each of the three indicators, we create a final score as the sum of the three standardized scores (i.e. Science, EBA, and Reduction in Chronic Absenteeism). Standardized scores are calculated by first transforming values for each of the

three indicators into z-scores. Next, each z-score is changed into a new standardized distribution with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. These new standardized scores for Science, EBA, and the Reduction in Chronic Absenteeism are then summed and placed in rank order.

- To calculate the reduction in chronic absenteeism, NDE will calculate a benchmark using the previous three-years of chronic absence data. Using a trend allows for smoothing of differences among years.
- The chronic absenteeism score will then be calculated by subtracting the current year's chronic absence rate from the three-year benchmark, then standardizing that score.
- The benchmark will be recalibrated every three years prior to the CSI designation cycle.

### **Indicator: Academic Achievement (Elementary, Middle, High School, District)**

#### ***ACT Reliability***

A technical report from 2014 by the ACT<sup>19</sup> provides the following information related to reliability. Scale score reliability and average standard error of measurement (SEM) statistics presented on page 61 speak to reliability of the ACT scores. Here, results indicate median scale score reliabilities of: 0.92 for English, 0.91 for Mathematics, 0.88 for Reading, 0.83 for Science, and 0.96 for the Composite. Alternatively, the average SEM for each test was as follows: 1.72 median SEM for English, 1.43 median SEM for Mathematics, 2.09 median SEM for Reading, 2.06 median SEM for Science, and 0.93 median SEM for the Composite.

#### ***ACT Validity***

A technical report from 2014 by the ACT provides the following information related to validity. Excerpts from page 64 speak to the validity of the ACT<sup>20</sup>

#### ***Content Validity***

The ACT tests are designed to measure students' problem-solving skills and knowledge in particular subject areas. The usefulness of ACT scores for this purpose provides the foundation for validity arguments for more specific uses (e.g., course placement).

The guiding principle underlying the development of the ACT is that the best way to predict success in college is to measure as directly as possible the degree to which each student has developed the academic skills and knowledge that are important for success in college. Tasks presented in the tests must therefore be representative of scholastic tasks. They must be intricate in structure, comprehensive in scope, and significant in their own right, rather than narrow or artificial tasks that can be defended for inclusion in the tests solely on the basis of their statistical correlation with a criterion. In this context, content-related validity is particularly significant.

The ACT tests contain a proportionately large number of complex problem-solving exercises and few measures of narrow skills. The tests are oriented toward major areas of college and high

school instructional programs, rather than toward a factorial definition of various aspects of intelligence. Thus, ACT scores, subscores, and skill statements based on the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards are directly related to student educational progress and can be readily understood and interpreted by instructional staff, parents, and students.

As described in Chapter 2, the test development procedures include an extensive review process with each item being critically examined at least sixteen times. Detailed test specifications have been developed to ensure that the test content is representative of current high school and university curricula. All test forms are reviewed to ensure that they match these specifications. Hence, there is an ongoing assessment of the content validity of the tests during the development process.

The standardization of the ACT tests is also important to their proper use as measures of educational achievement. Because ACT scores have the same meaning for all students, test forms, and test dates, they can be interpreted without reference to these characteristics. The courses students take in high school and the grades they earn are also measures of educational achievement, but these variables are not standardized measures. They cannot be standardized because course content varies considerably among schools and school districts, and grading policies certainly vary among instructors. Therefore, while high school courses taken and grades earned are measures of educational achievement, their interpretation should properly take into account differences in high school curricula and grading policies. ACT scores, because they are standardized measures, are more easily interpreted than are courses taken and grades earned.

#### *Construct and Criterion-Validity*

Chapter 5 from the technical report <sup>21</sup>provides multiple references and examples of both construct and criterion-related validity. We would direct your attention to the ACT technical manual in order to review specific findings.

#### ***NeSA Reading, Math, and Science Reliability***

A technical report provided in 2016 by Nebraska's statewide assessment vendor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC), provides the following information related to reliability. Excerpts from pages 84 and 85 <sup>22</sup> speak to reliability of the NeSA assessments.

The reliability index used for the 2016 administration of the NeSA was the Coefficient Alpha  $\alpha$  (Cronbach, 1951)<sup>23</sup>. Acceptable  $\alpha$  values generally range in the mid to high 0.80s to low 0.90s. The total test Coefficient Alpha reliabilities of the whole population were reviewed for each grade and content area of the NeSA. All reading, mathematics, and science forms for grades 3-11 have Coefficient Alphas in the high 0.80s or low 0.90s. Overall, these  $\alpha$  values provide evidence of good reliability.

Reliability estimates for subgroups based on gender, ethnicity, special education status, limited English proficiency status, and food program eligibility status are also computed and reported.

Results show fairly high reliability indices for all subpopulations in the high 0.80s to low 0.90s across grades and content areas, which indicates that the NeSA is not only reliable for the population as a whole, but it is also reliable for subpopulations of interest under NCLB. Overall, these two sets of values provide evidence of good reliability<sup>24</sup>. (*Coefficient Alpha  $\alpha$  (Cronbach, 1951)*)

### ***NeSA Reading, Math and Science Validity***

A technical report provided in 2016 by Nebraska's statewide assessment vendor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC)<sup>25</sup>, provides the following information related to validity. Excerpts from pages 90 and 91 speak to the validity of the NeSA Assessments.

#### ***Content Validity***

Content validity addresses whether the test adequately samples the relevant material it purports to cover. The NeSA for grades 3 through 11 is a criterion-referenced assessment. The criteria referenced are the Nebraska reading and mathematics content standards. Each assessment was based on and was directly aligned to the Nebraska statewide content standards to ensure good content validity.

For criterion-referenced, standards-based assessment, the strong content validity evidence is derived directly from the test construction process and the item scaling. The item development and test construction process ensures that every item aligns directly to one of the content standards. This alignment is foremost in the minds of the item writers and editors. As a routine part of item selection prior to an item appearing on a test form, the review committees check the alignment of the items with the standards and make any adjustments necessary. The result is consensus among the content specialists and teachers that the assessment does, in fact, assess what was intended.

The empirical item scaling, which indicates where each item falls on the logit ability-difficulty continuum, should be consistent with what theory suggests about the items. Items that require more knowledge, more advanced skills, and more complex behaviors should be empirically more difficult than those requiring less. Evidence of this agreement is contained in item summary reports held by Nebraska Department of Education. Panelists participating in the Bookmark process work from an item booklet in which items are ordered by their empirical difficulties. Discussions about placement of the bookmarks almost invariably focus on the knowledge, skills, and behaviors required of each item, and, overall, panelists were comfortable with the item ordering and spacing. Contrasting Groups participants, using their knowledge and experience with their students, placed their students in a corresponding Performance Level.

#### ***Internal Structure***

As described in the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing<sup>26</sup>, internal-structure evidence refers to the degree to which the relationships between test items and test components conform to the construct on which the proposed test interpretations are based.



- **Item-Test Correlations:** Item-test correlations were reviewed. All values are positive and of acceptable magnitude.
- **Rasch Measurement Dimensionality:** Results from principle components analyses were reviewed. The NeSA reading, mathematics, and science tests were essentially unidimensional, providing evidence supporting interpretations based on the total scores for the respective NeSA tests.
- **Strand Correlations:** Correlations and disattenuated correlations between strand scores within each content area were reviewed. This data can also provide information on score dimensionality that is part of internal-structure evidence. The NeSA-R tests have two strands, the NeSA-M tests have four strands, and the NeSA-S have four strands for each grade and content area. For each grade, Pearson's correlation coefficients between these strands were reviewed. The intercorrelations between the strands within the content areas are positive and generally range from moderate to high in value.

### ***NeSA Reading, Math, and Science Comparability***

A technical report provided in 2016 by Nebraska's statewide assessment vendor, Data Recognition Corporation<sup>27</sup>, provides the following information related to comparability. Excerpts from page 53 speak to the comparability of the NeSA Assessments.

The 2016 test forms were constructed with items that were either field tested, or used operationally on a previously administered NeSA test. NeSA assessments are constructed each year allowing each NeSA assessment to be different from the previous year's assessment. To ensure that all forms for a given grade and content area provide comparable scores, and to ensure the passing standards across different administrations are equivalent, the new operational items need to be placed on the bank scale via equating to bring the 2016 NeSA raw-score-to-Rasch ability scale to the previous operational scale. When the new 2016 NeSA tests are placed on the bank's scale, the resulting scale scores for the new test form will be the same as the scale scores of the previous operational form such that students performing at the same level of (underlying) achievement should receive the same score (i.e., scale score). The resulting scale scores will be used for score reporting and performance level classification. Once operational items are equated, field test items are then placed on the bank scale and are then ready for future operational use.

### ***NeSA Alternate Reliability***

A technical report provided in 2016 by Nebraska's statewide assessment vendor, Data Recognition Corporation<sup>28</sup>, provides the following information related to reliability. Excerpts from pages 50 and 51 speak to reliability of the NeSA Alternate assessments.

The reliability index used for the 2016 administration of the NeSA-Alt was the Coefficient Alpha  $\alpha$  (Cronbach<sup>29</sup>). Acceptable  $\alpha$  values generally range in the mid to high 0.80s to low 0.90s. The total test Coefficient Alpha reliabilities of the whole population were reviewed for each grade and content area of the NeSA-Alt. All reading, mathematics, and science forms for grades 3-11 have Coefficient Alphas in the low 0.90s. Overall, these  $\alpha$  values provide evidence of good reliability.

Reliability estimates for subgroups based on gender, ethnicity, special education status, limited English proficiency status, and food program eligibility status are not computed for the NeSA-Alt tests due to the small sample size of some subgroups.

### ***NeSA Alternate Validity***

A technical report provided in 2016 by Nebraska's statewide assessment vendor, Data Recognition Corporation<sup>30</sup>, provides the following information related to validity. Excerpts from pages 56 and 57 speak to the validity of the NeSA Alternate assessments.

#### ***Content Validity***

Content validity addresses whether the test adequately samples the relevant material it purports to cover. The NeSA-Alt for grades 3 to 8 and 11 is a criterion-referenced assessment. The criteria referenced are the Nebraska reading and mathematics content standards. Each assessment was based on and was directly aligned to the Nebraska statewide alternate content standards to ensure good content validity.

For criterion-referenced, standards-based assessment, the strong content validity evidence is derived directly from the test construction process and the item scaling. The item development and test construction process ensures that every item aligns directly to one of the content standards. This alignment is foremost in the minds of the item writers and editors. As a routine part of item selection prior to an item appearing on a test form, the review committees check the alignment of the items with the standards and make any adjustments necessary. The result is consensus among the content specialists and teachers that the assessment does in fact assess what was intended.

The empirical item scaling, which indicates where each item falls on the logit ability-difficulty continuum, should be consistent with what theory suggests about the items. Items that require more knowledge, more advanced skills, and more complex behaviors should be empirically more difficult than those requiring less. Evidence of this agreement is contained in the item summary tables held at Nebraska Department of Education.

#### ***Internal Structure***

As described in the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing<sup>31</sup> (2014), internal-structure evidence refers to the degree to which the relationships between test items and test components conform to the construct on which the proposed test interpretations are based.

Item-Test Correlations: Item-test correlations were reviewed. All values are positive and of acceptable magnitude.

Item Response Theory Dimensionality: Results from principle components analyses were reviewed. The NeSA-Alt reading, mathematics, and science tests were essentially unidimensional, providing evidence supporting interpretations based on the total scores for the respective NeSA-Alt tests.

Strand Correlations: Correlations and disattenuated correlations between strand scores within each content area were reviewed. This data can also provide information on score dimensionality that is part of internal-structure evidence. The NeSA-AAR tests have two strands, the NeSA-AAM tests have four strands, and the NeSA-AAS have four strands for each grade and content area. For each grade, Pearson correlation coefficients between these strands were reviewed. The intercorrelations between the strands within the content areas are positive and generally range from moderate to high in value.

### ***NeSA Alternate Comparability***

A technical report provided in 2016 by Nebraska's statewide assessment vendor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC), provides the following information related to comparability. Excerpts from page 40 speak to the comparability of the NeSA Alternate Assessments.

The 2016 test forms were constructed with items that were either field tested, or used operationally on a previously administered NeSA test. NeSA assessments are constructed each year allowing each NeSA assessment to be different from the previous year's assessment. To ensure that all forms for a given grade and content area provide comparable scores, and to ensure the passing standards across different administrations are equivalent, the new operational items need to be placed on the bank scale via equating to bring the 2016 NeSA raw-score-to-Rasch Ability scale to the previous operational scale. When the new 2016 NeSA tests are placed on the bank's scale, the resulting scale scores for the new test form will be the same as the scale scores of the previous operational form such that students performing at the same level of (underlying) achievement should receive the same score (i.e., scale score). The resulting scale scores will be used for score reporting and performance level classification. Once operational items are equated, field test items are then placed on the bank scale and are then ready for future operational use.

### **Indicator(s): Academic Progress (Elementary, Middle, High Schools)**

#### ***Improvement and Growth Reliability, Validity, and Comparability***

Nebraska's proposed indicators for academic progress (i.e., improvement, growth, and non-proficiency) are calculated using information from gained from the NeSA, NeSA Alternate, and ACT assessments. The reliability, validity and comparability of the assessments underlying these three indicators of academic progress are reviewed in the sections above.

### **Indicator: Progress in EL Proficiency (Elementary, Middle, High School)**

Nebraska is member of the ELPA21 consortium of states. The consortium was originally funded with an Enhanced Assessment Grant to develop a next-generation online English language proficiency assessment and is currently housed at the Center for Research, Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing (CRESST)<sup>32</sup> at the University of California (UC). Nebraska currently contracts with UC to deliver the annual assessment to all K-12 ELs. The ELP Indicator as part of

the AQuESTT Indicator for Growth will use data generated by the ELPA21 assessment to determine whether adequate annual growth in learning English has been made. The ELPA21 is aligned with the Nebraska English Language Proficiency Standards and assesses students' English language proficiency levels and progress in four domains: Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking. It is administered to six grade bands: K, 1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-8, and 9-12. The ELPA21 summative assessment became operational in 2015-16.

A standard setting process using the Bookmarking Method was conducted under the direction of Daniel Lewis of Pacific Metrics Corporation. The ELPA21 Standard Setting Technical Report conclusions found:

*“The validity of a standard setting is supported by empirical evidence of the reliability of the panelists’ cut score recommendations and an increase in the degree of consensus over rounds....With few exceptions, these standard errors are small relative to the standard deviation, and none would be considered unusual.”*

In summary, *“evidence, taken together, strongly supports the validity of the adopted cut scores, Proficiency Determination rules, and Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs). Implementation of the Technical Advisory Recommendations (TAC) to review the cut scores following subsequent ELPA21 administrations, after the collection of additional validity evidence and with the support of longitudinal data, will further enhance the validity of the cut scores, Proficiency Determination rules, and ALDs, and their value with respect to supporting the growth of English Learners.”*

The ELPA21 Standard Setting Technical Report compiled by Pacific Metrics Corporation and UCLA-CRESST contains confidential information and is available upon request to the NDE Title III Director.

ELPA21's approach to assessment is rooted in core beliefs:

- ELLs are a diverse group with varied backgrounds and capabilities
- All ELLs are capable of making progress toward English language proficiency
- ELLs need to acquire discipline-specific language practices that enable them to produce, interpret, and effectively collaborate on content-related grade-appropriate tasks.

Students are proficient when they attain a level of English language skill necessary to independently produce, interpret, collaborate on, and succeed in grade-level content-related academic tasks in English. This is indicated on ELPA21 by attaining a profile of level 4 or higher on a 1-5 scale on the domains of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Once Proficient on ELPA21, students are considered for reclassification.

**Indicator: School Quality or Student Success (Elementary, Middle, High School)**

### ***Chronic Absenteeism Reliability, Validity, and Comparability***

According to the *Every Student, Every Day: A Community Toolkit to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism*<sup>33</sup>:

- Is a primary cause of lower academic achievement, even when the absences are “excused” or understandable (Gottfried, 2009).<sup>34</sup>
- Is a powerful predictor of those students who may eventually drop out of school (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).<sup>35</sup>
- A study of public school students in Utah found that a student who is chronically absent in any year between the eighth and twelfth grades is over seven times more likely to drop out of school than a student who was not chronically absent (Utah Education Policy Center at the University of Utah, 2012).<sup>36</sup>
- Can even affect students in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade, who are then much less likely to read at grade level by the end of third grade (Ehrlich, Gwynne, Preja, and Allensworth).<sup>37</sup>
- Is caused by a variety of issues, including chronic health conditions, housing instability, involvement with the juvenile justice system, and unsafe conditions in school, among many others (Balfanz & Byrnes).<sup>38</sup>
- Is particularly prevalent among students who are low-income, students of color, students with disabilities, students who are highly mobile, and/or juvenile justice-involved youth—in other words, those who already tend to face significant challenges and for whom school is particularly beneficial (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).<sup>39</sup>
- Is particularly prevalent among those students who are homeless or reside in public housing (Nauer, et al.).<sup>40</sup>
- May lead to substance abuse. When students are skipping school, many of them become engaged in risky behavior such as substance abuse and delinquency (Henry & Thornberry).<sup>41</sup>
- Affects other students, too. Not only are frequent absences harmful to the absentee, but they also have a negative effect on the achievement of other students in the classroom (Gottfried).<sup>42</sup>
- Can negatively influence future adult health outcomes. Indeed, the mortality rate of high school dropouts is over two times greater than that for adults with some college education (Cutler, Lleras-Muney).<sup>43</sup>
- Can increase likelihood of involvement with the criminal justice system. (Page, Patteruti, Walsh, Ziedenberg).<sup>44</sup>

Schanzenbach, Bauer, and Mumford<sup>45</sup> analyze the reliability, validity, and comparability of the use of chronic absenteeism as the additional indicator of school quality or student success, concluding that “chronic absenteeism meets the technical specifications defined in statute...for the fifth indicator.” The authors suggest chronic absenteeism rates can be used to meaningfully differentiate among school, noting “the vast majority of schools have room to improve their

performance on this measure.”

In Nebraska, chronic absenteeism will be used annually for all schools, each grade span, and disaggregated by subgroup. Schanzenbach, Bauer, and Mumford<sup>46</sup> in their analysis find that in every state, rates of chronic absenteeism differentiated among schools, overall and within grade spans. Similar to the results in *Every Student, Every Day*, authors also find a relationship between chronic absenteeism and student achievement, student growth, and high school graduation. This relationship was found in multiple samples in different states, and across grade ranges. They conclude by saying “Chronic absenteeism meaningfully differentiates between schools and is related to the other indicators required to be in a statewide accountability system.”

These findings were similarly reflected in a correlational study investigating Nebraska’s chronically absent student performance on NeSA tests. Findings across all grades and all subjects indicate that chronically absent students are more likely to score lower on reading, math, and science exams than students who were not chronically absent.

*Table 17 Analysis of chronic absenteeism on test scores*

	Reading					Math					Science				
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
<b>Grade 4 - NeSA</b>															
Students absent less than 20 Days	112	115	119	121	124	107	109	113	112	113	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Students absent greater than 20 Days	91	92	97	99	101	83	86	90	88	88	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Students absent less than 10 Days	113	116	121	123	125	108	111	115	114	115	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Students absent greater than 10 Days	103	106	109	110	114	96	98	101	100	102	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>Grade 8 - NeSA</b>															
Students absent less than 20 Days	110	117	116	119	121	101	104	106	107	107	101	104	107	108	106
Students absent greater than 20 Days	84	89	88	93	96	71	74	74	77	78	75	80	81	83	81
Students absent less than 10 Days	113	120	119	121	123	104	107	109	110	110	104	106	109	110	108
Students absent greater than 10 Days	98	104	104	107	109	85	89	90	92	93	89	92	94	96	94
<b>Grade 11 - NeSA</b>															
Students absent less than 20 Days	106	110	116	114	116	100	106	108	108	111	102	106	107	108	107
Students absent greater than 20 Days	72	78	81	83	86	62	65	69	70	70	78	83	84	85	84
Students absent less than 10 Days	109	114	120	118	119	105	112	114	113	116	104	109	110	111	109
Students absent greater than 10 Days	89	92	97	97	99	78	81	85	86	87	89	93	94	95	94

Chronic absenteeism is an indicator that has been reported to and adopted by the US Department of Education. Federal law requires states to collect and report on chronic absence. Furthermore, Nebraska’s attendance data is valid and reliable. Therefore, a baseline can be developed for all schools, growth targets established, and a method for analyzing data created.

### ***AQuESTT EBA Reliability***

A technical evaluation in 2016 by Nebraska Department of Education provides the following information related to reliability of the AQuESTT EBA.

Cronbach's alpha (often referred to as coefficient alpha or alpha) is a commonly used measure of scale reliability. This measure was used to analyze the internal consistency of the EBA, which evaluates how closely the items are related to each other. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranges from 0, representing no consistency, to 1, representing perfect consistency. In general, higher reliabilities are expected for instruments that are used to make high-stakes decisions with acceptable values typically ranging from 0.8 to 0.9 (Carmines and Zeller)<sup>47</sup> Supportive reliability evidence was demonstrated for both the school and district EBAs. The school EBA (alpha = .90) and the district EBA (alpha = .95) were both found to be highly reliable.

### ***AQuESTT EBA Validity***

An independent psychometric analysis in 2016 provided the following information as to the validity of the AQuESTT EBA.

#### ***Content Validity***

In the 1980s, Guba and Lincoln substituted the terms reliability and validity – commonly referenced as quantitative terminology-- with the concept of “trustworthiness” for qualitative data (Creswell<sup>48</sup>). Trustworthiness contains four aspects: 1) credibility, 2) transferability, 3) dependability, and 4) confirmability (Creswell;<sup>49</sup> Shenton<sup>50</sup>). Because qualitative data and analyses assume that realities are constructed and constantly changing, concerns with internal and external validity must be addressed. The following methods were used to establish the trustworthiness of the of the EBA: triangulation of data sources, frequent debriefing sessions within the Nebraska Department of Education AQuESTT Classification and Priority School Designation Project Team, peer scrutiny of the Project Team's work, examination of previous research to frame findings, background, qualifications, and experience of the Project Team, in-depth methodological description to allow the work to be replicated, and the reflective appraisal of the project (Shenton<sup>51</sup>).

#### ***Internal Structure***

An independent analysis of the AQuESTT EBA found good empirical evidence for the utility of the questionnaires in measuring six traits for both schools and districts. Support was found for six distinct traits, instead of one common trait. All item responses showed significant prediction by the trait the item was supposed to measure via significant positive item discrimination slopes. Within each of the six traits, the five items responses did appear to be largely indicative of the trait they were designed to measure (largely unidimensional).

#### ***Addressing Threats to Validity***

We know that one of the largest threats to validity is the demand characteristic of the instrument. As such, Nebraska will incorporate specific steps to ameliorate such threats, including:

- Given the evidence for model fit and precision of measurement we know that respondents are responding consistently. However, other evidence for the validity of the EBA will be collected via a peer-review auditing process of responses to ensure that the inferences made about particular schools and districts are actually usable for their

intended purposes. The audit process was described in a previous section in the description of the Evidence Based Analysis.

- Aim to reduce too-positive response patterns by allowing respondents the opportunity to clarify their responses. That is, respondents may be more willing to admit to a valid seldom response if they can provide some context that would reduce any negative impression the seldom response would create.
- Create more opportunities to provide respondents a way to provide examples of their activities.

### ***AQuESTT EBA Comparability***

Each AQuESTT EBA standardized questionnaire will remain consistent for three consecutive years to ensure that all forms provide comparable scores.

### ***AQuESTT EBA Research Support***

The AQuESTT EBA was designed to measure the six tenets of AQuESTT: Positive Partnerships, Relationships, and Student Success; Transitions; Educational Opportunities and Access; College and Career Ready; Assessment; and Educator Effectiveness. Together, the six tenets form the framework for Nebraska's educational accountability and school quality. The EBA is a standardized questionnaire that was built around the policy statements of the State Board of Education, with input from multiple stakeholders. The policies, practices, and procedures measured therein are supported by research linking the policies, practices, or procedures measured as part of the EBA with key outcomes associated with student learning.

#### ***Positive Partnerships, Relationships, and Student Success (PPSS)***

PPSS items one and two measure policies, practices, and procedures related to partnerships with community groups and support services, and strategies for family attendance and participation. Such practices have been linked to positive performance on state assessments and student attendance (Epstein and Sheldon<sup>52</sup>; Sheldon 2003<sup>53</sup>, 2007<sup>54</sup>; Sheldon and Epstein<sup>55</sup>). PPSS item 3 measures clear expectations for safe, clean, and healthy schools - activities linked to higher achievement scores and student wellbeing (Berner<sup>56</sup>; Basch<sup>57</sup>; Schoener, Guerrero and Whitney<sup>58</sup>, Eggert et al.<sup>59</sup>; Dilley<sup>60</sup>). Item 4 of the PPSS tenet concerns measuring and addressing student engagement. This practice has been linked to gains in student achievement (Dotterer and Lowe<sup>61</sup>; Li and Lemer<sup>62</sup>). Finally, PPSS item 5 deals with strategies to support all students in monitoring and managing their own learning, including the use of personal learning plans for middle and high school students. These activities have been linked to higher levels of student engagement, achievement, and persistence (Zimmerman, Martinez-Pons and Bandura<sup>63</sup>; Cordova and Lepper<sup>64</sup>; Herlihy, Corinne and Quint<sup>65</sup>; Stefanou et al.<sup>66</sup>).

#### ***Transitions (TRANS)***

TRANS item 1 measures policies, practices, and procedures related to processes that support on-time grade completion. Such strategies have been shown to improve graduation (Allensworth and Easton<sup>67</sup>; Stout and Christenson<sup>68</sup>; Balfanz and Herzog<sup>69</sup>; Balfanz, Herzog and MacIver<sup>70</sup>). TRANS item 2 measures processes for addressing the needs of highly mobile students –



processes linked to gains in student achievement and mitigated student behavior problems (Rumberger et al.<sup>71</sup>; District Administration<sup>72</sup>; Paik and Phillips<sup>73</sup>). Item 3 of the TRANS tenet concerns processes to identify and support students at risk of dropping out. This practice has been linked to support student attendance, engagement, achievement, and employability skills (Brand<sup>74</sup>; Balfanz, Herzog, and MacIver (2007); Larson and Rumberger<sup>75</sup>). TRANS item 4 involves having processes in place to support incoming students be prepared for elementary, middle, and high school, respectively. These processes have been shown to support elementary reading and math performance (McClelland, Acock and Morrison<sup>76</sup>; Bossaert et al.<sup>77</sup>), middle school course grade performance (Mullins and Irvin<sup>78</sup>; Crockett et al.<sup>79</sup>; Williams et al.<sup>80</sup>), and high school graduation, attendance, academic failure, and behavior problems (Kennelly and Monrad<sup>81</sup>; McCallumore and Sparapani<sup>82</sup>; Cohen and Smerdon<sup>83</sup>). Finally, TRANS item 5 measures strategies to support student transitions from elementary, middle, and high school, respectively. These strategies to support transitions across school grades have been linked to improved course grade performance for elementary school students transitioning to middle school (Mullins and Irvin 2000; Midgley<sup>84</sup>; Mizelle and Mullins<sup>85</sup>; Akos and Shoffner<sup>86</sup>). For middle school students transitioning to high school, the strategies measured by TRANS item 5 have been shown to positively impact graduation, attendance, academic failure, and behavior problems (Kennelly and Monrad<sup>87</sup>; McCallumore and Sparapani<sup>88</sup>; Cohen and Smerdon<sup>89</sup>). In terms of high school students transitioning to post-high school opportunities, these strategies have been found to improve postsecondary education readiness, college academic performance, and employability skills (Bangser<sup>90</sup>; Sadler and Tai<sup>91</sup>).

#### *Educational Opportunities and Access (EDOP)*

EDOP item 1 measures policies, practices, and procedures related to before or after school opportunities. Such opportunities have been linked to positive social development and gains in achievement scores for students (Durlak and Weissberg<sup>92</sup>; Lauer et al.<sup>93</sup>; Durlak, Weissberg and Pachan<sup>94</sup>). Item 2 of the EDOP tenet relates to supplementing in-person classroom instruction with digital learning opportunities. This practice has been shown to improve writing performance and student engagement (Warren, Dondlinger and Barab<sup>95</sup>; Jacobsen<sup>96</sup>; Beeland<sup>97</sup>). EDOP item 3 measures continuous improvement strategies to support the learning of all students – strategies linked to increases in student achievement (Bernhardt<sup>98</sup>; Herman and Gribbons<sup>99</sup>; Hallinger and Heck<sup>100</sup>). EDOP item 4 measures practices for aligning educational opportunities to the needs of all students. These activities have been found to reduce the achievement gap among student subgroups (Cohen et al.<sup>101</sup>; Lee<sup>102</sup>; Flores<sup>103</sup>). Finally, item 5 of the EDOP tenet measures procedures for evaluating new educational programs. Such evaluations have been linked to higher levels of student achievement (Fuchs and Fuchs<sup>104</sup>; Slavin, Lake and Groff<sup>105</sup>).

#### *College and Career Ready (CCR)*

CCR item 1 measures policies, practices, and procedures related to curriculum development and alignment to the Nebraska Content Area Standards. This practice has been found to have a positive effect on student learning (Downing<sup>106</sup>; Wertheim, and Leyser<sup>107</sup>). CCR item 2 measures procedures for the integration of the Nebraska Career Readiness Standards into all content areas – a practice which shows a positive relationship with graduation rates and employability skills

(Zinser<sup>108</sup>; Hooley, Marriott and Sampson<sup>109</sup>). CCR item 3 measures practices for conducting a systematic and collaborative curriculum review. These practices have been linked to increases in student achievement (Datnow, Borman and Stringfield<sup>110</sup>; Dimmock and Wildy<sup>111</sup>). Item 4 of the CCR tenet measures partnerships for expanded learning opportunities; opportunities which have been found to support social development and improve student achievement (Billig<sup>112</sup>; DeWitt and Storksdieck<sup>113</sup>). Finally, CCR item 5 measures practices related to instruction on career awareness, career exploration, and career preparation, respectively. Such instruction has been positively linked to dropout, graduation, engagement, and career readiness (Kemple and Snipes<sup>114</sup>; Bishop and Mane<sup>115</sup>; Rojewski<sup>116</sup>).

#### *Assessment (ASSESS)*

ASSESS item 1 measures processes to ensure reliable, valid, and appropriate assessments. Such processes have been linked to increased student motivation (Brookhart<sup>117</sup>; Stefanou and Parkes<sup>118</sup>). ASSESS item 2 measures policies, practices, and procedures for utilizing a balanced assessment system. These practices have been found to support student achievement and student learning (Chappuis et al.<sup>119</sup>; Dunn and Mulvenon<sup>120</sup>; Bennett<sup>121</sup>; Atkins-Burnett et al.<sup>122</sup>; Chappuis and Stiggins<sup>123</sup>). Item 3 of the ASSESS tenet measures practices for sharing assessment results in a timely manner. These activities have been linked to gains in student achievement (Azmat and Iriberri<sup>124</sup>; Wiggins<sup>125</sup>). The ASSESS item 4 measures procedures for establishing and sharing grading policies and standards; procedures which have been shown to have a connection to higher achievement scores (Betts and Grogger<sup>126</sup>; Figlio and Lucas<sup>127</sup>). Finally, ASSESS item 5 measures practices for utilizing perceptual data. Such data has been found to aid in student learning (Bernhardt 2013; Schunk and Meece<sup>128</sup>).

#### *Educator Effectiveness (EDEFF)*

EDEFF item 1 measures policies, practices, and procedures for measuring and addressing teacher engagement. These practices have been linked to higher levels of student engagement and student achievement (Skinner and Belmont<sup>129</sup>; Klassen, Yerdelen and Durksen<sup>130</sup>; Klem and Connell<sup>131</sup>). EDEFF item 2 measures strategies for utilizing a research-based instructional framework aligned to the Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Framework (NTPPF). Such strategies have been shown to improve science performance and student engagement (Schroeder et al.<sup>132</sup>; Taylor et al.<sup>133</sup>). EDEFF item 3 measures procedures for utilizing a formal staff evaluation process aligned to the Nebraska Evaluation Model for Teachers and Principals. These procedures have been found to support student achievement and student learning (Yoon et al.<sup>134</sup>; Ingvarson, Meiers and Beavis<sup>135</sup>). Item 4 of the EDEFF tenet concerns developing a professional learning plan to support continuous improvement; such activities have been linked to gains in student achievement (Vescio, Ross and Adams<sup>136</sup>; Bruce et al.<sup>137</sup>). Finally, item 5 of the EDEFF tenet measures policies, practices, and procedures related to technology to support teaching and learning. These practices have been positively linked to mathematical skill development, technology proficiency, learning habits, self-esteem, and attitude towards school (Lei<sup>138</sup>; Tienken and Wilson<sup>139</sup>).

Table 18 ESSA Indicators & AQuESTT Rating Areas

ESSA Indicator	AQuESTT Rating Area	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Academic Achievement	Status	x	x	x
	Improvement			x
	Non-Proficiency			x
Academic Progress	Growth	x	x	
	Improvement	x	x	
	Non-Proficiency	x	x	
Graduation Rate	Graduation Rate (4-year and 7-year)			x
English Language Proficiency/Progress	English Language Proficiency/Progress	x	x	x
School Quality and Student Success	Chronic Absenteeism	x	x	x
	Science Indicator			
		x	x	x
	Evidence-Based Analysis	x	x	x
Participation	Participation	x	x	x

Table 18 provides a comparison of ESSA requirements and Nebraska’s Accountability Plan, AQuESTT.

## B. Subgroups

*i. List the subgroups of students from each major and racial ethnic group in the State, consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.16(a)(2), and, as applicable, describe any additional subgroups of students used in the accountability system.*

- *Pacific Islander*
- *Asian*
- *Black*
- *Native American*
- *Two or More Races*
- *Hispanic*
- *White*
- *Economically disadvantaged*
- *Children with disabilities*
- *English Learners*

Each indicator in the AQuESTT classification system is calculated with all students and will include reporting elements for all required subgroups listed above. Nebraska Department of Education plans to link the underlying subgroup data of each indicator to public reporting elements. These enhanced reports are being developed but are intended to maximize transparency for all groups so that the public has important information about equity. The enhanced reporting will use a minimum n-size of 10 students in order to protect student privacy. Currently, only the Academic Achievement indicator includes such enhanced reports but the goal is to include the enhanced reports for all indicators in the AQuESTT Accountability system.

### **Focus on Closing Achievement Gaps**

Nebraska has set ambitious long-term goals which cannot be attained without schools making significant progress and putting an intentional focus on student subgroups. The NDE has listened intentionally to feedback from stakeholders and learned from other state plans that include measures to hold schools more accountable to student group performance. This commitment also stems from the NDE's mission to lead and support the preparation of *all* Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living. As such, Nebraska is proposing the following addition to its accountability system beginning in 2019:

The designation of Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) school indicates a school in which one or more subgroup(s) are consistently underperforming. TSI schools will be determined by reviewing accountability indicators to determine underperformance by the state's 10 subgroups. The NDE will identify schools with a subgroup performing at or below the lowest quarter of Title I schools.

Beginning in 2019 with the first identification of TSI schools, a school identified for TSI shall not be classified as an "Excellent" school. This rule follows similar business rules for graduation rate where a limiting factor is instituted for low graduation rates (i.e. a school cannot receive an Excellent rating with a graduation rate below 90%).

In addition, in order for stakeholders to readily identify those schools with challenges in subgroup performance, a school's classification, regardless of level, will have the special notation "Targeted Support and Improvement" on its progress report and the state report card with an explanation of this designation. For example, if a school receives an overall rating of "Great" the designation would now include "Great (Targeted Support and Improvement)."

*ii. If applicable, describe the statewide uniform procedure for including former children with disabilities in the children with disabilities subgroup for purposes of calculating any indicator that uses data based on State assessment results under section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(I) of the ESEA and as described in 34 C.F.R. § 200.16(b), including the number of years the State includes the results of former children with disabilities.*

Nebraska is proposing to *not* include former children with disabilities into the children with disabilities subgroup. The children with disabilities group is stable enough so that the subgroup does not warrant the inclusion of former children with disabilities. Including only current students that qualify for the children with disabilities subgroup maintains the focus on students with the greatest need.

*iii. If applicable, describe the statewide uniform procedure for including former English learners in the English learner subgroup for purposes of calculating any indicator that uses data based on State assessment results under section 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)(I) of the ESEA and as described in 34 C.F.R. § 200.16(c)(1), including the number of years the State includes the results of former English learners.*

Adding former ELs to the EL subgroup helps to stabilize a subgroup that is less static than other subgroups. ELs exit the group as they attain proficiency. This makes it difficult to show improvement over time as the group's members, by definition, are not proficient. The AQuESTT accountability system currently includes former English learners in the English learner subgroup for two years. For 2017-2018 data, former English learners will be included in the English learner subgroup for 4 years so schools may better demonstrate progress in improving performance in meeting the state's content standards.

*iv. If applicable, choose one of the following options for recently arrived English learners in the State:*

☐ Exception under 34 C.F.R. § 200.16(c)(3)(i) or

☒ Exception under 34 C.F.R. § 200.16(c)(3)(ii) or

Nebraska will utilize this option because it will serve students better by allowing the opportunity to demonstrate growth in year two without placing undue accountability pressure on an EL student's first testing experience. Prior to ESSA, Nebraska elected to delay the first testing experience for a Recently Arrived English Learner (RAEL) until the second year of attendance in a U.S. school, but those assessment results in year two were immediately included in accountability for achievement. The new option under ESSA afford students the opportunity of up to three years of English language instruction before schools and districts are held accountable for achievement results of RAELs on state assessments. This option provides a phased-in approach to accountability and gives teachers more information on students' baseline and growth.

### **C. Minimum Number of Students**

*i. Provide the minimum number of students for purposes of accountability that the State determines are necessary to be included in each of the subgroups of students consistent with 34*

*C.F.R. § 200.17(a).*

Nebraska's 244 school districts vary widely, from the largest, Omaha Public Schools with a student population of 51,966 students to the smallest Lynch Public Schools with 65 students. Nebraska's accountability system was developed over a two-year span with great efforts taken to meet the needs of, support, and hold accountable these two districts, and the other 242 with student populations in between. The task force charged with developing AQuESTT chose to represent n-size with 25 assessment scores, paying special attention to the 130 districts with 400 students or fewer. Across three tests, an n-size of 25 assessment scores could allowed for a minimum student n-size of 10.

However, for purposes of Nebraska's new accountability system, an n-size of 10 will be used for all indicators. Stakeholders were clear that the n-size should protect students' identities but be as small as possible so that as many schools would be included in the accountability system as possible. Using an n-size of 10 allows for the minimum number of students for reporting and accountability to be aligned. The adjustment to a student n-size of 10 is a similar approach to the previous use of using an n-size of 25 assessment scores.

Table 21 provides additional details as to minimum n-sizes. These minimums are presented in context of the indicators, measures, and applicable school types as proposed for use in the Nebraska accountability system.

*Table 21 Subgroup n-sizes*

Indicator	Measure(s)	School Type	Units of Measurement	Minimum n-Size
Academic Achievement	Combined NeSA Math/ELA, NeSA Alternate and ACT	Elementary, Middle, High, District	Students	10
Academic Progress	Improvement	Elementary, Middle, High, District	Students	At minimum two years (within a three-consecutive-year-period) of 10
Academic Progress	Growth in NeSA Reading and Math	Elementary (No 3rd Grade), Middle, District	Students	At minimum 10
Academic Progress	Non-Proficiency	Elementary, Middle, High, District	Students	At minimum two years (within a three-consecutive-year-

				period) of 10
Graduation Rate	4- and 7- Year Cohort Graduation Rates	High School, District	Students	At minimum, a cohort size of 10 from both the 4- and 7-year cohorts
Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency	ELPA21 K-12	Elementary, Middle, High, District	Students	At minimum 10
School Quality and Student Success	Chronic Absenteeism	Elementary, Middle, High, District	Students	10 students
School Quality and Student Success	Science Indicator	Elementary, Middle, High, District	Students	At minimum 10
School Quality or Student Success	AQuESTT EBA	Elementary, Middle, High, District	Students, as described by building-level data described previously	At minimum 10 students

The AQuESTT system utilizes a minimum number of 10 students for a school/district to be included in the calculation of each indicator. If a school does not have enough students for inclusion of an indicator, then the school will receive the district's score on that indicator. This method insures all schools in the state are included in the system, and all indicators are used in classification.

For the graduation indicator, a school must have minimum number of 10 students. If a cohort lacks the minimum number of students, up to two previous years may be combined to reach the 10-student minimum.

*ii. If the State's minimum number of students for purposes of reporting is lower than the minimum number of students for purposes of accountability, provide that number consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.17(a)(2)(iv).*

Nebraska Department of Education uses a minimum number of 10 students for purposes of reporting. Nebraska Department of Education has used 10 as the minimum n-size for reporting since public reporting began for No Child Left Behind. The rule has worked for reporting and will be maintained.

*iii. Describe how the State's minimum number of students meets the requirements in 34 C.F.R. § 200.17(a)(1)-(2);*

The raw classification component of the AQuESTT accountability system was developed over two years by a diverse group of education stakeholders. The taskforce reviewed research, related literature, and other models of accountability. They then developed priorities and guiding principles and recommended a model to be adopted by the Nebraska State Board of Education. The Taskforce was led by Nebraska Department of Education staff and assisted by nationally recognized psychometricians.

The AQuESTT accountability system undergoes independent checks to ensure all calculations are statistically reliable. The minimum number of students is the same for all subgroups and does not exceed 30.

*iv. Describe how other components of the statewide accountability system, such as the State's uniform procedure for averaging data under 34 C.F.R. § 200.20(a), interact with the minimum number of students to affect the statistical reliability and soundness of accountability data and to ensure the maximum inclusion of all students and each subgroup of students under 34 C.F.R. § 200.16(a)(2);*

Components of the statewide accountability system were analyzed and models were run to make sure they were statistically reliable in order to maximize the inclusion of all students and subgroups. The unique methods ensure that almost no schools or subgroups are excluded from the accountability system. This analysis was conducted with the n-size of 25 student scores, which is similar to an n-size of 10 students.

*v. Describe the strategies the State uses to protect the privacy of individual students for each purpose for which disaggregated data is required, including reporting under section 1111(h) of the ESEA and the statewide accountability system under section 1111(c) of the ESEA;*

### **Data Privacy and Confidentiality**

The Nebraska Department of Education utilizes various procedures and security measures to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of student records collected and maintained by the agency. These procedures include assignment of a unique identifier to each student, a system of restricted access to data, and statistical cutoff procedures. More specifically:

- A unique student identification number (Nebraska Department of Education Student ID) is assigned to each Nebraska student. The Nebraska Department of Education Student ID is computer-generated and contains no embedded meaning. After being checked for duplicates, it becomes permanently assigned.
- Security protocols designed to limit who may have access to data and for what purposes.
- Masking rules to ensure that confidentiality is maintained in all public reporting of personally identifiable student information from educational records.



- All Nebraska Department of Education personnel collecting or using personally-identifiable student information are provided instruction regarding procedures adopted in accordance with this policy.
- Nebraska Department of Education maintains a current listing of agency personnel who have access to personally-identifiable student information through authentication and internal links.

### **Reporting Data**

As it relates to the reporting of data, Nebraska Department of Education has adopted the following primary masking rules:

- Rule of 10 – Used to protect personally identifiable information when the number of students in a group is small. Nebraska masks all numbers when there are fewer than 10 in a group. Membership is not masked at the State, district, school and grade level even if fewer than 10 students.
- Performance Level Reporting – When reporting student performance on assessments in levels
  - Only percentages are reported. All percentages are rounded. No counts (number tested) are reported with the percentages.
  - The percentages are displayed when there are 5 or more at a performance level.
  - All data are still masked for groups of fewer than 10.
- Rule of 100% - Used to protect privacy in student performance when all students in a group fall into the same achievement level regardless of the total student count.

*vi. Provide information regarding the number and percentage of all students and students in each subgroup described in 4.B.i above for whose results schools would not be held accountable under the State's system for annual meaningful differentiation of schools required by 34 C.F.R. § 200.18*

The AQuESTT Accountability system's unique approach to the minimum number makes it so all schools are held accountable under Nebraska's annual meaningful differentiation of schools.

*vii. If an SEA proposes a minimum number of students that exceeds 30, provide a justification that explains how a minimum number of students provided in 4.C above promotes sound, reliable accountability determinations, including data on the number and percentage of schools in the State that would not be held accountable in the system of annual meaningful differentiation under 34 C.F.R. § 200.18 for the results of students in each subgroup in 4.B.i above using the minimum number proposed by the State compared to the data on the number and percentage of schools in the State that would not be held accountable for the results of students in each subgroup if the minimum number of students is 30.*

Nebraska Department of Education does not propose a minimum number of students to exceed 30.

*vii. Describe how the minimum number of students was determined by the State, including how the State collaborated with teachers, principals, other school leaders, parents, and other stakeholders when determining such minimum number.*

The AQuESTT Task Force (2014-15) was composed of national experts, school board members, ESU professional development staff, administrators, and teachers from across the state (See Appendix B). This group reviewed historical NeSA data for stability and considered Nebraska's varied school sizes. This task force determined an n-size of 25 student scores showed fairly stable results from year-to-year, lower n-sizes increased variability, and higher n-sizes eliminated more schools from accountability.

Because Nebraska has a number of small schools, and in an effort to make sure students are counted, the n-size of 10 students was determined. The n-size of 10 students is similar to an n-size of 25 student scores, see the examples below:

*Example 1:* When 9 students take three tests, for example, ELA, math, and science, the student n-size is 9, the student scores n-size is 27.

*Example 2:* When 13 students take two tests, for example, ELA and math, the student n-size is 13 and the student scores n-size is 26.

The n-size of 10 students ensures that more schools are included in the accountability system, even those with few students in each subgroup. The use of an n-size of 10 students clarifies Nebraska's compliance with the federal requirements. The NDE will continue to seek stakeholder feedback on this important issue.

#### **D. Annual Meaningful Differentiation**

*Describe the State's system for annual meaningful differentiation of all public schools in the State, including public charter schools, consistent with the requirements of section 1111(c)(4)(C) of the ESEA and 34 C.F.R. §§ 200.12 and 200.18.*

Nebraska will continue to classify schools for accountability purposes using the AQuESTT classification system, and classification adjustments. In order to designate schools for comprehensive support and improvement, additional targeted support and improvement, and targeted support and improvement, Nebraska will use the filtering system described below.

This system maintains the integrity of the AQuESTT system, and makes it impossible for schools to be ranked, while still allowing for identification of the lowest performing schools and those most needing support to improve.

*Describe the following information with respect to the State's system of annual meaningful differentiation:*

*i. The distinct and discrete levels of school performance, and how they are calculated, under 34 C.F.R. § 200.18(a)(2) on each indicator in the statewide accountability system;*

The following business rules, described briefly here are explained in detail in Appendix F. These business rules are used to calculate AQuESTT school and district classifications for accountability. The data used is collected from Nebraska State Assessments (NeSA) and NSSRS data submitted by each district.

Every eligible public school and district is included and held accountable. The process is used to classify districts and schools within those districts into four rating levels: Excellent (4), Great (3), Good (2), or Needs Improvement (1).

Using results from NeSA a raw score is created based on every NeSA assessment completed by the students in grades 3-8 and the ACT in grade 11. Results from the entire state are then used to create cut scores, a school's percent proficient score is calculated by percent proficient divided by the total number of students on all eligible assessments.. This percentage is then compared against the cut scores for the corresponding school type (Elementary, Middle or High School) to determine an Excellent (4), Great (3), Good (2), or Needs Improvement (1) status score.

- This initial classification (i.e., Excellent, Great, Good, or Needs Improvement) is determined based on a school's or district's NeSA status score and is then subject to a series of potential "adjustments" – one for each of the remaining AQuESTT indicators, including: Academic Progress\*:
  - Improvement - based on a three-year trend line
  - Growth - a rate of individual student improvement (Grades 3-8)
  - Non-Proficiency - based on a three-year trend line
- Graduation Rate:
  - Graduation – (High School Only)
- Progress in Achieving ELP
  - ELPA21 K-12
- Non-Academic Indicators:
  - Participation - the percent of eligible assessments and scores compared to the number of eligible assessments
- School Quality or Student Success Indicators:
  - Chronic Absenteeism - A student is identified as chronically absent when a district reports that he or she has not been present for 10 percent or more of the days that he or she was "in membership" at a school. "Membership" is defined as the number of school days in session in which the student is enrolled and registered during the annual reporting period from July 1 to June 30.
  - Science Achievement

- Evidence-Based Analysis (Applied to raw classification – Schools only, not applied to districts)

\*A high school's academic progress is included as a measure of its academic achievement indicator.

Raw Classifications are assigned to schools and districts based on all applicable adjustments made to the initial classification determined by the status score using the indicators listed above (excluding the EBA). A detailed report is provided to each school depicting the final rating, this report is provided in Appendix G. The AQuESTT classification process consisting of initial classification via the status score, and the application of additional adjustment to arrive at a raw classification was designed to produce meaningful differentiation between schools. The result is a distribution of schools across AQuESTT classifications of approximately: 10% Needs Improvement, 40% Good, 40% Great, and 10% Excellent.

Once this process is complete and a raw classification has been assigned, a school may become *eligible* for an EBA adjustment if their EBA total score is in a top percentile relative to those in their same raw classification category (i.e., relative to the EBA total scores of other “Great,” “Excellent,” or “Needs Improvement” schools). Relevant percentiles and cut scores for each raw classification level are reviewed in the AQuESTT Final Classification Business Rules document in Appendix F. In order for an adjustment (i.e., increase one classification level) to be applied, eligible schools must provide evidence for their responses to be audited by a panel of peer-reviewers with educational expertise.

Taken together then, the AQuESTT classification process described above includes all indicators in providing for a meaningful differentiation of schools.

In the current AQuESTT classification system, meaningful differentiation is seen from the 2015 distribution of schools across the four classifications:

<b>School Classification</b>	<b>Number of Schools</b>	<b>Percent of Total (1130)</b>
Excellent	147	13%
Great	473	42%
Good	423	37%
Needs Improvement	87	8%

The data above show that schools classification roughly follows a normal distribution, with most schools (79%) classified within the middle two categories. This practice follows the input and feedback from the original AQuESTT taskforce and the Nebraska State Board of Education. Schools are classified for a three year cycle; the classifications are reported annually and the annual reporting includes progress reporting for each of the indicators.

After this process, NDE will use the below filtering system to designate schools for CSI, ATSI, and TSI:

**Designation Process:**

-For Achievement (Status), NDE will combine percent proficient for math and ELA for each school, rank from highest to lowest, and choose the lowest quarter (or lowest 5% for Additional Targeted Support and Improvement).

-Each of the Academic Progress indicators (Growth, Improvement, Non-Proficiency) have underlying raw data and calculations used *before* giving a bump. These raw calculations will be ranked, with the lowest quarter chosen (or lowest 5% for Additional Targeted Support and Improvement).

-Similarly, the Progress Toward English Language Proficiency indicator will have data showing the percent of students progressing towards proficiency. These scores will be ranked, and the lowest quarter (or lowest 5% for Additional Targeted Support and Improvement) moved to the next filter.

-In the final stage, the three School Quality and Student Success Indicators employ different scales (i.e. Science = 0-200, EBA = 0-120, and chronic absenteeism = 0%-100%). As such, after standardizing each of the three indicators, we create a final score as the sum of the three standardized scores (i.e. Science, EBA, and Reduction in Chronic Absenteeism). Standardized scores are calculated by first transforming values for each of the three indicators into z-scores. Next, each z-score is changed into a new standardized distribution with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. These new standardized scores for Science, EBA, and the Reduction in Chronic Absenteeism are then summed and placed in rank order.

-To calculate the reduction in chronic absenteeism, NDE will calculate a benchmark using the previous three-years of chronic absence data. Using a trend allows for smoothing of differences among years.

-The chronic absenteeism score will then be calculated by subtracting the current year's chronic absence rate from the three-year benchmark, then standardizing that score.

-The benchmark will be recalibrated every three years prior to the CSI designation cycle.

*ii. The weighting of each indicator, including how certain indicators receive substantial weight individually and much greater weight in the aggregate, consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.18(b) and (c)(1)-(2).*

The order of stages in the decision process establishes the weight placed on each indicator and allows the state to prioritize and place much greater weight on the academic indicators in the first and second stages.

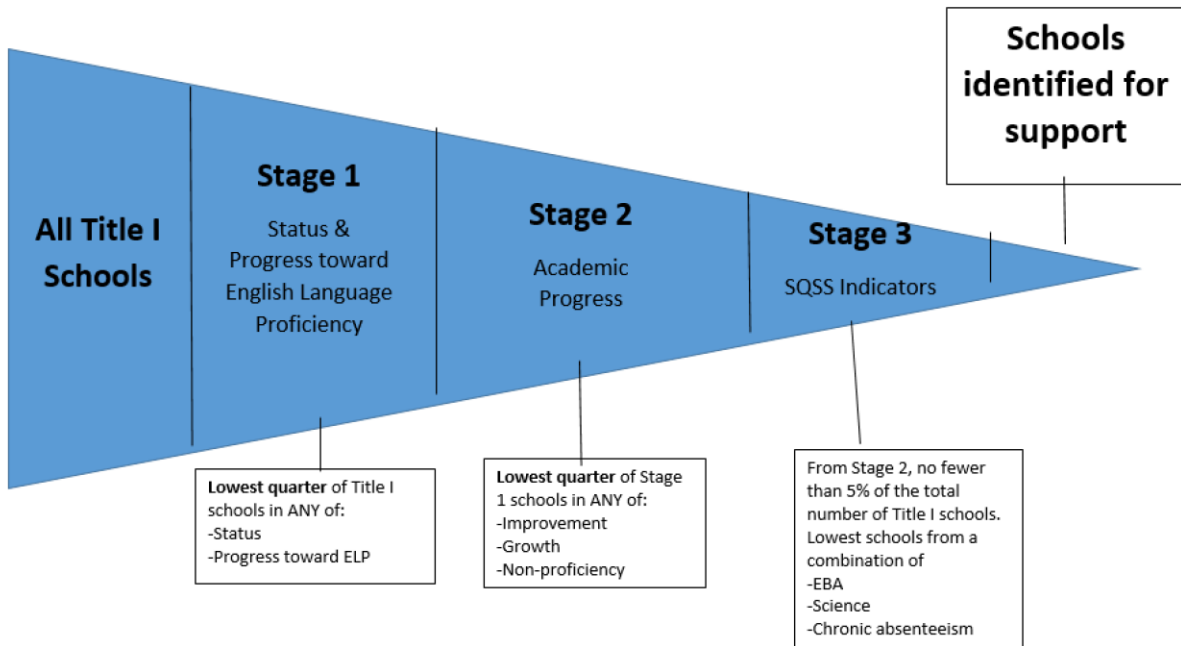
The first stage of indicators includes academic achievement in math, academic achievement in reading/ language arts, and progress toward English language proficiency. These achievement and English language proficiency indicators are considered to have equal weight to one another and greater weight than subsequent indicators, as low performance on any of them causes a school to progress to the next stage of differentiation.

For elementary and middle schools, the second stage includes the three measures of academic progress. These other academic indicators are considered to have equal weight to one another and much greater weight than the subsequent indicator, as low performance on either of them causes a school to progress to the next stage of differentiation. For high schools, the second stage includes four-year and seven-year graduation rate. Of the two, four-year graduation rate is considered to carry greater weight (51%), while 7-year will be weighted 49%. Both graduation rate indicators are considered to have much greater weight than the subsequent indicator, as low performance on both of them causes a school to progress to the next stage of differentiation.

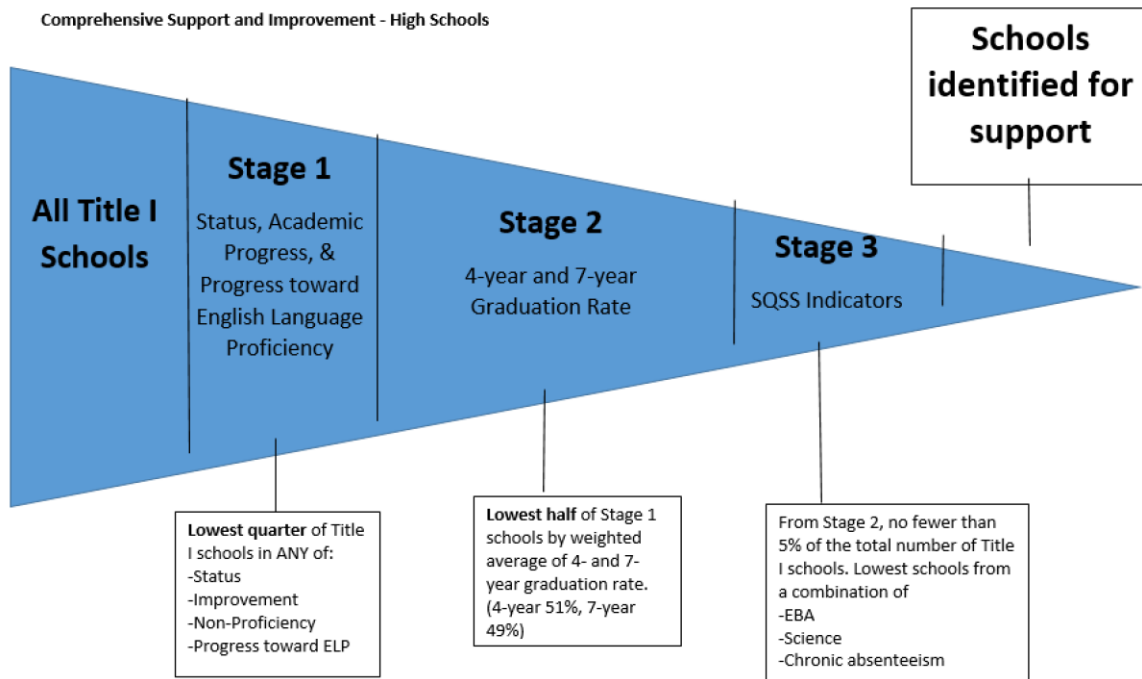
The third and final stage uses a combined score of Nebraska's three School Quality and Student Success Indicators: chronic absenteeism, science, and the Evidence Based Analysis. Since it comes last, this stage carries the least weight while still differentiating between schools that are already low on the academic indicators.

*The summative determinations, including how they are calculated, that are provided to schools under 34 C.F.R. § 200.18(a)(4).*

Comprehensive Support and Improvement - Elementary and Middle Schools

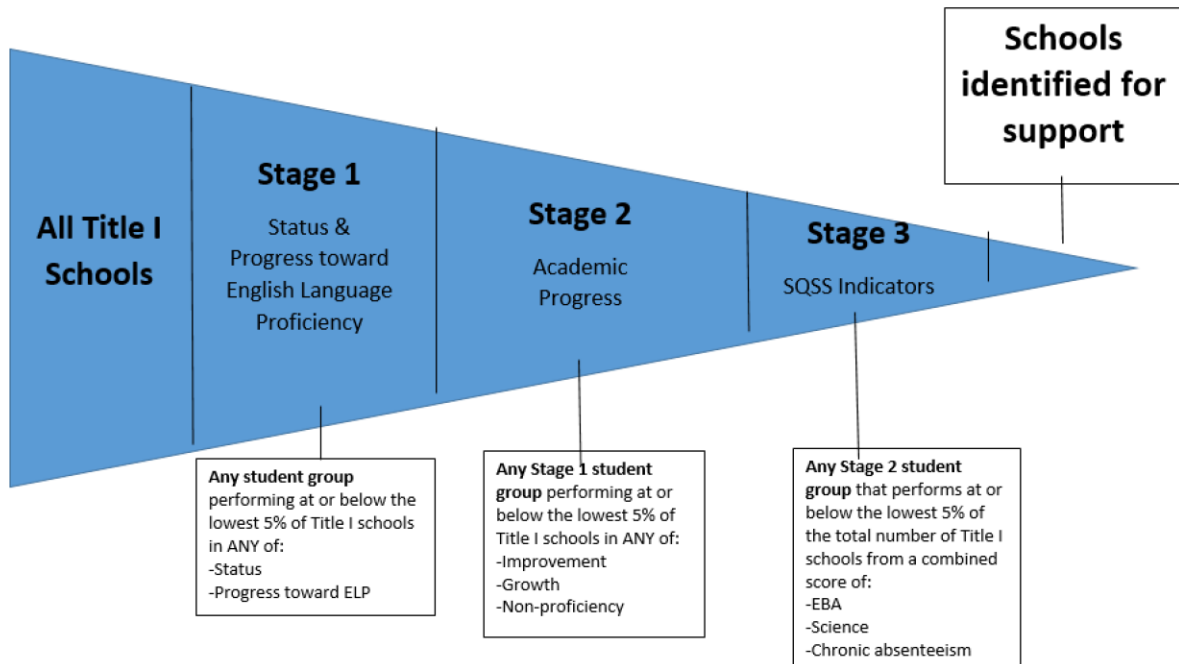


Comprehensive Support and Improvement - High Schools

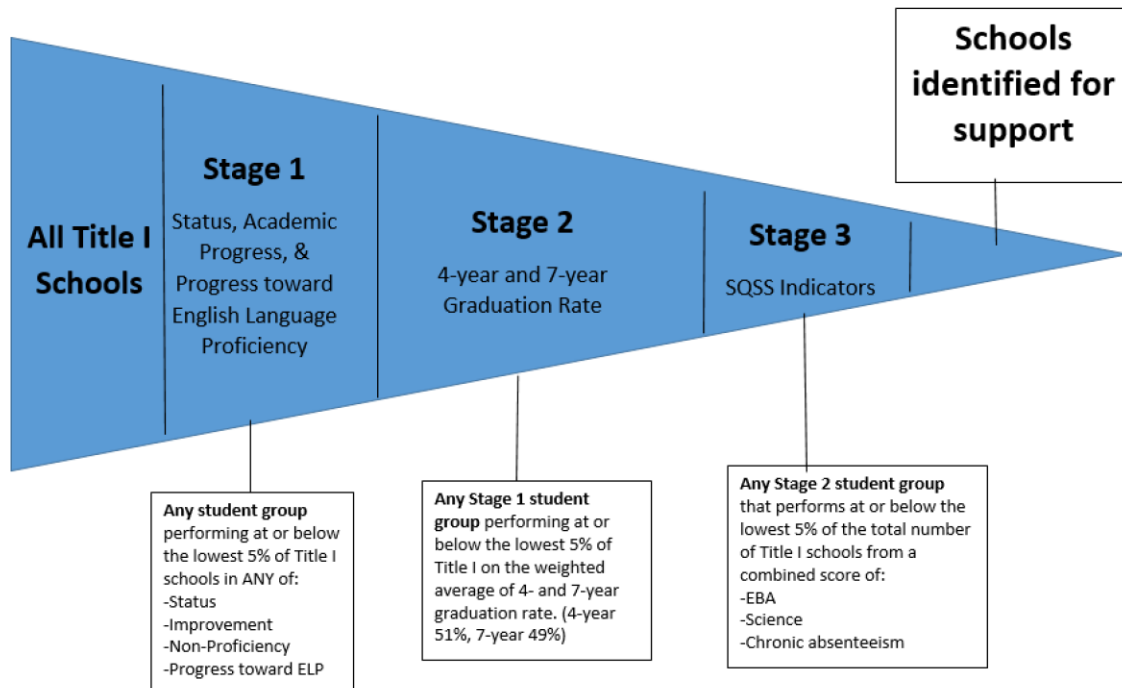


#### Additional Targeted Support and Improvement - Elementary and Middle Schools

Schools with any student group performing similarly to the lowest 5% of Title I schools will be designated for Additional Targeted Support and Improvement.



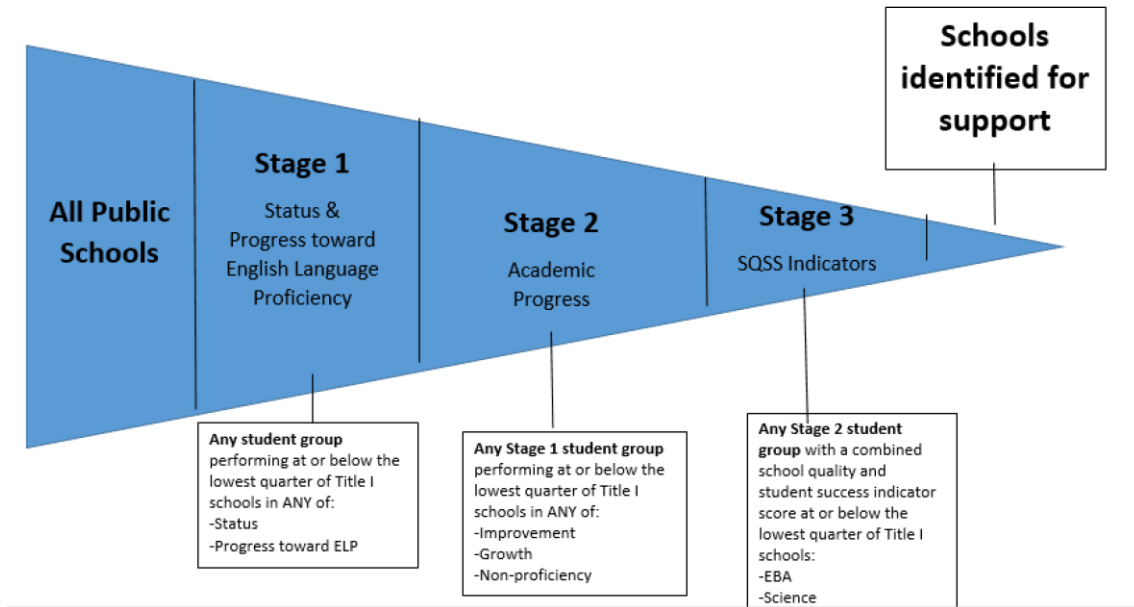
#### Additional Targeted Support - High Schools



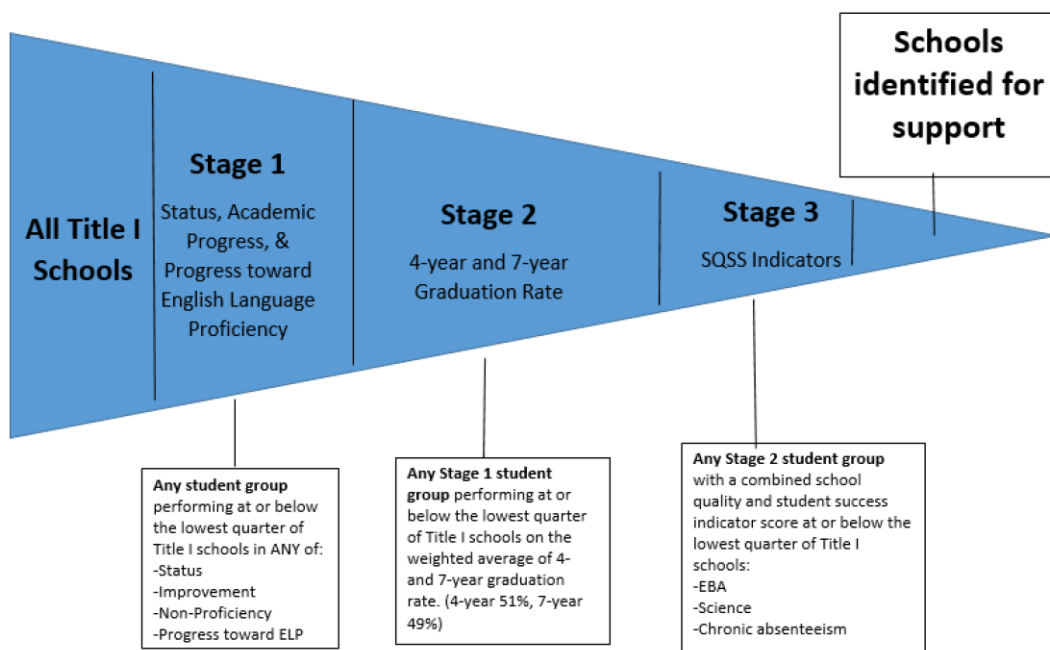


#### Targeted Support and Improvement - Elementary and Middle Schools with Consistently Underperforming Student Groups

Schools with consistently underperforming subgroups are those whose groups of students are comparable to the performance of the bottom quarter of Title I schools. Every public school with at least 10 students in each subgroup will be considered for this type of support and improvement. A school may be designated TSI for more than one student group.



#### Targeted Support and Improvement - High Schools with Consistently Underperforming Student Groups



*iii. How the system for meaningful differentiation and the methodology for identifying schools under 34 C.F.R. § 200.19 will ensure that schools with low performance on substantially weighted indicators are more likely to be identified for comprehensive support and improvement or targeted support and improvement, consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.18(c)(3) and (d)(1)(ii).*

Schools with low performance on substantially-weighted indicators are more likely to receive the lowest classification of Needs Improvement. Most schools identified for comprehensive and targeted support and improvement will come from this classification. The process for identifying schools for comprehensive and targeted support and improvement further explains how schools with low performance are more likely to be identified.

## **E. Participation Rate**

*Describe how the State is factoring the requirement for 95 percent student participation in assessments into its system of annual meaningful differentiation of schools consistent with the requirements of 34 C.F.R. § 200.15.*

For each school/district an adjustment or limitation to the overall classification rating will be made, based on participation rate. Schools that fail to reach 95% participation rate, can lower the raw classification by one, two, or three points based on cut rates as follows- minus 1 if lower than 95% but greater than 90%, minus 2 if less than 90% but greater than 85%. Participation rates less than 85% cannot earn more than a 1 (Needs Improvement) on the overall classification.

- 1 rating adjustment: Participation rate < 95%
- 2 rating adjustment: Participation rate < 90%
- Limit rating to 1 if Participation rate is < 85

## **F. Data Procedures**

*Describe the State's uniform procedure for averaging data, including combining data across school years, combining data across grades, or both, in a school as defined in 34 C.F.R. § 200.20(a), if applicable.*

The business rules are used to calculate AQuESTT school/district classifications for accountability. The data used is collected from NeSA assessments and NSSRS data submitted by districts. The State's uniform procedure for averaging data are included in the business rules are found in Appendix F of this document. Likewise, any combination of data across school year, or grades is defined in the business rules for each indicator.

## **G. Including All Public Schools in a State's Accountability System**

*If the State uses a different methodology for annual meaningful differentiation than the one described in D above for any of the following specific types of schools, describe how they are included, consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.18(d)(1)(iii):*

*i. Schools in which no grade level is assessed under the State's academic assessment system (e.g., P-2 schools), although the State is not required to administer a standardized assessment to meet this requirement;*

The school receives the district's classification.

*ii. Schools with variant grade configurations (e.g., P-12 schools);*

Schools are divided into standard grade configurations determined by the district but must include elementary, middle, and high school levels. Grade configurations are carried over from No Child Left Behind legislation.

A school building in Nebraska may include all grades K-12 and include within that building 3 schools: an elementary school, a middle school, and a high school. Similarly, there are buildings that include an elementary school and a middle school, or a middle school and a high school. Each school is classified and reported separately in the accountability system, based on grade bands: elementary school, middle school, or high school. The definition of which grades are included in a school are the decision of a local school district.

*iii. Small schools in which the total number of students who can be included in any indicator under 34 C.F.R. § 200.14 is less than the minimum number of students established by the State under 34 C.F.R. § 200.17(a)(1), consistent with a State's uniform procedures for averaging data under 34 C.F.R. § 200.20(a), if applicable;*

The AQuESTT system's unique approach to the minimum number makes it so all schools are held accountable under Nebraska's annual meaningful differentiation of schools.

*iv. Schools that are designed to serve special populations (e.g., students receiving alternative programming in alternative educational settings; students living in local institutions for neglected or delinquent children, including juvenile justice facilities; students enrolled in State public schools for the deaf or blind; and recently arrived English learners enrolled in public schools for newcomer students); and*

The vast majority of specialized school settings outlined in the list under *Section 4.1 iv.* above are already included in the State's AQuESTT assessment system and reporting of student performance. Student academic achievement results are tied directly to their resident school district.

Special Purpose schools under Nebraska law are not public schools. 20 U.S.C. §6472 defines both "Adult correctional institution" and "institution for neglected or delinquent youth" and three of our special purposes schools would fall into these categories. The Omaha Youth Academy is operated in an adult correctional facilities and would fall under subsection (1) The term "adult correctional institution" means

a facility in which persons (including persons under 21 years of age) are confined as a result of a conviction for a criminal offense.” The Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers would fall under subsection (4)(B) “a public or private residential facility for the care of children who have been adjudicated to be delinquent or in need of supervision.” Federal regulations go on to further defined these institutions for youth whose average stay exceeds 30 days. 34 C.F.R. §200.90.

These types of programs fall under the plan requirements of 20 U.S.C. §6434 as they are not public schools. Therefore these particular “Special Purpose” schools will be accounted for as described in that section (Title I Part D) of the Nebraska State Plan.

The other two “special purpose” likewise do not qualify as a public school under Nebraska law as they are not governed by a public school board. *See e.g.* Neb. Rev. Stat. 79-101 and 92 Nebraska Administrative Code 92 Chapter §§ 10-002.21 and 10-002.19.

*v. Newly opened schools that do not have multiple years of data, consistent with a State’s uniform procedure for averaging data under 34 C.F.R. § 200.20(a), if applicable, for at least one indicator (e.g., a newly opened high school that has not yet graduated its first cohort for students).*

New schools in Nebraska will be classified in their first and second year of operation based on state assessments, graduation rate if the school is a high school, and participation. First and second year schools (Status), regardless of their final classification cannot become priority schools without three years of assessment data.

## **4.2 Identification of Schools**

**A. Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools.** Describe:

*i. The methodologies, including the timeline, by which the State identifies schools for comprehensive support and improvement under section 1111(c)(4)(D)(i) of the ESEA and 34 C.F.R. § 200.19(a) and (d), including: 1) lowest-performing schools; 2) schools with low high school graduation rates; and 3) schools with chronically low-performing subgroups.*

The 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction’s increased focus on equity has catalyzed a philosophical shift around supporting districts and schools in Nebraska. Current statewide discussions point to a tiered system of supports and interventions for Nebraska schools and districts, with those demonstrating the most need (as measured via the AQuESTT classification and designation process and in accordance with the Strategic Plan) receiving a greater degree of attention and support compared to those performing better on the same metrics. This ensures increased equity of access and support according to identified needs, and it reflects more focused and responsible utilization of available funds. Figure 20 depicts this needs-driven approach to supporting districts and schools in Nebraska.

Figure 20 AQuESTT Support Level

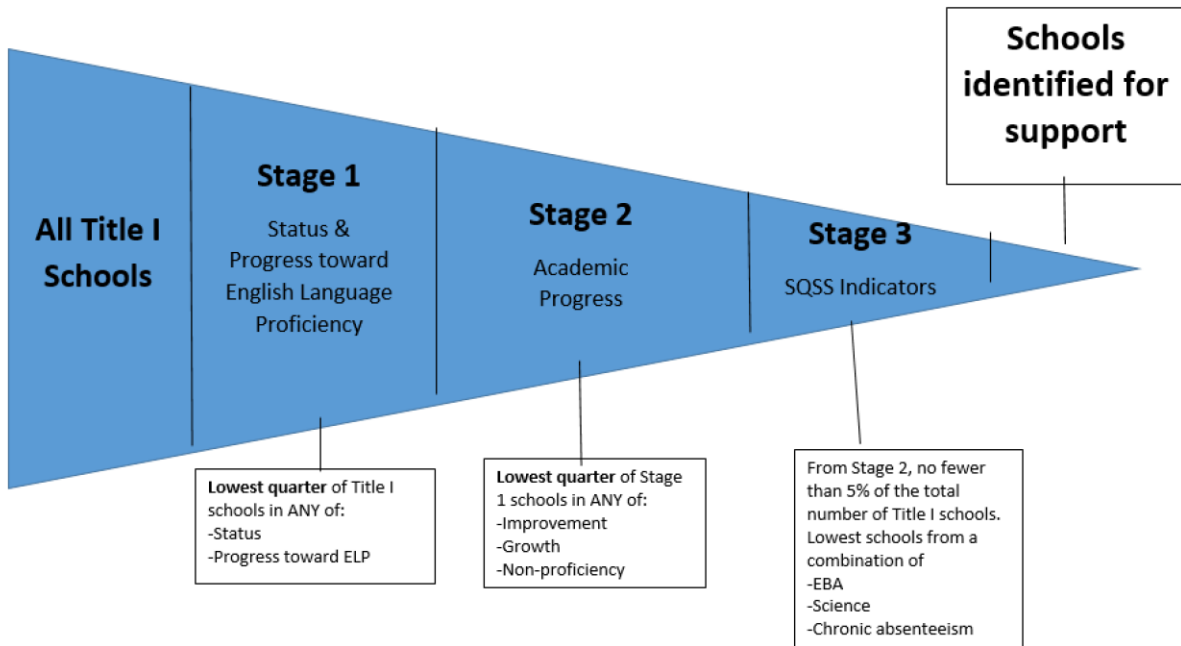


AQuESTT places schools into four classifications: Excellent, Great, Good, and Needs Improvement. Schools will then be designated for Needs of Comprehensive Support and Improvement if they meet any one of the three criteria below:

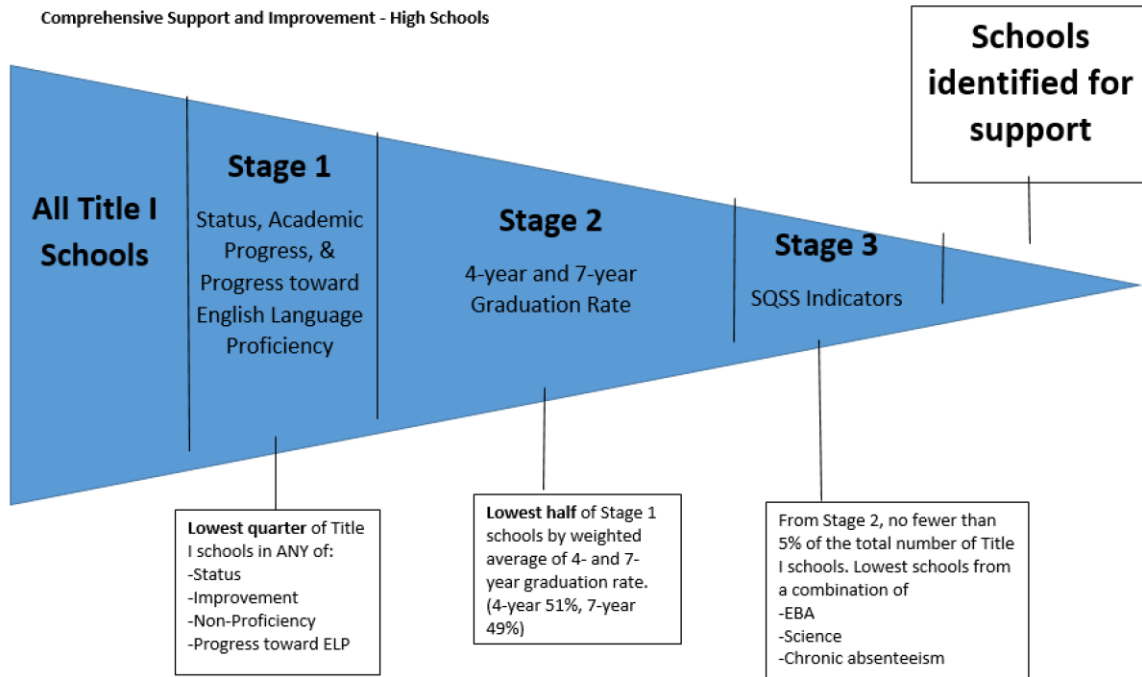
- the school is in the lowest 5 percent of overall performance of Title I schools\*, or
- the school has a four-year cohort graduation rate of less than 67%, or
- the school has consistently underperforming subgroups, or has maintained identification as an Additional Targeted Support school for three years

\*The lowest 5 percent of Title I schools will be identified using all indicators in the AQuESTT system. All Title I schools will be determined using the system below:

Comprehensive Support and Improvement - Elementary and Middle Schools



Comprehensive Support and Improvement - High Schools



The next classification will take place in the fall of 2018. Classification of schools will occur every year thereafter. However, schools will only be identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement every three years. Similarly, a school's CSI status will be evaluated on the below exit criteria after three years.

**Transition Year in 2017-18:** In 2017-2018 Nebraska will continue to support and intervene in schools within LEAs that were identified in the 2016-2017 school year as being in need of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under the ESEA, as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. For 2017-2018 the Nebraska Department of Education does not intend to add any new schools to this classification, or remove from the list any schools that currently are identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring.

As a transition to the new collection of student performance data in 2017-2018 and the creation of a new list of *Comprehensive Support and Improvement schools* under ESSA and AQuESTT, any identified CSI school will continue to submit a plan for improvement to Nebraska Department of Education for approval. Nebraska will use a portion of the Title I, Section 1003 funds that it reserves in fiscal year 2017 to support implementation of these School Improvement Plans, similar to the manner in which these funds were made available under Title I Accountability in prior years. If the State of Nebraska does not need all the school improvement funds it reserves in fiscal year 2017 to serve identified schools in the 2017-2018 school year, it will carry over any remaining funds to allow for a greater level of support for newly identified schools in need of comprehensive and targeted support and improvement, beginning in FY 2018.

Each school identified for *Comprehensive Support and Improvement*, will be required to demonstrate, through the ESEA Consolidated Application that they have met all the following requirements in the development of their local plan for the effective use of these Title I school improvement funds in addressing the academic achievement gap(s) that caused the school to be identified as needing improvement:

- A Comprehensive Needs Assessment regarding the identified academic achievement gaps among subgroups within the building student population;
- Selection of measureable goals for the use of Title I funds to address these identified achievement gaps as reflected in this Needs Assessment;
- Development and implementation of selected intervention strategies, founded in evidence-based practices that ensure a high expectation of success in narrowing academic achievement gaps, and;
- Implementation of an evaluation system/process to determine the effectiveness of the selected interventions being supported through Title I funds at improving the academic achievement of their target audience.

All Title I school improvement plans are submitted electronically through Nebraska Department of Education Grants Management System (GMS), a web-based system used by the Department for processing various grants and plans. The system supports application submissions,

amendments, and approvals as well as the issuance of grant award notifications. The system also supports the processing of payments against grant awards through reimbursement requests.

The purposes of the GMS system are:

- to provide school districts with an easy-to-use mechanism with a common look and feel even though material comes from various sources;
- to facilitate a quick response time between the Department and each LEA;
- to provide technical support from a single point-in-contact Nebraska Department of Education staff consultant to assist with submission, review and approval of all grant applications; and
- to supply real time financial reports.

All public high schools in the state that have a graduation rate below 67% will be eligible for Federal Title I improvement funds.

The school improvement process for Title I schools outlined above follows the same steps of evaluation and accountability that are used to designate three Priority Schools across the state. The process for designation, first used in 2015, used the steps outlined within 4d in the Nebraska Legislative Bill LB438 and subsequently in Title 92, Nebraska Administrative Code, Chapter 10 (Rule 10) which are based on changes to the accountability system for schools and school districts under The Quality Education Accountability Act.

**AQuESTT Priority School Designation:** Nebraska's AQuESTT system is also required to identify three schools for Priority School status which allows the State Board to select schools for interventions led by an intervention team selected by the Commissioner of Education. The first set of three schools were identified in December of 2015 and individual improvement plans were approved by the State Board in August of 2016. The Priority Schools were identified from the 87 schools that were classified as Needs Improvement. The process for selecting schools, establishing improvement plans, and determining exit criteria for schools has been developed by the NDE processes and procedures as well as established in Nebraska statute and rule. The initial Priority School process effectively serves as a prototype for the development of a process to designate and establish schools identified under ESSA for *Comprehensive Support and Improvement*.

**AQuESTT Needs Improvement Characteristics:** The identification of Priority Schools was aided by an analysis of the general characteristics of various schools across the state. The NDE identified four general characteristics of Needs Improvement schools that included recognizing that schools ranged across the state from those that were:

1. Small community schools typified by rural and possibly declining populations;
2. Metro area schools typified by racial and ethnic diversity and populations of poverty;



3. Native American schools that are typified by significant percentages of students residing on tribal nation land and in primarily tribal cultures; and,
4. Demographically shifting community schools typified by substantial populations of English learner students and families across the state.

Although none of the four general characteristics completely describe unique school circumstances, they do allude to the need to build capacity to assist schools that may have similar characteristics. In the selection of the priority schools it was important to use these characteristics to assist in building a theory of action that would help address school improvement that would assist students of various subgroups as well as communities of various conditions. Additionally, the work has identified areas where capacity has grown or failed to grow to meet these unique characteristics. For example, the identified supports and resources for EL seem more targeted than do resources for other specific subgroups. In Nebraska, there is a desire to take on the challenges of achievement equity for all students and design specific capacity building policies for the most disadvantaged students.

*ii. The uniform statewide exit criteria for schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement established by the State, including the number of years over which schools are expected to meet such criteria, under section 1111(d)(3)(A)(i) of the ESEA and consistent with the requirements in 34 C.F.R. § 200.21(f)(1).*

Nebraska will designate schools for comprehensive support and improvement every three years. In order to exit CSI designation, a school must not be re-identified for CSI, must not fall below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of Title I schools in any indicator in Stage 1, and must have shown improvement on all indicators which led to its initial identification.

Approved school improvement plans created by CSI schools will include improvement goals that fall within three effective school indicators, which may include:

1. Clear and Compelling Direction,
2. Student and Staff Culture and
3. Instructional Leadership
4. Student Success and Access
5. Teaching and Learning
6. School Leadership.

Support for improvement will include the coordination of resources by Nebraska Department of Education designated staff members, local Educational Service Unit staff and outside consultants as deemed necessary.

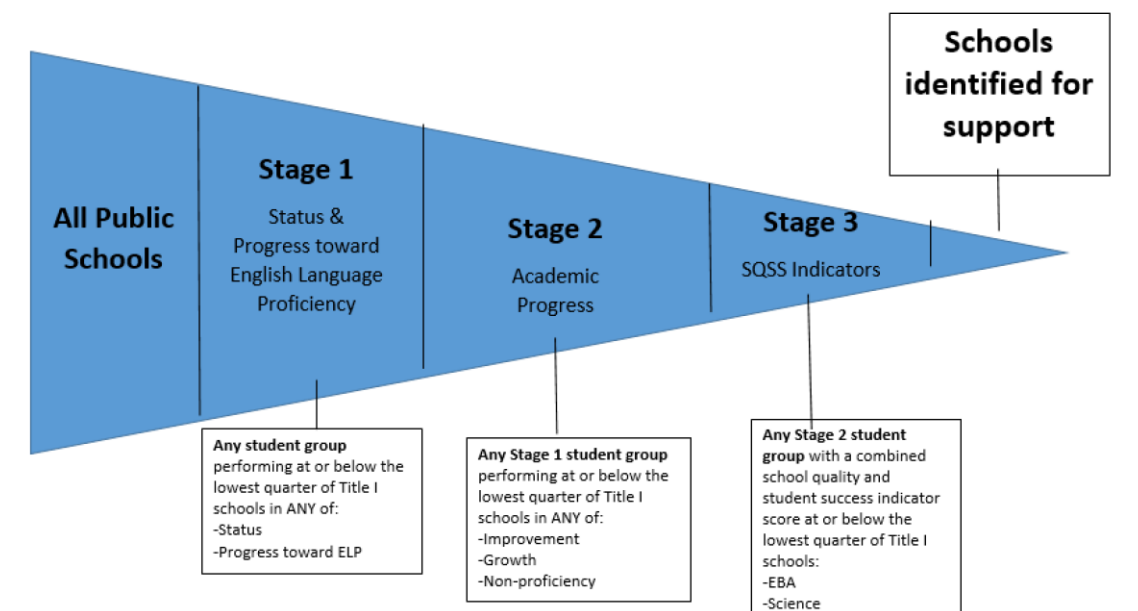
## B. Targeted Support and Improvement

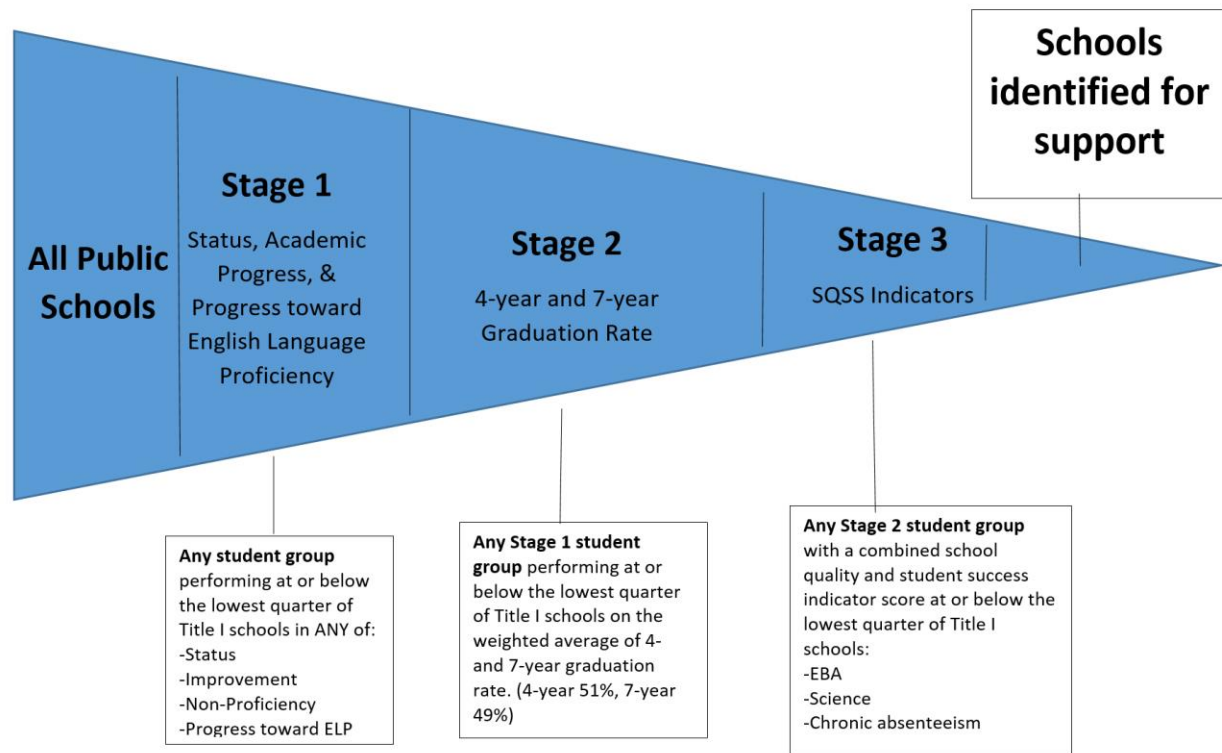
*Describe the State’s methodology for annually identifying any school with one or more “consistently underperforming” subgroups of students, based on all indicators in the statewide system of annual meaningful differentiation, including the definition used by the State to determine consistent underperformance. (ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(C)(iii))*

Nebraska’s accountability system, AQuESTT, does not currently differentiate subgroups from the overall student population. The Nebraska Department of Education plans to use all accountability indicators to identify schools for Targeted Support. Schools will be identified for TSI using the below filter system:

### Targeted Support and Improvement - Elementary and Middle Schools with Consistently Underperforming Student Groups

Schools with consistently underperforming subgroups are those whose groups of students are comparable to the performance of the bottom quarter of Title I schools. Every public school with at least 10 students in each subgroup will be considered for this type of support and improvement. A school may be designated TSI for more than one student group.



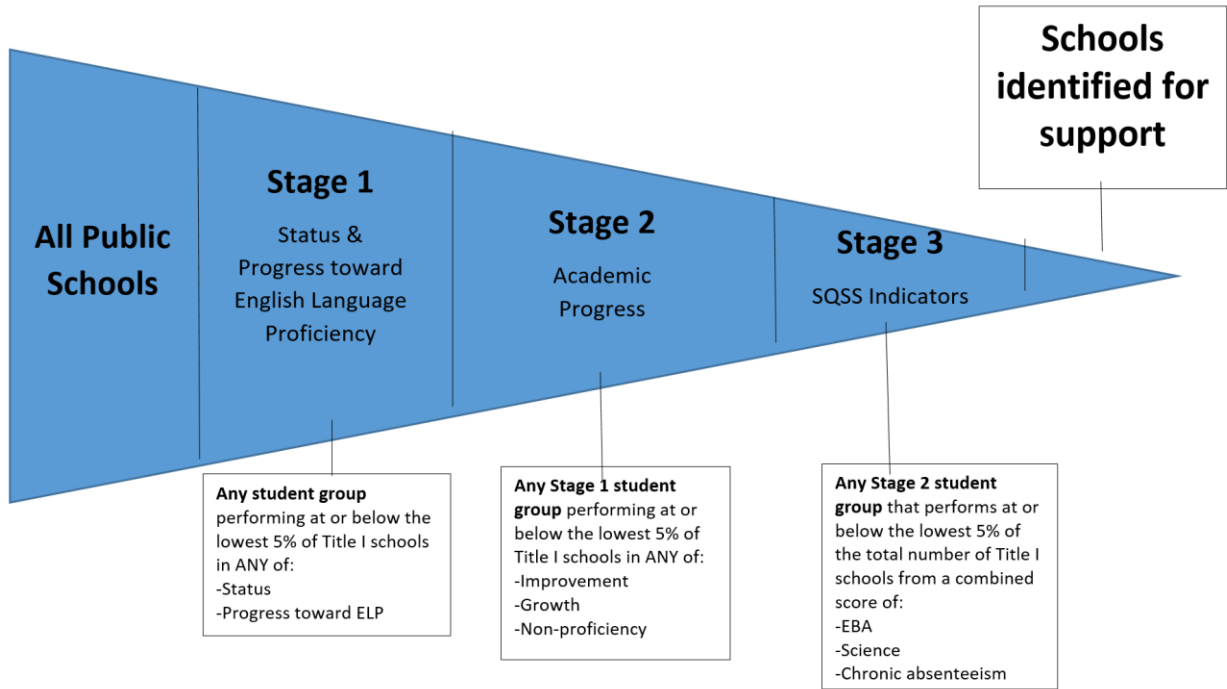


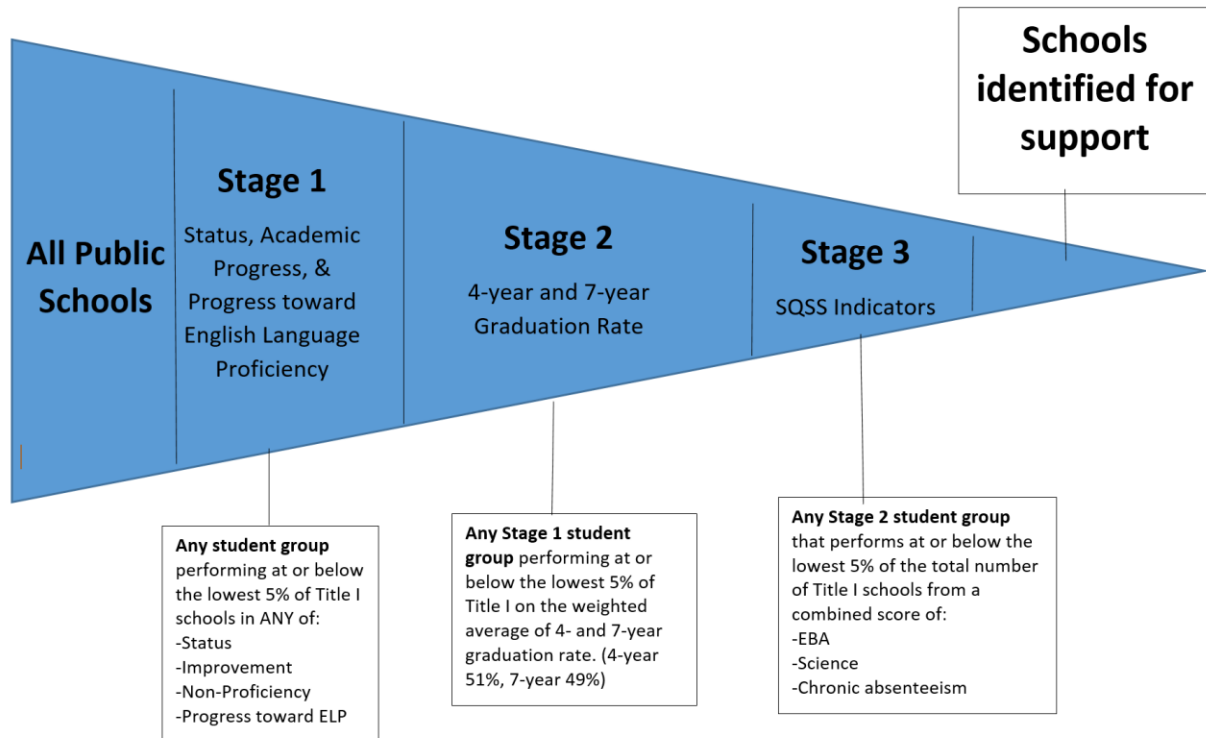
The NDE will begin identifying Targeted Support and Improvement schools in 2019, and **annually review and identify schools for Targeted Support.**

*Additional Targeted Support. Describe the State’s methodology, for identifying schools in which any subgroup of students, on its own, would lead to identification under ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(D)(i)(I) using the State’s methodology under ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(D), including the year in which the State will first identify such schools and the frequency with which the State will, thereafter, identify such schools. (ESEA section 1111(d)(2)(C)-(D))*

When schools are identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement, schools that have subgroups that would, on their own, be identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement will be identified for Additional Targeted Support.

The process by which schools will be identified for Additional Targeted Support will be identified through the following method:





Schools maintaining Additional Targeted Support identification for three years will be classified as a Comprehensive Support and Improvement school in the subsequent cycle.

*Exit Criteria for Schools Receiving Additional Targeted Support. Describe the statewide exit criteria, established by the State, for schools receiving additional targeted support under ESEA section 1111(d)(2)(C), including the number of years over which schools are expected to meet such criteria.*

Schools identified for ATSI can exit this status by successfully implementing its TSI plan such that all identified low-performing subgroups show sufficient growth and no longer meet the criteria for identification **for two consecutive years**.

### 4.3 State Support and Improvement for Low-performing Schools

#### A. School Improvement Resources

*Describe how the SEA will meet its responsibilities, consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.24(d) under section 1003 of the ESEA, including the process to award school improvement funds to LEAs and*

*monitoring and evaluating the use of funds by LEAs.*

Beginning in 2018-2019, the NDE will use a competitive approach to award school improvement funds to LEAs. The grant will be fashioned so that LEAs with the greatest need to improve are first to receive the allocated funds. The grants will include but not be limited to information such as needs assessment, accountability determinations, student achievement data, trend data, demographic characteristics, and progress towards meeting long term goals. Funding precedence will be given to those schools listed as Priority Schools. Resources not required or necessary for carrying out implementation plans and support systems for Priority Schools will be utilized to assist schools *Comprehensive Support and Improvement schools*.

Funds may also be reserved for supporting interventions in schools identified for Targeted Support and Improvement.

**Grant Process:** The Nebraska Department of Education will develop a grant process that will use eligibility criteria from the previous sections and will further require a needs assessment and competitive application. Grant resources will be used to select from potential intervention strategies that align with the state's AQuESTT system and priority school intervention process.

**Outline of Process:**

- Each eligible school will complete a pre-application that will include a self-assessment of needs on a prescribed set of criteria. The prescribed criteria will align with the tenets of AQuESTT and build on the elements of the Evidence-Based Analysis.
- Each eligible school in the pre-application will identify key areas necessary for support to improve areas including, but not limited to, climate, culture, instruction, and leadership supports.
- Each eligible school will identify partners to support including district, Educational Service Unit, and SEA resources. (The Nebraska Department of Education will identify potential support resources and determine other eligible support resources for schools)
- Upon the completion of a pre-application and self-assessment of needs, The Nebraska Department of Education will select up to half of the applicants (depending on available resources) to receive an Nebraska Department of Education determined diagnostic assessment. These assessments will be conducted by the Nebraska Department of Education or partners to determine the level of need and a set of potential supports to assist the school to improve.
- Finally, a set of at least 24 schools or 5% of Title I schools will be selected for comprehensive support and will be required to complete an application for additional support that will include the development of a custom school improvement plan (turnaround plan). Each successful application will be assigned an improvement assistance team based on the needs assessment, diagnostic assessment, and improvement plan. Schools will be eligible for annual support and eligible to maintain support for up to three years.

- Districts having schools identified for targeted support will be required to submit a plan focused on improving student outcomes, based on indicators in AQuESTT, for each subgroup of students considered to be consistently underperforming.
- The Nebraska Department of Education will evaluate progress on each plan annually and determine eligibility for continuation grants and/or supports.

#### **Outline of Supports and Eligible Supports:**

- The Nebraska Department of Education staff from various programs will be identified to support *Comprehensive Support and Improvement* schools.
- ESU staff from across the state will receive professional learning opportunities preparing them to support identified schools.
- Supports will be designed and coordinated with specific attention to small community schools, urban/metro schools, demographically shifting schools, and Native American schools.
- Supports from other entities and partners will be considered to be eligible support with Nebraska Department of Education approval.
- School improvement plans will be aligned with state and federal requirements.
- Supports for professional development including the use of Title IIa and other funds used for effective educator will be prioritized for schools that qualify for comprehensive and targeted support.
- Schools that do not qualify or otherwise receive assistance under this program will be considered for support through other state resources as available.
- Title I schools that are not selected for *Comprehensive Support and Improvement* are eligible for other targeted assistance including school improvement planning guidance with the intent of aligning state and federal accountability requirements. Such supports are intended to improve capacity alignment between the NDE, ESUs, districts, and partners.

Funds will be monitored by Nebraska Department of Education Title I staff to ensure the funds are properly used and tracked. Nebraska Department of Education Title I staff will also provide ongoing technical assistance to LEA staff in charge of tracking and spending awarded funds.

Nebraska Department of Education staff members will provide support and technical assistance to the LEA regarding LEAs' use of school improvement funds. Such support will be conducted by diverse teams assembled to provide expertise in identified challenge areas. The teams will be assembled from the NDE and ESU staff that are able to provide guidance to the LEA for implementation of evidence-based interventions that should assist the LEA in improving results used in the AQuESTT Accountability system. The teams will conduct regular meetings with the LEA and annually evaluate the LEA progress and use of school improvement funds.

## **B. Technical Assistance Regarding Evidence-Based Interventions**

*Describe the technical assistance the SEA will provide to each LEA in the State serving a significant number or percentage of schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement, including how it will provide technical assistance to LEAs to ensure the effective implementation of evidence-based interventions, consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.23(b), and, if applicable, the list of State-approved, evidence-based interventions for use in schools implementing comprehensive or targeted support and improvement plans consistent with § 200.23(c)(2)-(3).*

Technical assistance for schools identified for *Comprehensive or Targeted Support and Improvement* will begin with a robust needs assessment for each LEA. The needs assessment will be conducted in cooperation with the NDE, the LEA, and the appropriate ESU. The needs assessment examination will include, but not be limited to, information such as accountability determinations, student achievement data, trend data, demographic characteristics, and progress towards meeting long-term goals. The needs assessment will also examine data gathered with the EBA component of the AQuESTT accountability system. The needs assessment will be used to collaboratively develop a progress plan for each LEA identified for *Comprehensive or Targeted Support and Improvement*. The plan will detail evidence-based assessments and a timeline for implementation.

To provide targeted technical assistance for items identified during the needs assessment process, cohort groups will be identified. Current cohort groups include: small community schools, urban/metro schools, demographically shifting schools, and Native American schools. Additional cohorts may be created around specific needs. For instance, if a group of schools are identified as *in Need of Targeted Support and Improvement* because of consistent gaps in achievement between economically disadvantaged students and students that are not economically disadvantaged, a cohort may be created so that resources could be shared and that evidence-based interventions may be implemented across the cohort. Other factors that may influence the composition of a cohort include size and location. Cohorts will regularly meet to update the group on progress and to collaborate.

Through the strategic planning process, the Nebraska Department of Education has begun identifying new systems of support that could be used to assist LEAs in achieving long-term goals. The systems of support are organized around the six tenets of AQuESTT and include the additional category of Leadership. Part of the system of supports includes the identification of Nebraska Department of Education endorsed, evidence-based interventions. The Nebraska Department of Education is currently engaged in this work.

Technical assistance will be diverse and comprehensive, based on the needs assessment and the progress plans. The technical assistance will be offered through several outlets including, but not limited to, the Nebraska Department of Education, ESUs, and other cohort members. Technical assistance could range from something as simple as a phone conversation to something as sophisticated as ongoing professional development. The technical assistance will be tailored to



the needs of each LEA or cohort and intensive as needed to ensure that evidence-based intervention are effectively implemented.

### **C. More Rigorous Interventions**

*Describe the more rigorous interventions required for schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement that fail to meet the State's exit criteria within a State-determined number of years consistent with section 1111(d)(3)(A)(i) of the ESEA and 34 C.F.R. § 200.21(f)(3)(iii).*

For schools identified for *Comprehensive Support and Improvement*, the NDE shall annually review any progress plans and determine whether any modifications are needed. If a school has not met the exit criteria for needing comprehensive support and improvement by the fourth consecutive school year, the Nebraska Department of Education shall reevaluate the progress plan to determine if (a) a significant revision of the progress plan is necessary, (b) an entirely new progress plan is developed, or (c) an alternative administrative structure is warranted.

For schools identified for *Targeted Support and Improvement* the Nebraska Department of Education shall annually review any progress plans and determine whether any modifications are needed. If a school has not met the exit criteria for needing targeted support and improvement by the fourth consecutive school year, the Nebraska Department of Education shall reevaluate the progress plan to determine if (a) a significant revision of the progress plan is necessary, (b) an entirely new progress plan is developed, or (c) the school should be identified for *Comprehensive Support and Improvement*.

The NDE will continue to explore with the Governor and Legislature statutory changes to improve consistently low-performing schools that are not making progress, even after years of intervention. Additionally, The NDE will continue conversations with the Governor related to state statutes that dictate the conditions for more rigorous interventions (Neb. Rev. Stat. 79-760.6(4)). The State Board of Education has an opportunity to interpret the statute into rule.

### **D. Periodic Resource Review**

*Describe how the SEA will periodically review, identify, and, to the extent practicable, address any identified inequities in resources to ensure sufficient support for school improvement in each LEA in the State serving a significant number or percentage of schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement consistent with the requirements in section 1111(d)(3)(A)(ii) of the ESEA and 34 C.F.R. § 200.23(a).*

An annual review will be conducted as part of the State Board of Education's Strategic Plan in order to reevaluate all aspects of support offered to LEAs through Nebraska Department of Education. Any identified inequities in resources will result in comprehensive analysis and suggestions for addressing the inequities. Suggestions for addressing the inequities may include but not be limited to:

- revision of the process for identifying schools in need of comprehensive or targeted support and improvement
- changes in the formula used to allocate funds for schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement
- modifications to the technical assistance provided for schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement
- changes to the State Board of Education's Strategic Plan
- modifications to the AQuESTT classification system
- recommendations to alter/adopt policy or guidance

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## Section 5: Advancing Equity: Supporting Effective Educators

Several state-level initiatives and activities contributed to the Advancing Equity: Supporting Effective Educators component of the Nebraska State ESSA Plan. These activities took place between 2011 and 2017 and are outlined below to situate current and future efforts.

In 2011, the state of Nebraska began a [multi-year initiative focused on teacher and principal evaluation and support](#)<sup>140</sup>, requiring ongoing and extensive stakeholder input and activity. The initiative has led to a statewide model system of evaluation and support that holds the potential to unite Nebraska PK-20 teachers, leaders, schools, districts, and other educational organizations around a centralized vision of effective practices and processes to inform continual improvement of teachers and educational leaders.

The importance of statewide movement around teacher and principal evaluation and support was again emphasized in 2013. Under Rule 84 (Regulations for the Accreditation of Education Service Units), [joint planning activities involving the ESU Coordinating Council](#)<sup>141</sup>, ESU administrators and staff, and Nebraska Department of Education staff identified Blended Education (BlendED), Data Analysis, and Teacher/Principal evaluation as areas of statewide, collaborative focus. Teacher/Principal Evaluation (and BlendED and Data Analysis) remains an agreed-upon area of statewide collaborative focus to this day.

In 2014, the [Nebraska Education Data Systems Legislative Study](#)<sup>142</sup> was developed in response to Legislative Resolution 264. This study drove extensive collection and analysis of stakeholder input regarding the adequacy of data systems maintained by the Nebraska Department of Education. The study resulted in specific recommendations for the improvement of the Nebraska Education Data System to meet the needs of Nebraska's public education system. Three of the ten recommendations resulting from this study relate directly to supporting excellent educators through systems for instructional improvement, professional development, and teacher and principal evaluation. Ongoing conversations continue to voice statewide support for a comprehensive Instructional Improvement System, part of which would focus on professional development and teacher/principal evaluation.

Also in 2014, the Nebraska Department of Education sought [stakeholder input in the development of the Accountability for a Quality Education System Today and Tomorrow \(AQuESTT\) system](#)<sup>143</sup>, which boasted a tenet devoted to Educator Effectiveness and sub-focus areas of teacher/principal evaluation, professional development, and leadership supports. As a component of the AQuESTT development process, the Nebraska State Board of Education was able to establish a firm belief statement around Educator Effectiveness, asserting that “students should be surrounded by effective educators throughout their learning experiences, such that schools and districts develop effective teachers and leaders who establish a culture of success.” In 2015, a call for state equity plans led to the establishment of the Nebraska State Equity Plan, further bolstering educator effectiveness efforts, this time through the lens of focusing strategies to ensure equitable access to effective educators.



Finally, in January of 2016, the State Board of Education and the Nebraska Department of Education initiated the [development of a Strategic Plan<sup>144</sup>](#) to guide the vision and direction of education in Nebraska for the next 10 years. The 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction represents the evolution of a philosophical and practical approach to supporting education in Nebraska. The Strategic Plan defines a direction for accountability and a system of services and supports without losing sight of the importance of ensuring compliance with state and federal policies. Equity of opportunity for learners and excellent teachers and educational leaders for every student, every day are strong themes situated within the 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction.

In addition to these specific initiatives, several formalized committees provide ongoing input to direct efforts around the attraction, preparation, development, and retention of excellent teachers and educational leaders. These groups include, but are not limited to, the Nebraska Council on Teacher Education, the Nebraska Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, the Nebraska Council of School Administrators, Nebraska Department of Education Committee of Practitioners, and the Nebraska State Accreditation Committee. Finally, Nebraska Department of Education is in the process of creating a “future ready council” to specialize in communicating, coordinating, and assisting in prioritizing the aspects of work associated with the previously mentioned Instructional Improvement System.

To this day, stakeholder engagement continues conversations around how to best support excellent educators and build equity for learners across the state of Nebraska. The narrative for this component of the ESSA plan addresses current and future activities intended to address state systems and strategies to support excellent educators and ensure equity of access to excellent teachers, principals, and other school leaders, specifically focusing on supporting historically disadvantaged student populations.

All activities outlined in this Advancing Equity: Supporting Effective Educators section align with the 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction and the Nebraska AQuESTT system for accountability and support. Table 22 depicts the 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction Outcome and Goal statements addressed within this section of the Nebraska ESSA Plan.

*Table 22 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction Outcome and Goal Statements*

### **2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction Outcome and Goal Statements**

**Leadership:** Provide leadership and high quality services in processes, regulations, interagency collaboration, data systems, fiscal responsibility and evaluation that enhance the success of educational systems in Nebraska.

*2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction Goal 1.3: By 2020, 100% of teachers, service providers, school leaders and local school board members will have access to quality*

*professional learning opportunities through a Nebraska Department of Education facilitated professional learning directory.*

**AQuESTT Domain: Success, Access, and Support**

AQuESTT Tenet: Educational Opportunities and Access – Ensure that all students have access to comprehensive instructional opportunities to be prepared for postsecondary education and career.

*2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction Goal 4.1: By 2020, Nebraska Department of Education will develop a statewide digital course and content repository.*

**AQuESTT Domain: Teaching, Learning, and Serving**

AQuESTT Tenet: College, Career, and Civic Ready – Ensure every student upon completion of secondary education is prepared for postsecondary education, career, and civic opportunities.

*2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction Goal 5.2: By 2020, all Nebraska elementary schools will provide evidence-based interventions for any students not on grade level in reading and/or math.*

*2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction Goal 5.3: By 2026, 100% of Nebraska schools will provide all students with a program for career awareness, exploration, and preparation.*

**AQuESTT Tenet: Educator Effectiveness** – Assure that students are supported by qualified/credentialed, effective teachers and leaders throughout their learning experiences.

*2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction Goal 7.1: By 2018, Nebraska Department of Education will develop and implement a statewide teacher equity plan.*

*2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction Goal 7.2: By 2020, 100% of Nebraska schools will utilize performance standards and a research-based evaluation system for all certificated staff as aligned to Rule 10.*

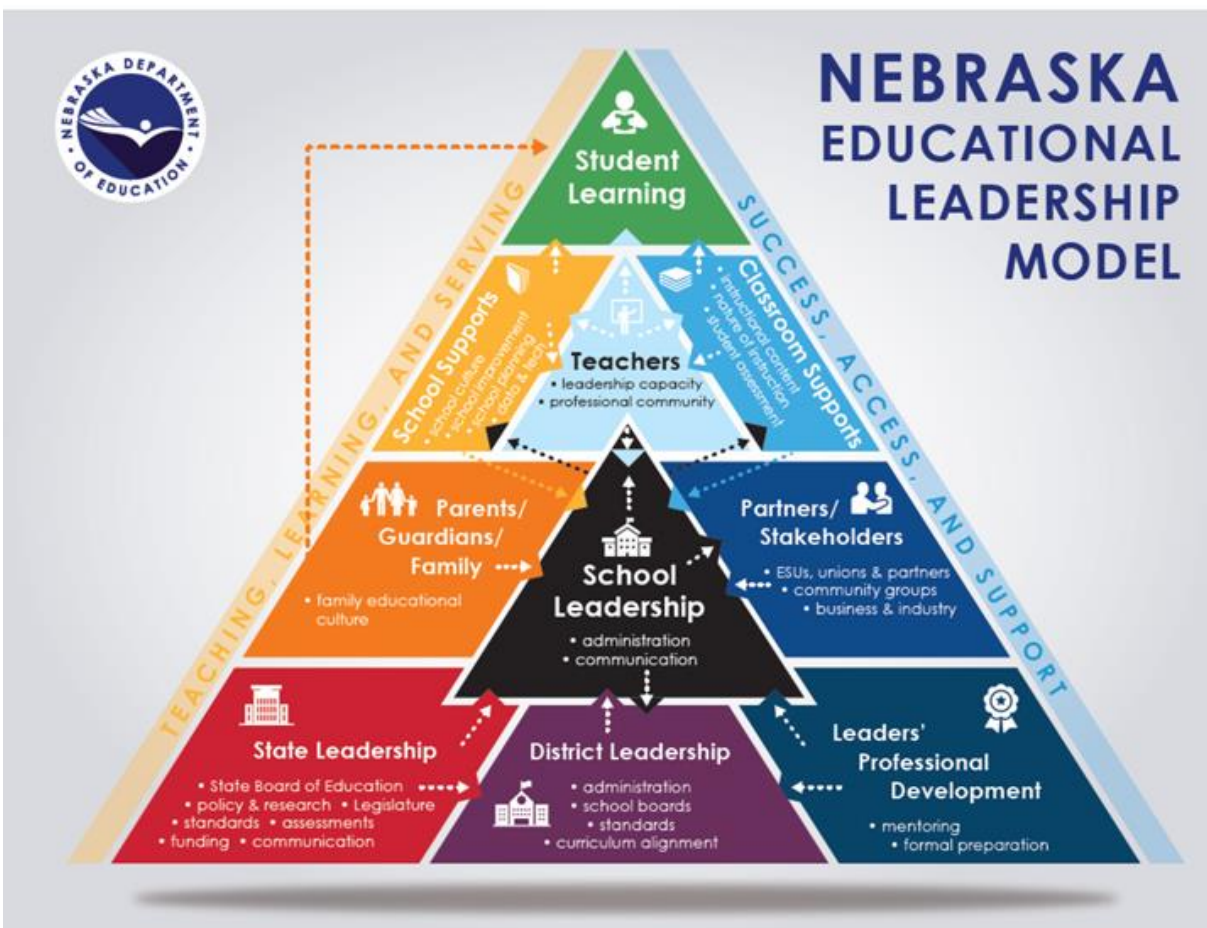
*2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction Goal 7.3: By 2022, 100% of Nebraska schools will be staffed by teachers who have or are actively pursuing a teaching certificate with the appropriate endorsement for the subject(s) and grade level(s) of the course(s) being taught.*

Use of Funds (ESEA section 2101(d)(2)(A) and (D)): *Describe how the State educational agency will use Title II, Part A funds received under Title II, Part A, for State-level activities described in section 2101(c), including how the activities are expected to improve student achievement.*

The Nebraska Leadership Model (Figure 21) is an evolving, visual depiction of the many influences exerted by and on educational leadership. While originally designed to drive

conversations around supporting educational leadership, one can use this model to consider the various paths of influence that result in improved student outcomes. This model encourages consideration of the paths of influence for teachers, principals, and other educational leaders, and it therefore applies broadly to Educator Effectiveness in relation to student outcomes.

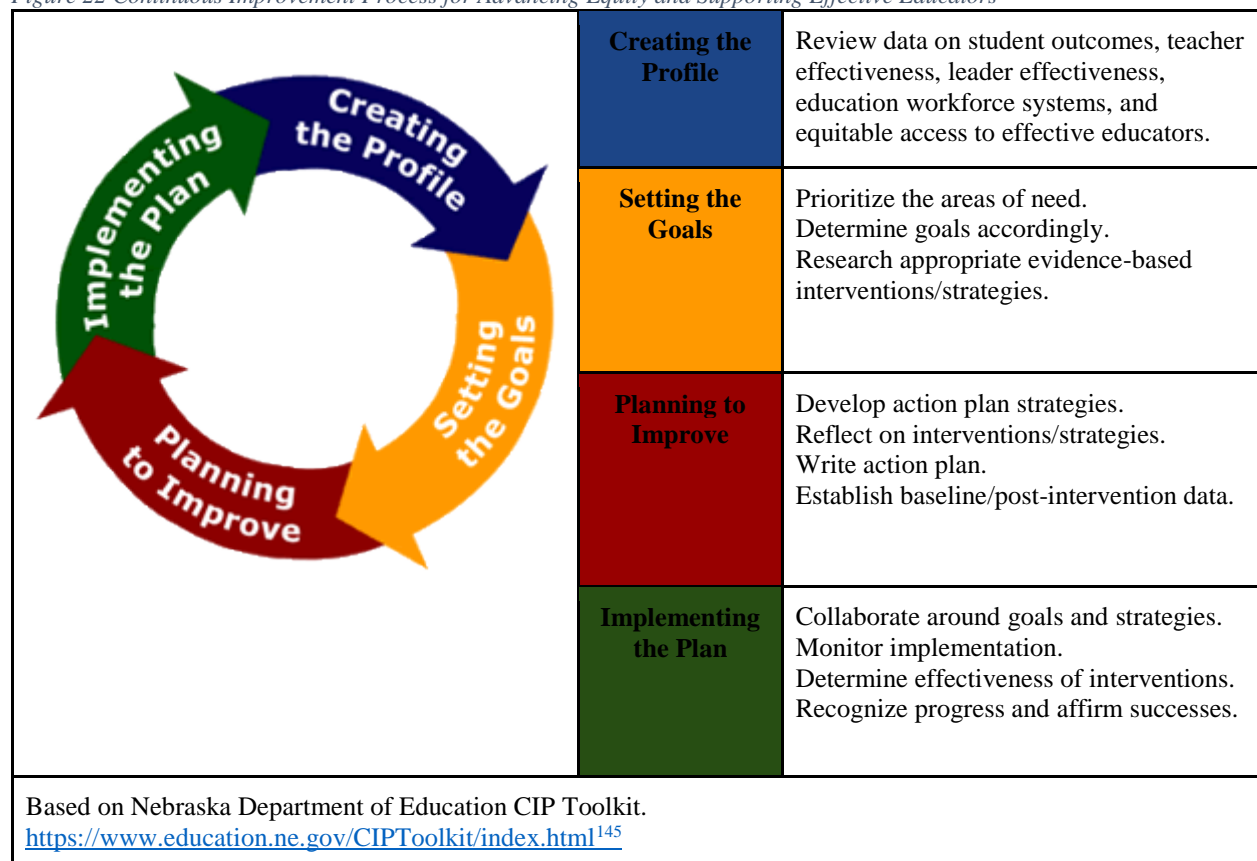
Figure 21 Nebraska Educational Leadership Model



In accordance with educational research, the Nebraska Educational Leadership Model depicts the teacher as having the most direct influence on student outcomes, and the school leader indirectly impacts student outcomes through influencing teachers, school/classroom supports, and family/community/partner engagement. It is expected that activities outlined in this section will positively influence the effectiveness of teachers and school leadership. Based on the paths of influence outlined in the Nebraska Educational Leadership Model, any activity that positively influences the effectiveness of teachers and school leadership should, by extension, positively influence student learning and outcomes. As such, activities in this section are expected to positively influence student outcomes.

It is important to note that the activities and strategies outlined below are informed by current data and stakeholder input. An annual review of progress and relevant data with stakeholder groups may illuminate a need to adjust strategies and activities. While all activities outlined in this section are intended to positively influence educator effectiveness, activities in this section may or may not be supported by Title II-A funds. Prioritization of use of Title II-A funds is reviewed regularly with stakeholder groups to clarify any needed adjustments or redirection in utilization of the SEA allocation of Title II-A funds. Given the value that Nebraska places on the Continuous Improvement Process, this approach of constantly reviewing data, monitoring progress, and adjusting as necessary is a natural fit for the state. Figure 22 depicts the Nebraska Department of Education-espoused Continuous Improvement Process as applied to activities for advancing equity and supporting effective educators.

*Figure 22 Continuous Improvement Process for Advancing Equity and Supporting Effective Educators*



### Advancing Equity

In addition to positively influencing Educator Effectiveness, the activities outlined in this section are also expected to positively influence equitable access to effective educators. The Every Student Succeeds Act provides Nebraska with the opportunity to analyze current activities, evaluate stakeholder input, and reflect upon evidence related to teacher and leader effectiveness

to ensure that its education workforce is able to deliver on the 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction, specifically for those students who are historically disadvantaged and underserved. When conducting this analysis, the following items arose as significant considerations in determining how to better support Equity and Educator Effectiveness in the state of Nebraska.

- Not all districts in Nebraska have adopted a system of evaluation that reflects best practices.
- There is inequitable access to quality supports necessary to develop and implement a system of evaluation that reflects best practices.
- There is currently little sense of urgency to adopt a system of evaluation that reflects best practices.
- Several EBA items highlight the importance of embracing performance standards, a research-based evaluation system, and an integrated system of supports for all certificated staff.
- Several goals with the 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction promote a statewide system to unify efforts around educator effectiveness.
- ESSA requires that Nebraska: 1) define, measure, and report on inexperienced teachers, principals, and other school leaders; 2) define, measure, and report on educators teaching with emergency or provisional credentials; 3) define, measure, and report on teachers who are not teaching in the field or level for which they are endorsed; and 4) identify how progress will be measured and evaluated in addressing disproportionate rates at which Title 1 students are served by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers.

Stakeholder feedback revealed several issues, including:

- concern for the future supply of classroom teachers and building leaders;
- interest in state level Title II-A funds to support systems of evaluation, feedback loops for continual improvement, and instructional leadership;
- insistence that districts not be placed under increased data collection burden;
- desire for selected activities to promote growth-oriented systems of evaluation with integrated supports; and
- requests to avoid static teacher labeling.

Nebraska will utilize an Education Workforce Index as a strategy to address these evidence- and stakeholder-indicated needs and issues. The Education Workforce Index presents Nebraska with an opportunity to build a system of integrated supports and activities that advance equity and increase educator effectiveness. Through the Index, Nebraska intends to mobilize schools, districts, and ESUs to embrace systems of evaluation with integrated supports that

- drive continual and targeted growth;
- produce evidence to inform focused professional growth activities;
- increase capacity of building administrators to serve as instructional leaders;
- establish a broader and shared understanding around comprehensive, systemic approaches to human capital management; and

- advanced equity-focused conversations and activities across the state of Nebraska.

An Education Workforce Index is a value calculated at the state, district, and building levels to provide information about the strength of the educator workforce in relation to equitable access planning. To calculate the Education Workforce Index Score for a district, one would apply the equation  $[100 - (\text{Evaluation system quality score} + \text{Percent of inexperienced teachers and leaders} + \text{Percent of out-of-field/out-of-level teachers} + \text{Percent of courses taught by unqualified teachers})/4]$ . The highest index value possible is 100, which represents an educator workforce with experienced, qualified, in-field teachers and leaders who benefit from a system of evaluation and integrated supports that reflect research-based, best practices. Table 23 depicts an example Education Workforce Index calculation for four different districts of varying poverty and minority quartiles.

Table 23 Education Workforce Index Example

	Percent Poverty Quartile	Percent Minority Quartile	Evaluation System Quality (based on EBA item w/ annual policy validation)	Percent of inexperienced teachers and leaders	Percent of out-of-field/out-of-level teachers	Percent of courses taught by unqualified teachers	Education Workforce Index Score
District X	Med-High	High	66.66	19.23	21.42	0	81.50
District Y	Med-Low	Med-Low	0	32.14	17.11	0	62.69
District Z	Low	Med-Low	100	13.79	26.71	0	89.88
District N	Med-Low	Med-High	100	15.94	3.9	0	95.04

The Education Workforce Index presents Nebraska with an opportunity to build a system of integrated supports and activities that advance equity and increase educator effectiveness. It is anticipated that strategic implementation of the Education Workforce Index will:

1. drive conversations around equity in the state of Nebraska;
2. foster a shared understanding around future Rule 10 expectations, current needs, and a clear path to ensuring continued compliance;
3. encourage dialogue centered on ensuring a comprehensive system of deliberately-selected strategies by which a school/district/ESU/state can address educator workforce concerns;

4. serve as an impetus to mobilize widespread growth with systems of evaluation and integrated supports;
5. catalyze development of system of supports for principals and other school leaders to ensure instructional leader capacity across the state;
6. ensure compliance with ESSA Law expectations;
7. present the Nebraska Department of Education with the opportunity to align multiple programs (e.g., SPED, EL, Rule 10, Continuous School Improvement);
8. encourage focused use of federal funds and selection of evidence-based programming; and
9. build a unified approach to defining, measuring, and reporting on Educator Effectiveness.

### **Improving Equitable Access via the Nebraska Education Workforce Index Process:**

Successful utilization of the Education Workforce Index requires a process that encourages reflection on evidence-based practices, dialogue, and a focus on growth. Again, the process reflects the Nebraska Continuous Improvement Process as is depicted below in Figure 23:

*Figure 23 Education Workforce Index Continuous Improvement Process*

<b>Creating the Profile</b>	Annual review of EBA responses, policy audit, and diagnostic analysis communicated via email narrative to district and/or building leadership. ESU support network copied on diagnostic communication.
<b>Setting the Goals*</b>	District/building leadership review diagnostic narrative. District/building leadership reflect on gaps and set goals. District/building leadership review possible activities/strategies to advance workforce system.
<b>Planning to Improve*</b>	District and building leadership incorporate goals and corresponding activities/strategies into a plan of action. District and building leadership establish post-intervention evidence.
<b>Implementing the Plan*</b>	Collaborate around goals and strategies. Monitor implementation. Determine effectiveness of interventions. Recognize progress and affirm successes.

Based on Nebraska Department of Education CIP Toolkit. <https://www.education.ne.gov/CIPToolkit/index.html><sup>146</sup>

*\*Ideally, this process is conducted in collaboration with ESU support network and Nebraska Department of Education contacts.*

As previously noted, not all Nebraska districts have adopted a research-based educator evaluation system, not all districts are perceived to have equitable access to the supports and resources necessary to adopt and implement a research-based educator evaluation system, and stakeholder voices are asking for a continued emphasis on growth-oriented systems of evaluation. Being responsive to these needs and voices should better enable Nebraska schools to

be prepared to meet goal 7.2 as outlined in the 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction.

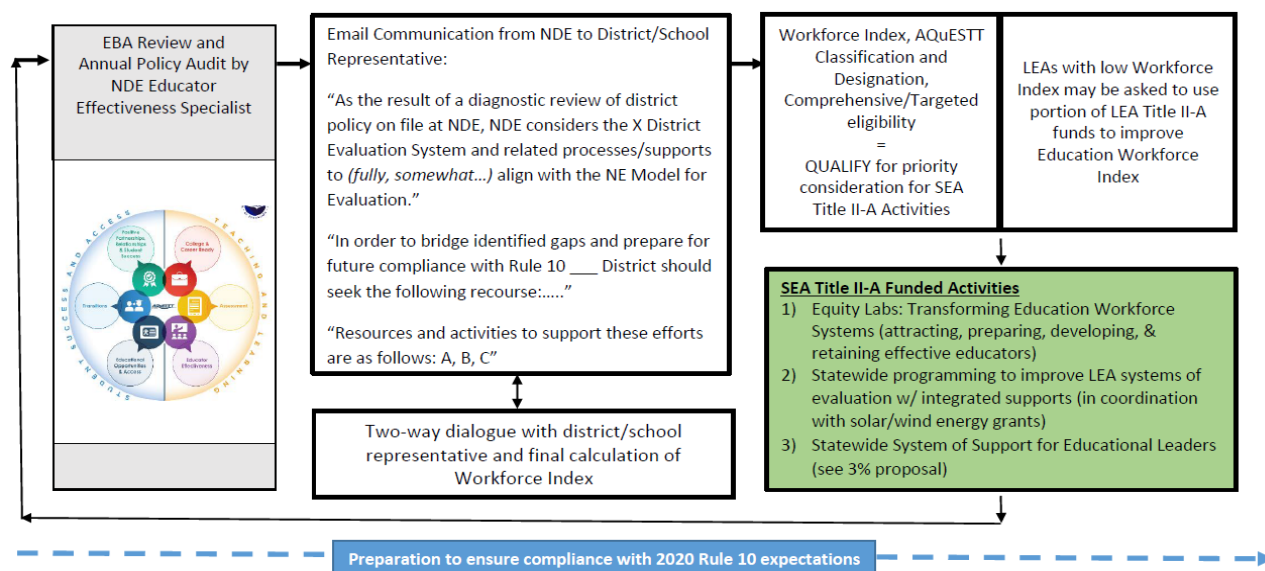
**2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction Goal 7.2:** *By 2020, 100% of Nebraska schools will utilize performance standards and a research-based evaluation system for all certificated staff as aligned to Rule 10.*

The Education Workforce Index process seeks to address identified needs and stakeholder concerns while simultaneously building statewide urgency and movement around the “utilization of performance standards and a research-based evaluation system for all certificated staff as aligned to Rule 10.” The process begins with an annual policy audit that provides district/building administration with an official Nebraska Department of Education diagnostic analysis (driven by the EBA rubric) of the degree to which the district/building system of evaluation (and integrated supports) aligns with research-based, best practices. The diagnostic analysis outlines necessary steps/processes to increase alignment and corresponding supports available across the state. When district/buildings submit EBA responses in the spring, the diagnostic analysis serves as a validation of the district response to the Educator Effectiveness items, and the adjusted EBA score is entered into an annual “Education Workforce Index.”

A high index reflects a strong education workforce system. Comprehensive and Targeted Schools, Needs Improvement Schools, and schools with low Education Workforce Index scores receive priority consideration for participation in SEA Title II-A activities, and these activities are designed to advance equity, support increased Effectiveness of Educators, and improve Education Workforce Systems. LEAs with low index scores may be asked to use a portion of their LEA Title II-A funds to improve their Education Workforce Systems and may elect to do so via participation in state-sponsored activities. In addition, “Local Equitable Access Planning/Equity Labs” that are grounded in the Education Workforce Index may be offered during state-sponsored activities, and the state may elect to design resources to support “Local Equitable Access Planning/Equity Lab” activities. Figure 24 depicts, in greater detail, a possible approach to utilizing the Index to enact the results outlined above.



Figure 24 Nebraska Education Workforce Index Process



Ensuring effective, impactful, and widespread use of the Education Workforce Index will require several associated considerations. Genuine pursuit of this system will require that the Education Workforce Index be approached as a dynamic tool that may see ongoing adjustments per new data accessible in the state and increased understandings around educator effectiveness. It is also critical that the process associated with the Index be presented as a dynamic process that may see ongoing adjustments to reflect the ever-evolving needs across the state. Cross-team efforts should explore deliberate alignment of definitions and measurement approaches for indicators included in the index (for example, the definition of “qualified” should be the same for IDEA, Rule 10, and the Educator Workforce Index). Because the value of the Education Workforce Index process relies heavily on detailed district evaluation policy that is on file at Nebraska Department of Education, Rule 10 may be revisited with consideration to raise the level of expectations around systems of evaluation and integrated supports. Finally, while equity labs are highlighted as a venue by which to advance understanding around educator workforce systems in the state of Nebraska, Equity Labs should be explored as a viable, but by no means singular, option for transforming education workforce systems.

### Transforming Education Workforce Systems: Attracting, Preparing, Developing, and Retaining Effective Educators

The Education Workforce Index will generate reflection and dialogue across the state of Nebraska, though efforts toward transforming the education workforce in Nebraska must understandably transcend reflection and dialogue about the Education Workforce Index tool. The Education Workforce Index spurs a shared, systems-level dialogue with districts and schools and encourages pursuit of research-based, growth oriented systems of educator evaluation with integrated supports. Further dialogue, reflection, and action planning through a broad and

comprehensive framework will allow for more accurate identification of effective practices and strategies in support of Effective Education Workforce Systems.

Teachers and leaders are the most important school-based factors in ensuring student success. As such, states have an important responsibility in designing and implementing education workforce initiatives in a manner that recognizes the multifaceted and interconnected nature of education workforce systems. Such efforts consider the need to: 1) attract teachers and leaders to the profession, 2) prepare them to be learner- and school-ready on day one; 3) provide continuing development throughout their careers; and 4) retain those educators who are most effective. This comprehensive framework for transforming Education Workforce Systems will allow for broader conversations rooted originally in the Education Workforce Index.

The activities, strategies, and supports outlined below contribute to the broader vision of an Effective Education Workforce System, thereby contributing to increased educator effectiveness and equity of access to effective educators. All activities outlined throughout the Advancing Equity: Supporting Effective Educators section contribute to a larger Education Workforce System vision and may be supported by Title II-A funds.

***Instructions:** Consistent with sections 2101 and 2102 of the ESEA, if an SEA intends to use funds under one or more of the included programs for any of the following purposes, provide a description with the necessary information.*

**A. Certification and Licensure Systems.** *Does the SEA intend to use Title II-A funds or funds from other included programs for certifying and licensing teachers and principals or other school leaders?*

**System of Certification and Licensing** (ESEA section 2101(d)(2)(B)): *Describe the State's system of certification and licensing of teachers, principals, or other school leaders.*

Throughout the Advancing Equity: Supporting Effective Educators section, it is important to maintain a focus on the multifaceted and interconnected nature of educational workforce systems. As previously mentioned, education workforce efforts consider the need to: 1) attract teachers and leaders to the profession, 2) prepare them to be learner- and school-ready on day one; 3) provide continuing development throughout their careers; and 4) retain those educators who are most effective. Certification and Licensure Systems, Educator Preparation Programs, and Educator Development Systems all fall squarely within this comprehensive vision for education workforce efforts, and all are addressed in the section that follows.

### **Nebraska Certification and Licensure System**

Nebraska requires completion of an approved teacher education preparation program to receive an Initial, Standard, or Professional level teaching certificate. Effective September 1, 2014, the Nebraska Department of Education requires passing scores on the Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators (Reading, Writing and Mathematics) for admission into a Nebraska teacher education preparation program and for other applicants requesting a Nebraska Initial, Standard,

or Professional certificate. Effective September 1, 2015, passing one or more Praxis Subject Assessments will be required for those seeking an initial endorsement on a Nebraska certificate. Effective September 1, 2015, individuals must also provide evidence they have taken the appropriate Praxis Subject Assessment Content Test and passed at the Nebraska-required score before a new endorsement can be placed on a Nebraska Teaching Certificate. In addition to passing both the Praxis Core and Subject Assessments, the state of Nebraska also statutorily requires all educator preparation programs to include a clinical practicum with integrated observations by program faculty. These pre-service, classroom-based observations provide opportunities for candidates to demonstrate the knowledge and skills acquired during the coursework and clinical experiences of their preparation programs.

The Nebraska Department of Education designates the Teacher Certification Division of Adult Program Services as the responsible entity for providing oversight and management of the certification process for teachers, principals, and other school leaders.

The Department may issue Initial, Standard, and Professional teaching certificates. In addition, the Department may issue Alternate Program, Postsecondary, Provisional, Career Education, State Substitute, Local Substitute, and Transitional teaching permits. Each applicant for any such teaching certificate or permit may be required to complete activities and submit documentation as outlined in the Nebraska [\*Teacher Certification Manual\*](#)<sup>147</sup>. The case is similar for administrative endorsements. The Department may issue Standard or Professional Administrative certificates and a Provisional Administrative permit. Each applicant for any such Administrative certificate or permit may be required to complete activities and submit documentation as outlined in the Nebraska [\*Teacher Certification Manual\*](#)<sup>148</sup>.

As is the case for many other states, Nebraska is facing a teacher shortage that is becoming more pronounced each year. An annual teacher vacancy survey is conducted to maintain an accurate understanding of teacher supply in Nebraska. The [\*2016-2017 Teacher Vacancy Survey\*](#)<sup>149</sup> was conducted in the fall of 2016 by the Nebraska Department of Education, and results of these annual reports are proposed to the US Department of Education as shortage areas for federal loan forgiveness.

Nationwide, a common approach to mitigating these teacher shortage concerns is the establishment of alternate paths to certification. In Nebraska, existing alternate paths fulfill the requirements outlined for standard teacher preparation programming. For example, through federal grant funding, the Nebraska Department of Education partnered with the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK) to implement the [\*Transitional Certification Program\*](#)<sup>150</sup> (TCP). Through this program, mid-career professionals and recent college graduates with baccalaureate degrees who wish to become Nebraska teachers may qualify for the Nebraska Transitional Teaching Certificate. In addition to the TCP program at UNK, similar alternative routes to certification are available at most Nebraska institutions with approved educator preparation programs. [\*Rule 21\*](#)<sup>151</sup>, *Issuance of Certificates and Permits to Teach, Provide Special Services*

*and Administer in Nebraska Schools*, provides specific requirements for the transitional certificate, including:

- the applicant must have a baccalaureate degree that includes at least 75% of the course requirements for preparation in a secondary field or subject endorsement area.
- a written request for the issuance of the certificate from the superintendent or governing body of the school system in which the applicant intends to teach, accompanied by documentation that the school system has not found a fully qualified teacher for the position.
- an assessment of transcripts completed by a certification officer in a standard institution of higher education and a plan developed for completion of an approved initial teacher certification program.
- a written plan from the school system for mentoring and supervision of the applicant.
- completion of a pre-teaching seminar that includes information and skill development in the areas of diversity, classroom management, curriculum planning, and instructional strategies prior to assuming responsibility for the classroom.
- a written agreement with a Nebraska teacher education program to complete at least one supervisory visit each semester to the school system of the applicant.

In Nebraska, the Career Education Teaching Permit represents another approach to mitigating teacher shortage concerns, and the existence of this permit reflects the ESSA-indicated emphasis on Career and Technical Education. The permit is available for individuals hired to teach by a Nebraska school district in a career education where no teaching education program exists, where instructional content of the course exceeds teacher preparation coursework, or for which a school system submits documentation that it has not found a qualified teacher for a specific course in the career education field. Nebraska recognizes that educators with Career Education Teaching Permits may need additional support to ensure effective instruction. As such, Career Education specialists with the Nebraska Department of Education have established a network of supports to encourage instructional success for those new to the field or on a Career Education Teaching Permit. The Nebraska Career Education Beginning Teacher Institute, Nebraska Career Education Leadership Academy, Nebraska Career Education Jump Start, and Career Readiness and Exploration Curriculum Teacher Training collectively contribute to increased effectiveness for Nebraska Career Education teachers.

**B. Educator Preparation Program Strategies.** *Does the SEA intend to use Title II-A funds or funds from other included programs to support the State's strategies to improve educator preparation programs consistent with section 2101(d)(2)(M) of the ESEA, particularly for educators of low-income and minority students?*

Teacher Preparation (ESEA section 2101(d)(2)(M)): *Describe the actions the State may take to improve preparation programs and strengthen support for teachers, principals, or other school leaders based on the needs of the State, as identified by the SEA.*

Supporting the attraction, preparation, development, and retention of excellent educators is a priority for the state of Nebraska, and this is reflected throughout efforts at the Nebraska Department of Education. The 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction and Nebraska's accountability system, AQuESTT, both address the critical importance of a comprehensive approach to ensuring an effective educator workforce. As such, it is no surprise that Nebraska embraces the critical role played by educator preparation programming in ensuring a quality education workforce.

There are 16 approved educator preparation programs in Nebraska. In addition to the requirement that all Nebraska institutions successfully complete the state program approval process, most institutions have also attained national accreditation by the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) or by the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC). National accreditation processes transitioned to the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) in 2016.

[Title 92, Nebraska Administrative Code, Chapter 20 \(92 NAC 20; Rule 20\)<sup>152</sup>](#), contains regulations for teacher education program approval. In addition to annual reporting requirements, the State Program Approval requires a full review of the educator preparation program (EPP), including the specific areas of endorsement or advanced preparation. The full review is conducted on a cyclical basis (typically every seven years) and is designed to provide a comprehensive assessment of the program.

The full review includes an off-site Folio Review process that engages professional educators in the review of folio materials prepared by the institution. The folios include data and other information regarding the institution's compliance with [Rule 24<sup>153</sup>](#) (endorsements) and [Rule 20<sup>154</sup>](#) (overall preparation program) requirements; assessment results regarding candidate quality and performance in areas such as candidate's knowledge, skills, dispositions, and effect on PK-12 learning, and program improvement initiatives informed by candidate performance data. Once the off-site Folio Review is completed, an on-site visit is conducted, generally in conjunction with the national accreditation visit.

After all evidence is examined, the Nebraska Council on Teacher Education (NCTE) makes a formal recommendation to the Commissioner of Education and the Nebraska State Board of Education regarding state approval of the institution's educator preparation program. The State Board makes the final determination regarding state approval.

Nebraska deliberately engages in efforts to encourage continuous and informed improvement to educator preparation programs. For example, in 2012, a collaborative effort led to the development of a [model code of educator ethics to be interwoven into higher education programs<sup>155</sup>](#). In 2016, Nebraska initiated an annual, statewide first year teacher survey. The survey is administered to building principals who complete the survey regarding their novice teachers who graduated from Nebraska Teacher Preparation programs. Institution-specific

information is shared with corresponding institutions to assist in continuous and informed programmatic improvement.

It is recognized that the work of educators is ever-evolving as research influences understanding of how to best serve and support learners, teachers, and leaders. Because the hope of schools is to receive new educators who are learner- and school-ready on day one, it follows that improved understandings around the responsibilities and needs of practitioners may influence the approaches and content utilized in educator preparation programming. If this is the case, Title II-A funds may be used to support these efforts. The Nebraska Department of Education engages in regular meetings and conversations with the Nebraska Council on Teacher Education, the Nebraska Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, and the Committee of Practitioners. These three groups serve in an advisory capacity, in conjunction with annual stakeholder conversations, to identify and prioritize efforts that will continue to improve educator preparation programs and, by extension, educator effectiveness across the state of Nebraska. State level Title II-A funds are devoted to supporting collaborative initiatives with or identified by these groups.

### **Teach in Nebraska (TIN) Website Recruitment Initiative**

The Teach in Nebraska website ([www.nebraskaeducationjobs.ne.gov](http://www.nebraskaeducationjobs.ne.gov))<sup>156</sup> was developed as a method to assist school systems in Nebraska with recruitment of educational personnel. Nebraska joined a web consortium of states using similar boards and developed its application and marketing at low cost via assistance from its Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education (TAESE) affiliation at Utah State University. Since that time, the website has been redesigned, added new functions, a new operating system, and a new format to meet internal Department of Education specifications. The website is branded as an official Nebraska Department of Education information technology site and is linked as such.

The TIN website continues to experience solid growth patterns. The website projects it will host over 500,000 visitors this year on over 3,000,000 web based hits. These numbers demonstrate the massive growth and increasing popularity of the TIN website.

The TIN website provides assistance to pre-service teachers as they identify available positions that might best fit their strengths for the teaching profession. The website also aids teacher preparation programs seeking to offer counsel to their pre-service teachers in securing a permanent position.

The TIN website represents a tremendous cost saving tool and service for districts provided by the Nebraska Department of Education. The TIN is a free service open to all approved educational agencies within Nebraska. Comparable services offered by newspapers and national employment board services can easily cost districts hundreds to thousands of dollars for the same service. For example, a single posting in a large metropolitan newspaper can run \$300 to \$500 depending on content while a subscription to a national employment board can cost upwards of \$4,000 per year. By collecting employment vacancies on a single site, the TIN provides a

valuable resource to both employers and job seekers. The TIN website efforts may be supported through Title II-A state level funding.

### **Attracting Excellence to Teaching and Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Initiatives**

In April 2009, the Nebraska Legislature approved LB547, which revised the [Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program](#)<sup>157</sup> (AETP) created in 2006 to become the Excellence in Teaching Act. This revision granted the Nebraska Department of Education and the State Board of Education the authority to adopt and promulgate rules and regulations to carry out the Act, which includes the Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program and the Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program (§79-8,132-79-8,140 R.R.S.). [Rule 25](#)<sup>158</sup>, *Regulations Governing the Excellence in Teaching Act* (Title 92, NAC, Chapter 25), was adopted by the State Board of Education in March 2010 and approved by Nebraska's governor on September 14, 2010.

The Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program provides forgivable loans to eligible students who are enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate teacher education program at an eligible Nebraska institution working towards his/her initial certificate to teach in Nebraska. Eligible students may apply, on an annual basis, for an AETP loan in an amount of \$3,000 and can apply for, and receive, AETP loans annually for up to five consecutive years. In return for receiving an AETP loan, the student agrees to complete the teacher education program that s/he is currently enrolled in and commits to becoming certified teaching full-time in an accredited or approved public or private school in Nebraska. If the student meets the loan forgiveness obligations, loans will be forgiven, beginning after the first two years of full-time teaching, in an amount up to \$3,000 for each year of teaching or in an amount up to \$6,000 for each year of teaching if the student teaches in a school district that has been classified as very sparse or in a school building in which at least 40% of the students qualify for the poverty factor. AETP activities may be supported by Title II-A state level funding.

The Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program (EETP) provides forgivable loans to Nebraska teachers enrolled in an eligible graduate program. The EETP is part of the Excellence in Teaching Act passed by the Nebraska Legislature and signed into law on April 22, 2009. EETP provides a limited number of forgivable loans to Nebraska teachers enrolled in an eligible graduate program.

The Excellence in Teaching Act conducts a [program evaluation](#)<sup>159</sup> every even numbered year. The 2016 progress report reveals that, since program implementation in 2006, 646 AETP loan recipients (63% of all AETP loan recipients) have received their initial certification with an endorsement in a subject area identified as a shortage area in Nebraska. The report also indicated that Nebraska Department of Education has awarded 2,763 EETP loans to Nebraska teachers since the program's inception in 2009. Of those, 996 loans (36%) are pending as the recipients continue to work towards completion of the graduate program in which they are currently enrolled, and 491 loans (18%) have been forgiven as recipients have fulfilled the teaching obligation of the program. To date, 372 EETP loan recipients (34%) have completed a graduate program resulting in an advanced degree with an emphasis in a subject area that has been



designated as a shortage area, allowing the recipient to become endorsed to teach in the applicable subject area. Title II-A state level funds may be used to support EETP activities.

### **C. Educator Growth and Development Systems.**

*Does the SEA intend to use Title II-A funds or funds from other included programs to support the State's systems of professional growth and improvement for educators that addresses: 1) induction; 2) development, consistent with the definition of professional development in section 8002(42) of the ESEA; 3) compensation; and 4) advancement for teachers, principals, and other school leaders. This may also include how the SEA will work with LEAs in the State to develop or implement systems of professional growth and improvement, consistent with section 2102(b)(2)(B) of the ESEA; or State or local educator evaluation and support systems consistent with section 2101(c)(4)(B)(ii) of the ESEA?*

☒ Yes. If yes, provide a description of the educator growth and development systems below.

#### **Nebraska's system of educator growth and development**

Nebraska has traditionally supported local control of education, and this support is no different when addressing Educator Effectiveness and systems of educator growth and development. There are no state requirements for policies or practices in the recruitment, hiring, and induction of new teachers and minimal requirements for professional learning or training of teachers and principals. At the state level, there is no mandated statewide performance evaluation system for teachers or principals.

While there is no mandated statewide system of evaluation and integrated supports for teachers or principals, Nebraska has made notable progress in this arena. In November of 2011, the State Board of Education adopted the Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Framework<sup>160</sup>. Information on this Framework can be found beginning on p.110 of this document. In 2016, with the adoption of the 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction, the Nebraska State Board of Education clearly outlines the goal that by 2020, 100% of Nebraska schools will utilize performance standards and a research-based evaluation system for all certificated staff as aligned to Rule 10.

This goal, while ambitious, is attainable. However, the current capacity for implementing this system varies widely across the state. Presently, while many LEAs have embraced the utilization of a comprehensive system of evaluation to inform continual growth efforts, others have yet to move beyond more traditional evaluation procedures that meet minimum expectations as outlined in state accreditation rules, and there is a high degree of district variance in approaches to evaluating and supporting teachers and principals. Ensuring successful implementation within all districts in Nebraska will require careful scaffolding of a process to mobilize forward movement while also ensuring necessary system of supports.

The equity-related federal expectations for measuring “ineffective” reporting on proportional distribution and identifying strategies by which to eliminate gaps has presented Nebraska with a



timely opportunity to re-mobilize districts to embrace growth-oriented systems of evaluation. ESSA enables the state to reconsider the current status of, needs around, and supports for existing systems of evaluation and integrated professional growth, specifically as they relate to advancing equity and increasing educator effectiveness. The Education Workforce Index plays a very central role to these efforts.

As has been addressed, Nebraska embraces the critical importance of addressing Educator Workforce quality through a systems-level lens that recognizes the interconnected nature and critical roles of attracting, preparing, developing, and retaining effective educators. Because a systems-level approach is being espoused, Nebraska is developing and intends to strategically utilize an Educator Workforce Index to message and support systems-level thinking and dialogue across the state. Nebraska will utilize an Education Workforce Index to mobilize schools, districts, and ESUs to embrace systems of evaluation and support that drive continual and focused growth, produce evidence to inform focused professional growth activities, build capacity of building administrators to serve as instructional leaders, establish a broader and shared understanding around comprehensive, systemic approaches to human capital management, and advance equity-focused conversations and activities across the state of Nebraska.

The Nebraska Education Workforce Index will consider the ESSA-required indicators “inexperienced”, “out-of-field”, and “unqualified.” The Index will also include an “ineffective” measure that will message to districts and buildings the degree to which LEA policy-indicated systems of evaluation and integrated supports reflect best practices and align with the Nebraska Model for Evaluation. The Educator Workforce Index will involve a value calculated at the state, district, and building levels to provide information about the strength of the educator workforce in relation to equitable access planning. The highest index value possible is 100, which represents an educator workforce with experienced, qualified, in-field teachers and leaders who are provided with a system of evaluation and integrated supports that reflect research-based, best practices.

With the reality of the current menagerie of systems of evaluation and integrated supports in place across the state, it will be necessary to establish a comprehensive and equitably accessible system of supports and services that will ensure that all schools and districts have access to the resources, materials, and trainings necessary to be able to develop, implement, and maintain research-based systems of evaluation and integrated supports for all certificated staff. Currently, Solar and Wind Energy funds support grants for schools to engage in activities to support systems of evaluation, and a 1.0 FTE position at the Nebraska Department of Education has been funded to support schools and districts in their efforts, but a much more concerted and focused movement will be necessary to attain the goal established by the Nebraska State Board of Education. It is anticipated that Title II-A funds will be used to support these efforts.

## **Support for Educational Leadership**

While discussions of professional growth systems have traditionally focused on the classroom teacher, it is important to recognize that research has provided a wealth of evidence in favor of deliberately establishing focused systems of support designed for PK-12 principals.

Leithwood<sup>161</sup>, et al. (2004), in a comprehensive review of literature concluded that principals are second only to teachers as the most significant school-level factor influencing student achievement, and the impact of effective principals is exhibited to a higher degree in schools with greater need. Branch, Hanushek, and Rivkin<sup>162</sup> found that “highly effective principals raise the achievement of a typical student by between two and seven months of learning in a single year; ineffective principals lower achievement by the same amount.” Given the research-indicated significance of principals for student learning, the principal is arguably a key lever for realizing Nebraska Department of Education’s overarching strategic priorities: ensure that all Nebraskans, regardless of background or circumstances, have equitable access to opportunities for success increase the number of Nebraskans who are ready for success in postsecondary education, career, and civic life.

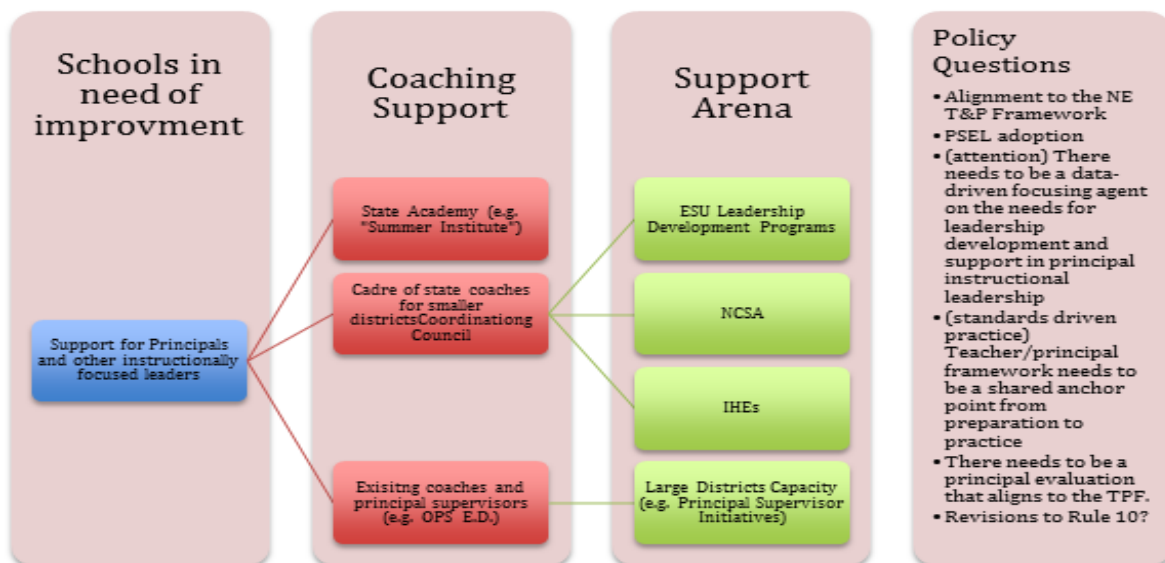
Traditional principal supports may not meet the unique needs of today’s principals. Christy Guilfoyle<sup>163</sup>, in an ASCD policy brief, urges that any system of support ensure careful alignment with the complex and changing responsibilities of the principal. The role of the principal has experienced a dramatic yet relatively recent shift in responsibility and expectations, and building a system of evaluation and support aligned with a more traditional conceptualization of principal would reflect misappropriation of resources. Today’s principal must be an instructional leader, visionary, community organizer, data analyst, change agent, team builder, and cultivator of leadership in others. Modern-day principals must be prepared to engage in the processes of hiring and dismissal of teachers, serve as a coach for teachers for continual improvement, cultivate a safe and secure learning environment, and nurture a collaborative culture of shared accountability. Logically, the next question might be “how does Nebraska better support today’s principals in pursuing growth?”

Statewide, there has been increased interest in efficient and effective utilization of the Nebraska Principal Effective Practices to drive growth and evaluation. The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), formerly known as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards, were released in 2015. The updated standards include greater attention to promoting student well-being rather than academic rigor alone. The updated standards also factor in principals’ abilities to provide instructional leadership. The Nebraska Principal Effective Practices have been enhanced to align with the PSEL standards, and training and support efforts are ongoing across the state. It is anticipated that these efforts will expand in capacity in partnership with the Nebraska Council for School Administrators (NCSA), which is currently sponsoring the development of standards for superintendents and other educational leadership positions. Given this convergence of interest and resources around supporting principals, now may be an opportune moment to pursue a more extensive system to support principals in the state of Nebraska.

The Nebraska Department of Education intends to capitalize on the optional 3 percent set-aside of Title II funds to better support principals and other school leaders. Stakeholder input points to interest in the establishment of supports for principals and other school leaders, and initial conversations by the Nebraska ESSA Educational Leadership Learning Community have signaled the genesis of a broader and more concerted movement focused on supporting principals and other school leaders in the state of Nebraska. The Nebraska ESSA Educational Leadership Learning Council (ELLC), a recently organized group focused on supporting educational leaders, collaboratively identified critical educational leadership levers associated with ensuring equity of opportunity and access for learners who are most in need of support. In developing a vision, the group confirmed a common sentiment expressed by Nebraska stakeholders: “If we intend to provide equitable learning for our increasingly diverse population, our principals are the key to increasing the capacity of our teachers. School leaders are our highest impact lever for escalating equitable student learning.”

The ELLC group identified a need for the State to embrace an instructionally-focused priority for all principals, and the group stressed the importance of developing a formal plan for engagement to build a shared understanding and collective efforts in support of educational leadership. To establish a framework within which to engage in dialogue around effective systems of support, the ELLC group collaboratively produced a meta-framework (Figure 25) to direct support for principals in high-needs schools. The meta-framework is depicted below in its current form, though it is anticipated that the activities, supports, and policy considerations may evolve significantly based on evidence indicated needs and stakeholder input.

Figure 25 ELLC Meta-Framework to Direct Support for Principals in High-Needs Schools



As allowed by statute, Nebraska will reserve an additional three percent of Title II-A funds to provide high quality supports for principals and other school leaders. This may manifest as

implementation of a Nebraska Professional Learning Academy and related system of supports. Consistent with research on the impact of highly effective school leaders on student performance, and in accordance with the Nebraska vision for Education Workforce Systems, the system of principal supports will aim to increase the capacity of school leaders to attract, recruit, develop, and retain effective educators. Specifically, it is anticipated that the system of supports may:

- Concentrate on improving the capacity of school leaders, primarily those leading schools identified for Comprehensive or Targeted Supports, those identified as Needs Improvement by the state accountability system, and those with a low Education Workforce Index.
- Employ a curriculum informed by input from stakeholders and aligned with the Nebraska Framework of Effective Practices for Principals.
- Develop outcome-oriented performance metrics that will be utilized to measure the impact of professional learning in areas such as standards-based, data-driven, and differentiated instruction, equitable access to high quality instruction, cultural competence, and the effective leveraging of resources to address equity and excellence.
- Minimize duplication of effort by collaborating with other professional learning providers and professional organizations in the development and implementation stages of the professional learning.
- Initial discussions regarding the development of a system of support for Nebraska's educational leaders have highlighted a possible need to:
- Assemble a broadly representative PK-20 commission focused on ensuring that every public school has an effective leader with the capacity to impact teaching and learning.
- Conduct exploratory research on current needs and offerings for educational leadership across the state.
- Review, enhance, and refine state leadership effective practice frameworks and outline a progression of learning for all principals and other administrative positions.
- Based on conversations and data analysis, collaboratively design a principal support framework founded upon the Nebraska Principal Performance Framework and Nebraska Model System of Evaluation.
- Pilot support framework with an emphasis on including schools most in need of support.
- Scale framework to ensure equitable and enduring access and use of the system.
- Establish ongoing processes by which to continually monitor and improve the system.

As indicated in the above list, efforts must begin by expanding an inclusive conversation about statewide expectations for principals and other educational leaders, and an exploratory research study may be necessary to accurately understand current perceptions, needs, and existing supports as they relate to principals and other school leaders in the state. Finally, it will be critical that these efforts build upon existing work associated with the Nebraska Model System of Evaluation. As such, activities will be grounded in the Nebraska Principal Performance Framework as aligned with nationally recognized performance standards for principals and other school leaders.

Once dialogue establishes a clear and shared understanding regarding what Nebraska expects for principals and principal supervisors, Nebraska may consider revisiting expectations for securing administrative endorsements through leadership preparation programs in the state. Title II-A funds will be used to support the efforts outlined in this Support for Educational Leadership section.

### **Support for Teachers and Teacher Leaders**

The Nebraska Department of Education is supporting multiple efforts to further develop and refine the skills of practicing teachers across the state. Recent examples include beginning teacher institutes for those with emergency credentials, work on an English Language Arts standards instructional tool, and establishment of teacher ambassadors who focus on integration of STEM activities across content areas.

These activities are each of value and deserving of funding. Each contributes to the ongoing development of teachers across the state. They reflect independent activities that may or may not operate in coordination with other, parallel efforts or within larger, ongoing efforts. To scale any of these or other activities, the Nebraska Department of Education would need to formalize a system that strategically ensures equitable access to opportunities statewide.

The Nebraska Department of Education recognizes that state level capacity faces manpower limitations, and ensuring statewide scale for most initiatives requires a system that capitalizes on individuals well beyond the walls of the State Office Building. The Educational Service Units serve in this capacity, and yet there is even greater potential for scale by recognizing the leadership potential of practicing teachers. There has been past interest in and discussion of establishing a formal and strategic, statewide Teacher Leadership effort, but a large-scale system that strategically identifies, develops, and deploys Teacher Leaders in focused support of state efforts has yet to be devised. A significant obstacle impeding these efforts has been insufficient funding, and this is no different for other efforts outlined in this section. Despite the lack of funds, it is difficult to ignore the potential for significant and scalable impact of a focused and strategic system for teacher leadership (and educational leadership). As with the educational leadership initiatives, these efforts must begin with the establishment of a statewide dialogue with stakeholders to clarify and establish a shared understanding around the possible role for Teacher Leadership forces. It is anticipated that state level Title II-A funds may be used to support initial dialogue related to these efforts and, if identified as a priority, to advance strategic Teacher Leadership Support activities.

**The Shared Systems and Supports Project** is a Nebraska Department of Education initiative that guides the development of Nebraska's Instructional Improvement System. According to the [Reform Support Network](#)<sup>164</sup> (2014), "An [Instructional Improvement System] is a system, based in technology, which provides data to enable teachers, principals and other administrators to manage continuous instructional improvement. An Instructional Improvement System offers a common technology platform with one user interface across multiple systems and navigational

paths to deliver the right information at the right time to the right people for the improvement of instruction.”

The Nebraska Shared Systems and Supports project creates a fundamental shift toward efficiency in access to digital learning resources and tools. The approach reduces local and state burdens, increases equitable access to digital education, and improves the privacy and security of student information across Nebraska. A core component of the Nebraska Instructional Improvement System is a professional development system that provides educators with a system to find, access and manage professional learning and development opportunities - online and in-person. Other core components include a standards database, learning object repository, course-building tool, learning management system, and assessment object repository. These components are limited neither to specific subject content nor to specific districts/schools. This System of Supports Project opens the door to greater equity of access to resources and supports for all educators in the state of Nebraska. This initiative is in its infancy, but the need for such a system has been long-expressed. It plays a critical role in Nebraska’s efforts to develop effective teachers and educational leaders and ensure equitable access for learners who are most in need of support. State level Title II-A funds may be used to support these efforts.

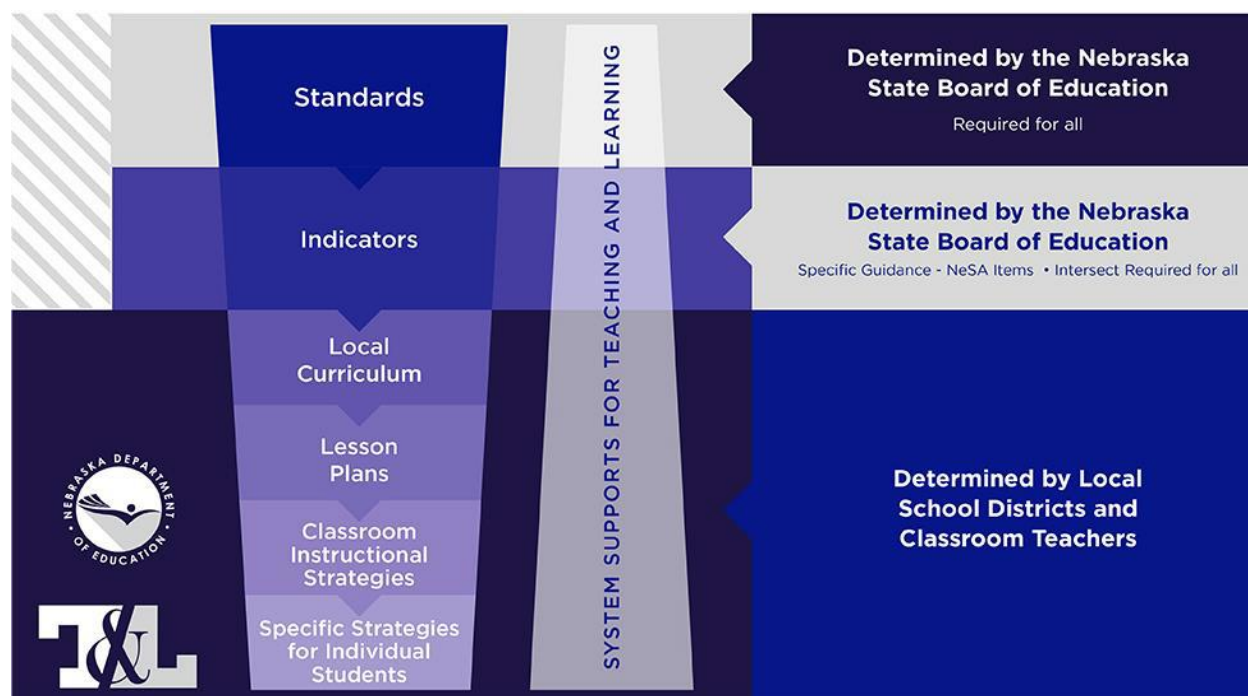
### **Challenging State Academic Standards**

Standards help guide the planning, implementation, and assessment of student learning. The use of standards to streamline instruction ensures that teaching practices deliberately focus on agreed-upon learning targets. Expectations for student learning are mapped out with each prescribed standard. Standards play a pivotal role in the design and implementation of learning experiences. As such, support for educators to understand and applying standards to the instructional design process contributes to educator effectiveness.

Nebraska has content area standards in a wide variety of subjects. While these standards have unique characteristics that capture content and skills particular to each subject area, the standards have a consistent structure that allows educators, parents, and students to easily make sense of their organization. This is particularly advantageous at the elementary level, as this consistent organizing structure allows teachers to move seamlessly across content area standards when creating lessons and units that address more than one content area.

To ensure that the standards for each content area are well organized and internally coherent, Nebraska Department of Education articulates a construct that guides the overall structure of the content area standards across subjects. While not all of the state’s content standards documents currently reflect this two-tier structure, the scheduled standards’ updates will result in the consistent formatting of all standards documents. The overall structure is depicted in Figure 26.

Figure 26 Model Flow of How Learning Goals are Established through Nebraska Content Standards



The top two tiers of this model—standards and indicators—are identified through Nebraska’s collaborative process of bringing educators and experts together from across the state; they provide goals for learning in each content area throughout a student’s K–12 education. At the local level, districts select or develop a curriculum that best meets the expectations of the content standards and indicators, as well as meets the unique needs of students and families in the local community. Curricula is selected at the local level and can vary significantly from school to school. Most curricula include pacing guidance, lesson plans, and instructional resources/materials (e.g., textbooks, etc.) to guide the organization and planning of units and lessons across the school year.

The third tier of this model, which encompasses classroom instruction and individual student needs, illustrates the increasingly critical role of teachers. Teachers know best the instructional strategies, approaches, and types of help that will support the needs of their students. Guidance and data provided by formative, summative, authentic, and diagnostic assessments help teachers identify gaps in student knowledge and skills. The identification of these learning gaps allows teachers to adapt their lessons and best help students learn the required content and skills.

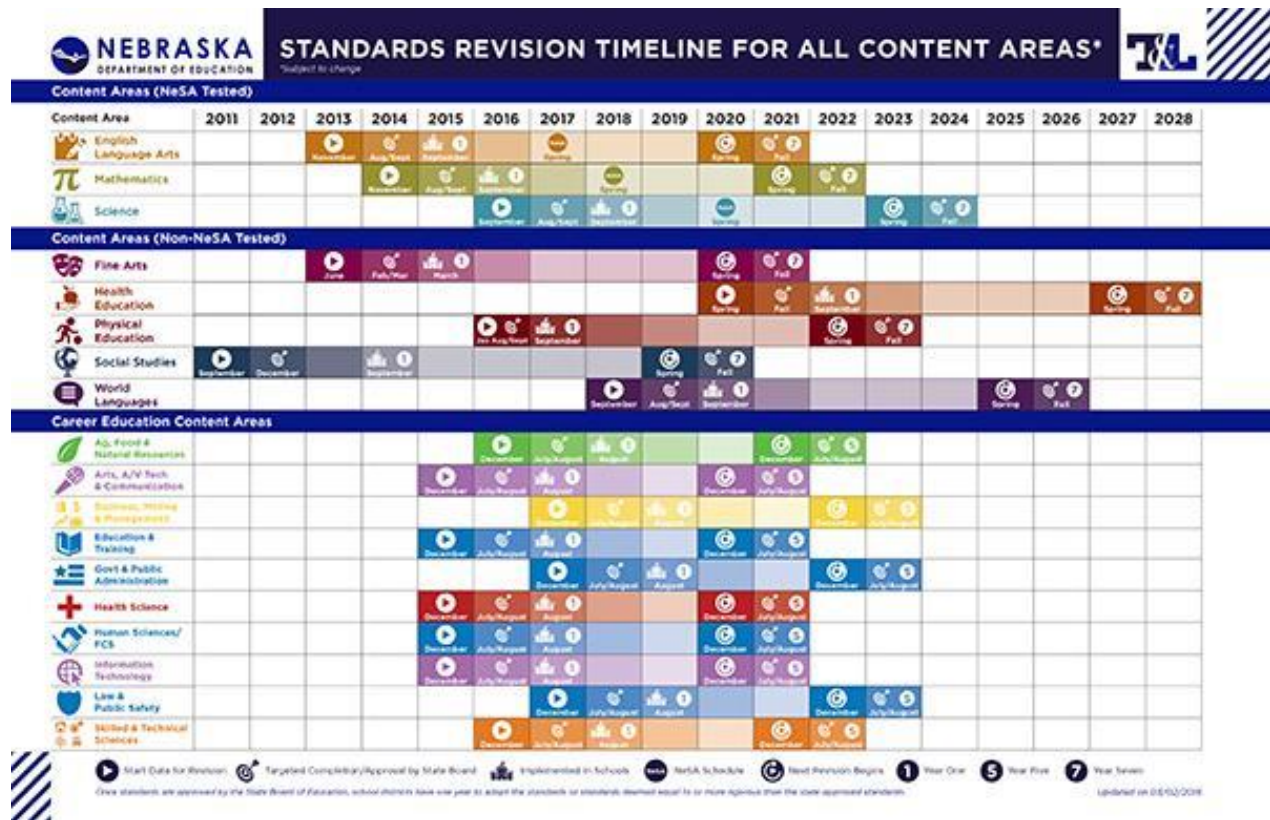
### 5.1 Standards Revision Timeline for All Content Areas

The consistent structure of Nebraska content standards is complemented by a consistent revision timeline as depicted in Figure 27. The inclusive nature of both approaches reflects ESSAs recognition and celebration of the importance of ensuring a high quality, well-rounded experience for all learners. Deliberate recognition and integration of standards-based supports



within the Shared Systems of Support Project will ensure a more comprehensive and intentional system to support educator effectiveness throughout the state of Nebraska. State level Title II-A funds may be used to support efforts around ensuring quality standards and effective implementation of standards across all content areas.

Figure 27 Standards Revision Timeline for All Content Areas



This timeline may be found at:

<https://www.education.ne.gov/academicStandards/Images/TLStandardsTimeline.jpg>.

## 5.2 Support for Educators

*Instructions: Consistent with sections 2101 and 2102 of the ESEA, provide a description with the necessary information.*

### A. Resources to Support State-level Strategies

*Describe how the SEA will use Title II-A funds and funds from other included programs, consistent with allowable uses of funds provided under those programs, to support State-level strategies designed to:*

- Increase student achievement consistent with the challenging State academic standards;*
- Improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other school leaders;*



- iii. *Increase the number of teachers, principals, and other school leaders who are effective in improving student academic achievement in schools; and*
- iv. *Provide low-income and minority students greater access to effective teachers, principals, and other school leaders consistent with the educator equity provisions in 34 C.F.R. § 299.18(c).*

The state-level strategies using SEA Title II-A funds are described in Section 5.1. It is worth repeating that Nebraska will annually engage stakeholders in a focused review of statewide activities and evidence-indicated statewide needs to determine necessary adjustments. The activities and strategies outlined in this ESSA Plan are informed by current data and stakeholder input, and the annual review of progress and relevant data with stakeholder groups may illuminate a need to adjust strategies, activities, and priorities. The specific activities listed in this plan provide information about specific use of funds for implementation. Recognizing the dynamic nature of the field of education, it may be that needs for alternate yet appropriate uses of Title II-A funds may evolve, however funded activities would fall within the possible uses of funds of ESSA as outlined in SEC. 2101.c.4.B.i-xxi. Given the value that Nebraska places on the Continual Improvement Process, this approach of continually reviewing data, monitoring progress, and adjusting as necessary is a natural fit for the state.

**B. Skills to Address Specific Learning Needs.** *Describe how the SEA will improve the skills of teachers, principals, or other school leaders in identifying students with specific learning needs and providing instruction based on the needs of such students, consistent with section 2101(d)(2)(J) of the ESEA.*

**Improving Skills of Educators (ESEA section 2101(d)(2)(J)):** *Describe how the SEA will improve the skills of teachers, principals, or other school leaders in order to enable them to identify students with specific learning needs, particularly children with disabilities, English learners, students who are gifted and talented, and students with low literacy levels, and provide instruction based on the needs of such students.*

*(2101(d)(2)(J) -how the State educational agency will improve the skills of teachers, principals, other school leaders in order to enable them to identify students with specific learning needs, particularly children with disabilities, English learners, students who are gifted and talented, and students with low literacy levels, and provide instruction based on the needs of such students.*

The Nebraska Department of Education collaborates with Educational Service Units, Local Education Associations, higher education organizations, and community partners to provide training and support aligned to district needs identified by local needs assessments and continuous improvement plans. Below are a few examples of Nebraska partnerships that assist teachers, principals, and other school leaders in identifying and supporting students with specific learning needs, particularly children with disabilities, English learners, students who are gifted and talented, and students with low literacy levels.

In Nebraska, each school district is responsible for assuring that high quality services are provided to every child. Response to Intervention (RtI) is a framework that allows Nebraska school districts to expand their capacity to effectively educate all students and improve educational outcomes. The Nebraska Department of Education supports the implementation of RtI. Specifically, the Nebraska Department of Education has endorsed the Essential Elements for the Implementation of RtI. The Essential Elements for RtI, which define the distinctive features of a scientifically-supported process for meeting students' academic needs, is based upon principles identified in research for an effective RtI system. Administration of these features may differ from district to district, and districts have latitude in determining appropriate assessments, curriculum, and interventions that meet their needs. The RtI framework can be tailored to fully integrate into the district's current organizational structure and priorities as well as the overall school improvement plan.

The Nebraska Department of Education and the University of Nebraska, working collaboratively, have established the RtI Consortium. The role of the RtI Consortium is to provide professional development and technical assistance to Nebraska schools in implementing Response to Intervention with fidelity. The RtI Consortium works with ESUs and school districts in this endeavor.

The [Nebraska Multi-Tiered System of Supports website](#)<sup>165</sup> is an additional resource to offer support for RtI in the state of Nebraska. It is housed within the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families & Schools. This web-based resource was created by professional development providers from the University of Nebraska who have been charged with providing resources and professional development that is grounded in the current research to schools in Nebraska.

The Nebraska Department of Education is partnering with Nebraska teachers, principals, and other school leaders to develop [learning modules for schools and districts](#)<sup>166</sup> related to services for English Learners. The first module is complete and includes four segments: The Identification and Intake Process, Preparing Staff for EL Arrivals, Creating a Climate of Welcome, and Helping Families Navigate the School System. Each segment runs between 5-10 minutes. Current plans point to the creation of four additional modules to continue building widely-accessible support for all teachers, principals, and other leaders serving the needs of English Learners.

**1. Data and Consultation** (*ESEA section 2101(d)(2)(K)*): *Describe how the State will use data and ongoing consultation as described in ESEA section 2101(d)(3) to continually update and improve the activities supported under Title II, Part A.*

The Nebraska Department of Education does not operate in isolation and actively involves stakeholder input while working to continually improve educator preparation programming. All 16 institutions offering educator programming in Nebraska are represented on the Nebraska

Council on Teacher Education (NCTE), an advisory body to the State Board of Education. NCTE consists of equal representation from educators, educator preparation administrators, and governance representatives (i.e., Nebraska State Education Association, Nebraska School Counselors Association, Nebraska Association of School Boards), which work in partnership to assure high standards for Nebraska educator preparation and quality education for PreK-12 students statewide. As an advisory body to the State Board of Education, NCTE develops and recommends standards for State Board approval and adoption relating to:

- State approval of higher education institutions providing teacher, counselor, and/or administrative preparatory programs; and programs leading to a special services certificate.
- Admission into and retention in an approved professional education program leading to teacher, counselor, administrative, or special services certification.
- Issuance of teacher counselor, administrative, and special services certificates.
- Certificate endorsements.
- Relationships of Nebraska teacher, counselor, administrator, and special services certification with other states and national bodies.

The Nebraska Department of Education also engages in regular meetings and conversations with the Nebraska Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (NACTE), an organization in which all 16 of Nebraska's teacher preparation institutions have membership. The Committee of Practitioners also engages regularly with the staff at Nebraska Department of Education. These three groups serve in an advisory capacity, in conjunction with annual stakeholder conversations, to identify and prioritize efforts that will continue to improve educator preparation programs and, by extension, educator effectiveness across the state of Nebraska. State level Title II-A funds are devoted to supporting collaborative initiatives with, or identified by, these groups.

The Nebraska Department of Education will use Title II-A funds to support state-level strategies designed to increase student achievement, improve teacher and principal quality and effectiveness, support strategies to strengthen access to low-income and minority students, and to address equity gaps.

The Nebraska Department of Education will grant Title II-A funds to LEAs through the Consolidated Application process. Each LEA will be required to demonstrate, through the ESEA Consolidated Application process, that they have met all the following requirements in the development of their local plan for the effective use of these Title II-A funds:

- Comprehensive Needs Assessment regarding the support of excellent educators;
- selection of measureable goals for the use of Title II-A funds on the basis of the Needs Assessment;
- Development and implementation of selected intervention strategies, founded in evidence-based practices that ensure a high expectation of success, and;
- Implementation of an evaluation system/process to determine the effectiveness of the selected interventions being supported through Title II-A and other funds.

The SEA will utilize 1 percent of Title II-A funds for administrative costs to fulfill oversight, monitoring, and fiscal duties, and the SEA will utilize approximately 4 percent of Title II-A funds for statewide initiatives to support effective educators and address equity gaps. There will be an effort to increase general communication to stakeholders regarding statewide initiatives, grant opportunities, and professional growth opportunities. The state will utilize the 3 percent Title II-A optional set-aside funding to further support efforts to build the capacity of principals and other school leaders in the state of Nebraska.

### **5.3 Educator Equity**

Nebraska developed, submitted, and received approval on the [Nebraska Educator Equity Plan as published in June of 2015](#)<sup>167</sup>. This 2015 Equity Plan is intended to ensure that every student in every school is taught by an excellent educator. Historically, Nebraska has had minimal gaps statewide among schools regarding the extent that economically disadvantaged students are taught by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers. In the 2015 Equity Plan, Nebraska summarized existing equity gaps, providing charts that reflect the data available.

For each gap identified, Nebraska outlined selected strategies being employed to address root causes. Nebraska has and will continue to monitor and provide support on the strategies identified. The goal is to ensure that economically disadvantaged and minority students are not taught by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers at higher rates than other children. As indicated in the [Strategic Vision and Direction for 2017-2026](#)<sup>168</sup>:

“We (the State Board of Education) intend to ensure all Nebraskans, regardless of background or circumstances, have equitable access to opportunities for success” and “increase the number of Nebraskans who are ready for success in postsecondary education, career, and civic life.”

In the 2017 Nebraska State ESSA Plan, the Education Workforce Index has been introduced as a means by which to measure and advance Equity across the state. This Education Workforce Index enhances prior measures for analyzing equitable distribution of teachers. The Education Workforce Index seeks to meet ESSA-federally required points of analysis for equitable access to effective educators, including an inexperienced indicator, an out-of-field indicator, a qualified indicator, and a systems-level quality indicator. Nebraska will utilize the Education Workforce Index to mobilize schools, districts, and ESUs to embrace systems of evaluation and support that drive continual and focused growth, produce evidence to inform focused professional growth activities, build capacity of building administrators to serve as instructional leaders, establish a broader and shared understanding around comprehensive, systemic approaches to human capital management, and advance equity-focused conversations and activities across the state of Nebraska. The Index will consider the ESSA-required indicators for “inexperience”, “out-of-field,” and “unqualified.”

The Nebraska Education Workforce Index will also include an “ineffective” measure that will message to districts and buildings the degree to which LEA policy-indicated systems of evaluation and integrated supports reflect best practices and align with the Nebraska Model for Evaluation. The Educator Workforce Index will employ a value calculated at the state, district,

and building levels to provide information about the strength of the educator workforce in relation to equitable access planning. The highest index value possible is 100, which represents an educator workforce with experienced, qualified, in-field teachers and leaders who are equipped with a system of evaluation and integrated supports that reflect research-based best practices. A more technical explanation and tentative initial analyses follow. Note that the indicators to be included in the Education Workforce continue to be discussed and refined, and it is anticipated that a pilot year will result in further refinement of the instrument and processes surrounding instrument implementation.

The Nebraska educator workforce index is built using the mean of four variables:

- the score from the selected response to items 2 and 3 in the Educator Effectiveness tenet of the 2015 Evidence-Based Analysis (EBA);
- the percentage of inexperienced teachers and principals,
- the percentage of courses with unqualified teachers, and
- the percentage of courses with out-of-field teachers.

Note that the data used for all analyses in this section is from the 2015-2016 school year, as the 2016-2017 EBA item results were to become available only after the deadline for the final draft of the Nebraska ESSA plan.

The resulting Nebraska educator workforce mean index takes on real numbers ranging from 0 through 100, with 100 being the highest workforce index value or most ideal score.

All analyses are conducted using Stata/SE 14.2. The data, syntax, and output files are available upon request.

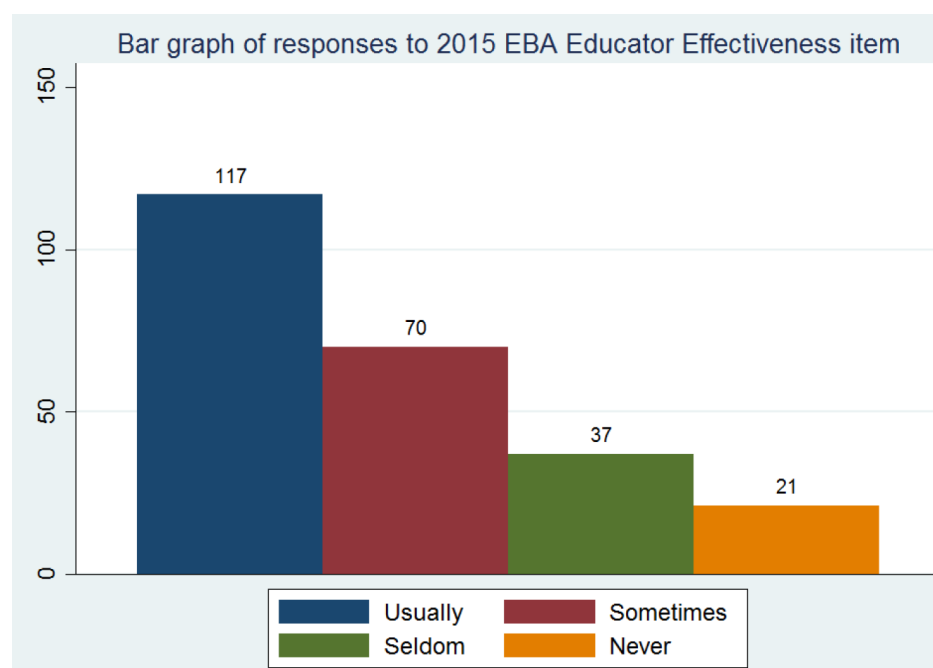
### **Summary of Individual Measures**

Prior to creating the index, the distribution of each of the four variables that make up the index is analyzed. Table 24 and Figure 28 show key statistics of these variables. In general, districts across the state are doing relatively well with a low mean percentage of the variables Inexperienced Educators, Courses with unqualified teachers, courses with out-of-field teachers, and with the majority of them selecting “usually” in response to item 3 of the Educator Effectiveness tenet item 3, from the 2015 EBA questionnaire, states: *The school district utilizes a formal staff evaluation process aligned to the Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Framework (NTPPF).*

Table 24 Summary of Individual Measures

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Inexperienced Educators (%)	14.90	7.91
Courses with Unqualified Teachers (%)	0.05	0.51
Courses with Out-of-Field Teachers (%)	9.86	6.47

Figure 28 Breakdown of EBA Responses



The next three figures show the percentage distribution of these variables: 1) inexperienced teachers and principals, 2) courses with unqualified teachers, and 3) courses with out-of-field teachers. For the variable on inexperienced teachers and principals, the percentage of educators with three years or less of experience is used. Unqualified teachers are defined as teachers not having a current Nebraska teaching certificate and working on a provisional commitment, while out-of-field teachers are defined as teachers teaching out of their endorsed area or grade level. All three figures are heavily right-skewed, revealing that the bulk of the districts have very low percentages of these three variables.

Figure 29 Distribution of Inexperience Teachers and Principals

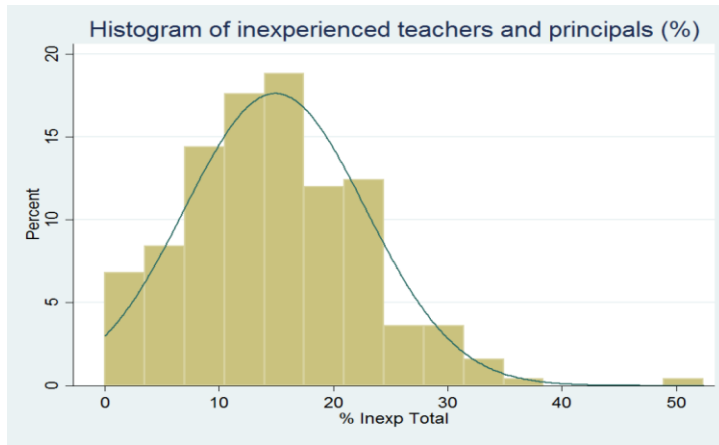


Figure 30 Distribution of Courses with Unqualified Teachers

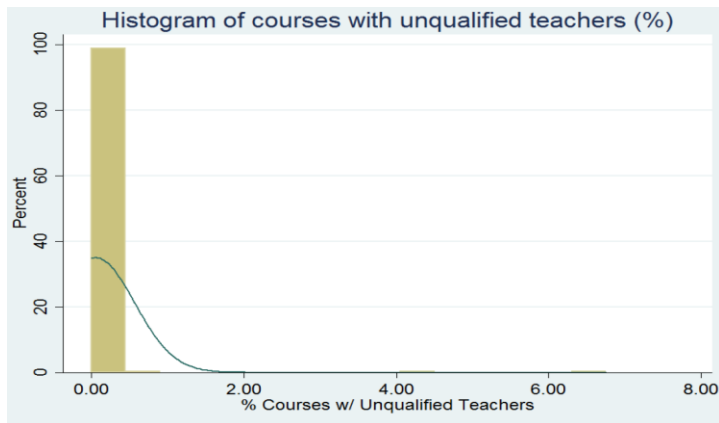


Figure 31 Distribution of Courses with Out-of-Field Teachers

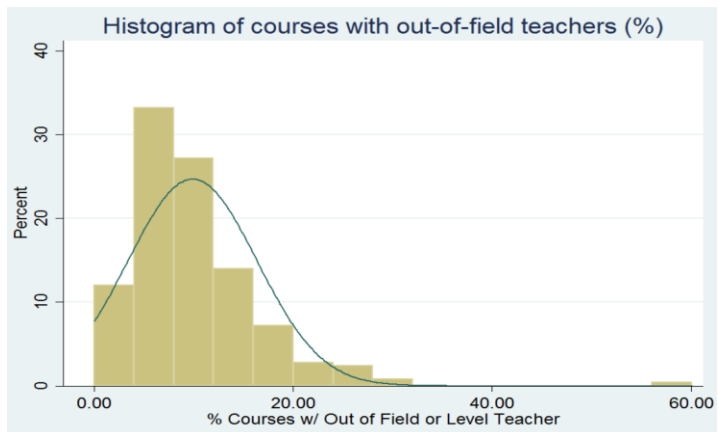


Table 25 shows relatively large mean values of the workforce index are found in the fourth membership (mean=89.77) and first poverty (mean=88.58) quartiles. Thus, the score of educator workforce is higher for districts with the largest membership and districts with the lowest percentage of students in poverty. The lowest mean values of the workforce index are found for districts with small membership (mean for Q1=85.33 and mean for Q2=85.96). These workforce index values are lower than that of districts in the highest poverty (mean=86.16) and minority quartiles (mean=87.33).

*Table 25 Summary Statistics of the Workforce Index by Quartile Groups for Districts*

Workforce Index	Mean	Standard Deviation	Frequency
Total	86.84	8.86	250
Membership Quartile			
Q1	85.33	9.95	63
Q2	85.96	9.64	62
Q3	86.33	7.81	63
Q4	89.77	7.27	62
Poverty Quartile			
Q1	88.58	8.54	63
Q2	86.42	9.00	62
Q3	86.18	9.12	63
Q4	86.16	8.74	62
Minority Quartile			
Q1	86.06	9.27	63
Q2	86.91	8.99	62
Q3	87.06	8.92	63
Q4	87.33	8.41	62

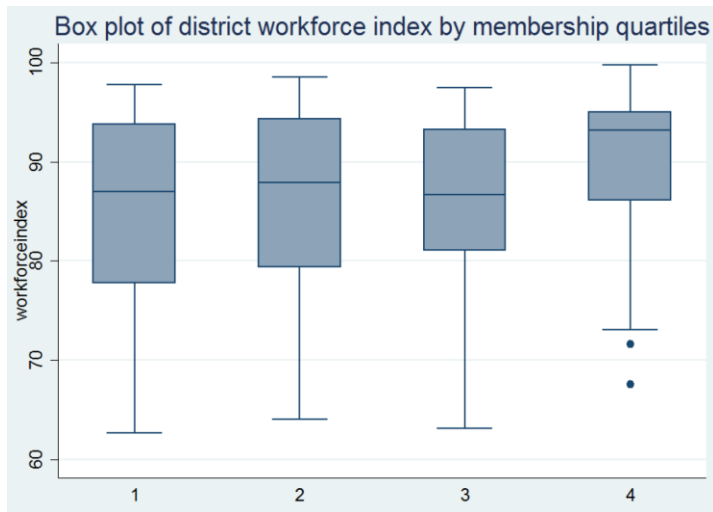
### **Box Plots of the Index**

The box plots that follow display the distribution of the workforce index values; specifically, from bottom to top, each line of a box shows the minimum, first quartile, median, third quartile, and maximum values. The next three figures are the box plots of the workforce index disaggregated by membership, poverty, and minority quartiles, respectively.

In the District Workforce Boxplot (by membership) Figure 32, there are two low outlier districts in the fourth membership quartile. Across the first three membership quartiles, the workforce index values range between 60 and 100. The range of values is slightly smaller for the fourth membership quartile, with the median being the highest of the four quartiles. This suggests that over 50% of the districts have workforce index values at or above 90.

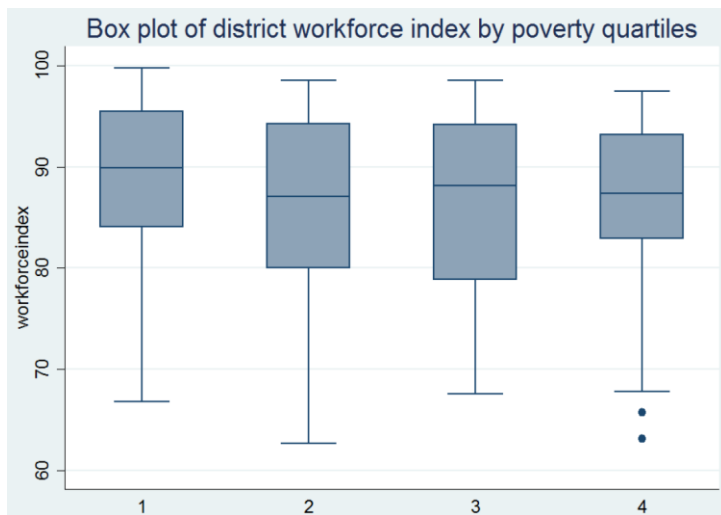


Figure 32 Box Plot of Workforce Index by Membership Quartiles



In the Poverty Quartile District Box Plot (Figure 33), the median workforce index value is highest for the first poverty quartile. Thus, 50% of districts with the lowest percentage of students in poverty have workforce index values at or above. While the median values appear to fluctuate as the poverty quartiles increase, the maximum values of the workforce index are decreasing as the poverty quartiles increase. Similar to the membership quartile figure, there are two low outlier districts in the fourth poverty quartile.

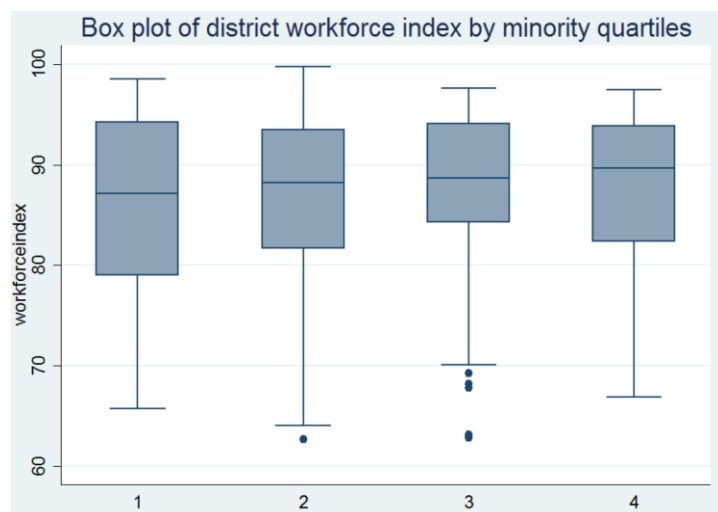
Figure 33 Box Plot of Workforce Index by Poverty Quartiles



In the box plot for district workforce index by minority quartiles (Figure 34), there are several low outlier districts in the second and third minority quartiles. Interestingly, the median

workforce index value is highest in the fourth minority quartiles. Thus, half of the districts with the largest percentage of minority students have a workforce index value at or above 90.

Figure 34 Box Plot of Workforce Index by Minority Quartiles



**Disproportionate Rates of Access to Educators (ESEA section 1111(g)(1)(B)):** Describe how low-income and minority children enrolled in schools assisted under Title I, Part A are not served at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers, and the measures the SEA will use to evaluate and publicly report the progress of the SEA with respect to such description.

**A. Definitions** Provide SEA’s definitions, using distinct criteria, for the following key terms:

Table 26 Key Term Definitions

Key Term	Definition of Explanation
Ineffective	<p>This item emphasizes a systems-level measure that will message to districts and buildings the degree to which LEA policy-indicated systems of evaluation and integrated supports reflect best practices and align with the Nebraska Model for Evaluation. The “ineffective” measure relies on district- and school- selected responses to Evidence-Based Analysis (EBA) Educator Effectiveness items. A policy audit will serve to validate district and school EBA responses. The EBA Educator Effectiveness items that pertain to this measure are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school/district utilizes a research-based instructional model aligned to the Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Framework (NTPPF)</li> <li>• The school/district utilizes a formal staff evaluation process aligned to the Nebraska Evaluation Model for Teachers and Principals.</li> </ul>

Out-of-field teacher*+	<p>Out-of-field teacher - a teacher who has a current Nebraska teaching certificate, but is either out-of-endorsed area or out-of-level (see below).</p> <p>Out-of-endorsed area - teacher has a teaching certificate without an endorsement that matches the subject required of the course being taught, as per the Course Codes and Clearing Endorsements manual for that school year.</p> <p>Out-of-level - teacher has a teaching certificate with an endorsement that matches the subject, but not at the grade level required of the course being taught, as per the Course Codes and Clearing Endorsements manual for that school year.</p>
Inexperienced teacher*+	A teacher or principal reported as having fewer than four years of experience.
Unqualified	Teachers not having a current Nebraska teaching certificate and working on a provisional commitment.
Low-income student	Students who are eligible to receive free or reduced price school lunches (FRL).
Minority student	<p>Students who indicated they are a race or ethnicity other than White.</p> <p>Students who have been identified as Limited English Proficient.</p>

\*Definitions of these terms must provide useful information about educator equity.

+Definitions of these terms must be consistent with the definitions that a State uses under 34 C.F.R. § 200.37.

## Opportune Timing and ESSA

The Nebraska Department of Education recognizes that pursuing minimal compliance with ESSA Equity regulatory requirements, while possible, will not fully realize the ESSA plan's potential benefits for teachers, leaders, and learners. Because of the ESSA requirements for measuring Education Workforce Systems, change must be pursued. ESSA serves as a catalyst for change, enabling Nebraska to raise statewide expectations around teacher evaluation while simultaneously building a more comprehensive, informed, and collaborative system to support Educator Effectiveness.

The increasingly large base of research clearly indicates the critical importance of effective teachers and educational leaders for student growth. Simultaneously, voiced concerns of a shrinking education workforce pipeline are progressively increasing in volume. The time is now for this focused undertaking around Educator Effectiveness. Because it has taken well-over five years to arrive at the current state of affairs with systems of evaluation in Nebraska, movement to more rigorous expectations for systems of evaluation will require substantive and very deliberate planning and will take substantial time to implement.

The [Nebraska Educator Equity Plan as published in June of 2015<sup>169</sup>](#) includes data on inexperienced, unqualified, and out-of-field teachers. Nebraska is developing reporting requirements to comply with ESSA requirements in this area. As previously addressed, the Education Workforce Index will be used as Nebraska seeks to further increase capacity to

comply specifically with statutory reporting requirements associated with the term “ineffective.” As evidence of intent to build toward full compliance with statutory reporting requirements, the state is prepared to submit, at this time, data similar to what was reported in the former 2015 Equity Plan. However, instead of reporting via quartiles, as was done in the 2015 Equity Plan, Nebraska is reporting on statutorily required “access to ineffective, out-of-field, and inexperienced teachers” in a way that more accurately reflects the letter of the law, allowing comparison between Title I schools and other schools. Table 27 and Table 28 and the following image reflect the current capacity for Nebraska to calculate and report on statutorily required items of “access to inexperienced, out-of-field, and ineffective teachers.” The tables reflect updated rates based on the most recent data available in the state of Nebraska.

Nebraska is submitting in this manner with the recognition that this is a unique and timely opportunity to simultaneously submit a plan to pursue a larger vision over the course of the next three years.

The following tables reflecting statutorily required analyses and are in response to requests by USDoe.

*Table 27 Statutory Analysis (2017 Data): Distribution of Out of Field and Inexperienced Teachers in Elementary Schools*

2017 data	School Type	Teacher Data						Principal Data		
		Classes by Out of Field	1 <sup>st</sup> year teachers	Inexperienced (less than 4 years)	Turnover (3 year avg)	Average Total years experience	District tenure	Turnover (3 year avg)	Average Total years experience	District tenure
Elementary	Title I	4.43%	6.24%	18.22%	17.7%	14	10.9	16.6%	21.1	12.1
	Other	5.5%	5.44%	15.82%	16.6%	13.9	11	13.4%	21.3	14.6
	Difference	1.1%	.8%	2.4%	1.1 %	.1	.1	3.2 %	.2	2.5
Table Notes: Salmon colored cells indicate areas in which there is negative disproportionality for Title I Schools.										

School Type	Teacher Data					Principal Data		
	Classes by appropEnd orsed	1 <sup>st</sup> Year Teachers	Turnover (3 Year Avg)	Total Years of Experience	District Tenure	Turnover (3 Year Avg)	Total Years of Experience	District Tenure
Highest Quartile of Minority Students	94.55% 1* = 131 2* = 1745 3* = 32551	6.94% N = 391 NT = 5631	19.8% N = 3648 NT = 18419	12.7	10.3	17.3% N = 98 NP = 567	20.6	15.4
Lowest Quartile of Minority Students	94.29% 1* = 81 2* = 476 3* = 9200	4.99% N = 99 NT = 1982	14.9% N = 939 NT = 6299	16.1	11.8	15.3% N = 62 NP = 404	20.4	9.2
Difference	.26	1.95	4.9	3.4	1.5	2.0	.2	6.2
Highest Quartile of Poverty Students	94.74% 1* = 107 2* = 1614 3* = 30993	6.92% N = 386 NT = 5577	19.7% N = 3603 NT = 18246	12.9	10.4	17.9% N = 108 NP = 605	20.7	14.6
Lowest Quartile of Poverty Students	96.71% 1* = 57 2* = 759 3* = 24001	4.91% N = 198 NT = 4031	15.8% N = 2036 NT = 12848	16.2	11.0	14.6% N = 70 NP = 478	20.9	12.8
Difference	1.97	2.01	3.9	3.3	0.6	3.3	0.2	-1.8
Rural Schools	94.50% 1* = 273 2* = 2269 3* = 43666	5.84% N = 455 NT = 7787	16.5% N = 4192 NT = 25390	15.2	11.3	17% N = 223 NP = 1314	21.4	10.5
Non-Rural Schools	96.35% 1* = 96 2* = 1526 3* = 42854	6.03% N = 425 NT = 7043	18.7% N = 4352 NT = 23247	12.8	10.6	16.7% N = 108 NP = 648	20.9	16.4
Difference	1.85	.19	2.2	2.4	.7	.3	0.6	5.9

Table Notes: Classes by Endorsed teacher: 1\* = out-of-level; 2\* = out of endorsed area; 3\* = appropriately endorsed

Table 28 Statutory Analysis (2017 Data): Distribution of Out of Field and Inexperienced Teachers in Secondary Schools

2017 data	School Type	Teacher Data						Principal Data		
		Classes by Out of Field	1 <sup>st</sup> year teachers	Inexperienced (less than 4 years)	Turnover (3 year avg)	Average Total years experience	District tenure	Turnover (3 year avg)	Average Total years experience	District tenure
Secondary	Title I	12.3%	5.43%	17.7%	17.7%	14	10.4	15.2%	19.8	10.1
	Other	11.5%	5.30%	15.61%	14.8%	14.9	10.9	14.8%	21.1	11.1
	Difference	.8%	.13%	2.09	2.9%	.9	.5	.4%	1.3	1

Table Notes: Salmon colored cells indicate areas in which there is negative disproportionality for Title I Schools.

Image 2 Statutory Analysis (2017 Data): Distribution of Effective Systems to support Educator Growth (= ineffective definition)

School Type	Teacher Data					Principal Data		
	Classes by Endorsed Teachers	1 <sup>st</sup> Year Teachers	Turnover (3 Year Avg)	Total Years of Experience	District Tenure	Turnover (3 Year Avg)	Total Years of Experience	District Tenure
Highest Quartile of Minority Students	87.63% 1* = 1152 2* = 4645 3* = 41062	6.99% N = 195 NT = 2790	16.6% N = 1409 NT = 8500	12.9	10	14.6% N = 24 NP = 164	20.7	14.5
Lowest Quartile of Minority Students	89.82% 1* = 634 2* = 1711 3* = 20694	6.05% N = 109 NT = 1803	13.7% N = 759 NT = 5523	16.2	11.5	14.5% N = 43 NP = 296	21	9.5
Difference	2.19	.94	2.9	3.3	1.5	4.5	.3	5
Highest Quartile of Poverty Students	86.90% 1* = 685 2* = 2914 3* = 23879	6.61% N = 113 NT = 1709	17.5% N = 907 NT = 5169	12.5	9.7	15.0% N = 18 NT = 120	19.9	14.2
Lowest Quartile of Poverty Students	91.06% 1* = 781 2* = 2711 3* = 35561	4.39% N = 126 NT = 2869	12.9% N = 1120 NT = 8689	15.2	11.0	13.0% N = 32 NP = 246	21.5	11.5
Difference	4.16	2.22	4.6	2.7	1.3	2.0	1.6	2.7
Rural Schools	88.39% 1* = 2469 2* = 6973 3* = 71897	5.64% N = 320 NT = 5669	14.8% N = 2645 NT = 17892	15.7	11.1	13.5% N = 104 NT = 770	20.8	10.1
Non-Rural Schools	89.38% 1* = 1119 2* = 4922 3* = 50860	6.00% N = 223 NT = 3717	15.4% N = 1718 NT = 11169	13	10.1	18.7% N = 28 NP = 150	22.2	16.4
Difference	.99	.36	.6	2.7	1	5.2	1.4	6.3

Table Notes: Classes by endorsed teacher: 1\* = out-of-level; 2\* = out of endorsed area; 3\* = appropriately endorsed

The following tables reflect an examination of the following differences:

- Low-income vs. non-low-income in Title I and non-Title I schools
- Minority vs. non-minority in Title I and non-Title I schools

### Analysis of Disproportionate Rates of Access to Educators: ELEMENTARY Data

2017 Data	Rate at which classes are taught by ineffective teachers.	Rate at which classes are taught by out of field teachers.	Rate at which classes are taught by inexperienced teachers.
Low income students enrolled in schools receiving funds under Title I-A	51.9%	3.89%	18.51%
Not low income students enrolled in schools NOT	42.8%	4.56%	15.75%

receiving funds under Title I-A			
Difference between rates	9.1%	-0.67%	2.76%
<b>Minority</b> students enrolled in schools receiving funds under <b>Title I-A</b>	51.7%	3.83%	18.88%
Not minority students enrolled in schools not receiving funds under Title I-A	42.9%	5.05%	15.77%
Difference between rates	8.8%	-1.22%	3.11%

### Analysis of Disproportionate Rates of Access to Educators: **SECONDARY** Data

<i>2017 Data</i>	Rate at which classes are taught by <b>ineffective</b> teachers.	Rate at which classes are taught by <b>out of field</b> teachers.	Rate at which classes are taught by <b>inexperienced</b> teachers.
<b>Low income</b> students enrolled in schools receiving funds under <b>Title I-A</b>	52.9%	11.04%	17.42%
Not low income students enrolled in schools NOT receiving funds under Title I-A	44.6%	9.49%	15.72%
Difference between rates	8.3%	1.55%	1.7%
<b>Minority</b> students enrolled in schools receiving funds under <b>Title I-A</b>	52.8%	11.3%	17.55%
Not minority students enrolled in schools not receiving funds under Title I-A	44.7%	10.47%	15.75%
Difference between rates	8.1%	0.83%	1.8%

Per the 2016 publication by the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at the American Institutes for Research, there are three overarching approaches to defining, measuring, and reporting on “ineffective teacher”: 1) use existing educator evaluation systems, 2) select from available indicators of effectiveness to develop a new measure, and 3) allow LEAs to develop locally specific measures within a set of parameters (p. 2). Nebraska, as identified in the originally submitted ESSA plan, will be combining approaches 1 and 3 by building capacity of districts to meet the Nebraska State Board of Education’s Vision and Direction Educator Effectiveness Goal 7.2: “By 2020, 100% of Nebraska schools will utilize performance standards and a research-

based evaluation system for all certificated staff as aligned to Rule 10.” Meeting this goal allows districts to retain a degree of local decision making while also building a common, statewide approach to measuring and reporting on teacher effectiveness.

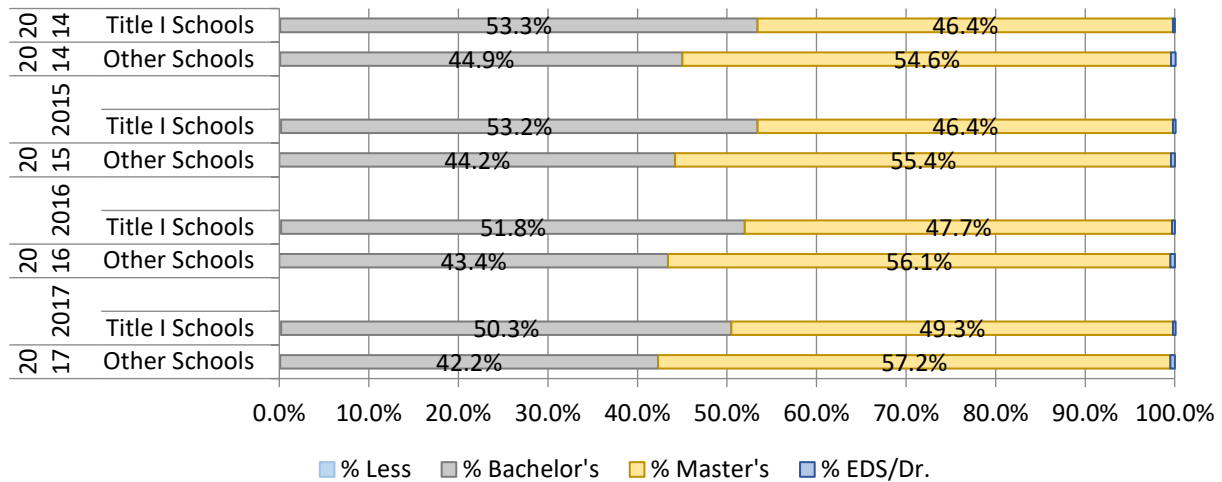
According to the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders/AIR article designed to support state efforts in this work, “We believe the research base is too limited to use any one indicator as a complete representation of teacher effectiveness...” (2016, p. 6), and use of a singular proxy measure reflects this very approach. In an effort to comply with federal expectations, Nebraska is willing to report on “ineffective teacher” through the US DoE’s suggested lens of “teacher without an advanced degree”, though there is concern about implied beliefs about the relationship between graduate education and teacher effectiveness. As such, Nebraska is citing the following from a recent research brief and asserts that this reporting of proxy “ineffective teacher” data is strictly for compliance purposes, and the data will not be utilized in isolation to inform decision making in the state.

“Overall, past research depicts a complex, poorly understood relationship between teacher educational attainment and student outcomes that may vary by such factors as level of schooling, academic subject, and major-course congruence. Studies reporting nonsignificant or negative effects were most common in the context of reading achievement in K-8 schools. Additional research is needed to better inform state policy on teacher licensure requirements” (Horn, Tae Jang, 2017, p. 3).

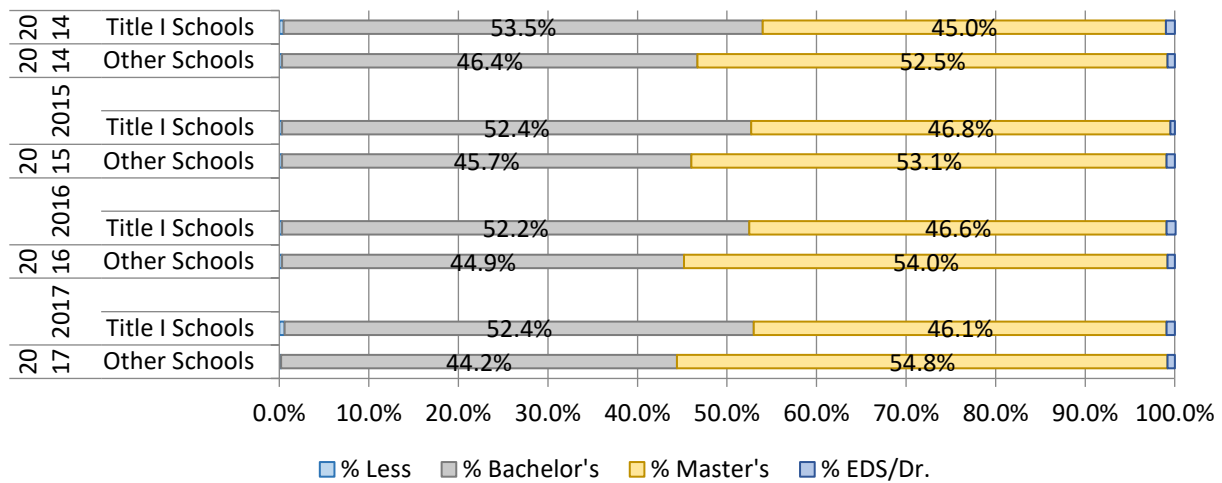
Utilization of this proxy measure will be discontinued when all districts have demonstrated readiness to comply with the Nebraska State Board of Education’s Vision and Direction Educator Effectiveness Goal 7.2: “By 2020, 100% of Nebraska schools will utilize performance standards and a research-based evaluation system for all certificated staff as aligned to Rule 10.” It is anticipated that, per the previously submitted timeline, this would be no later than August, 2020. What follows represents a reporting of the proxy measure data.



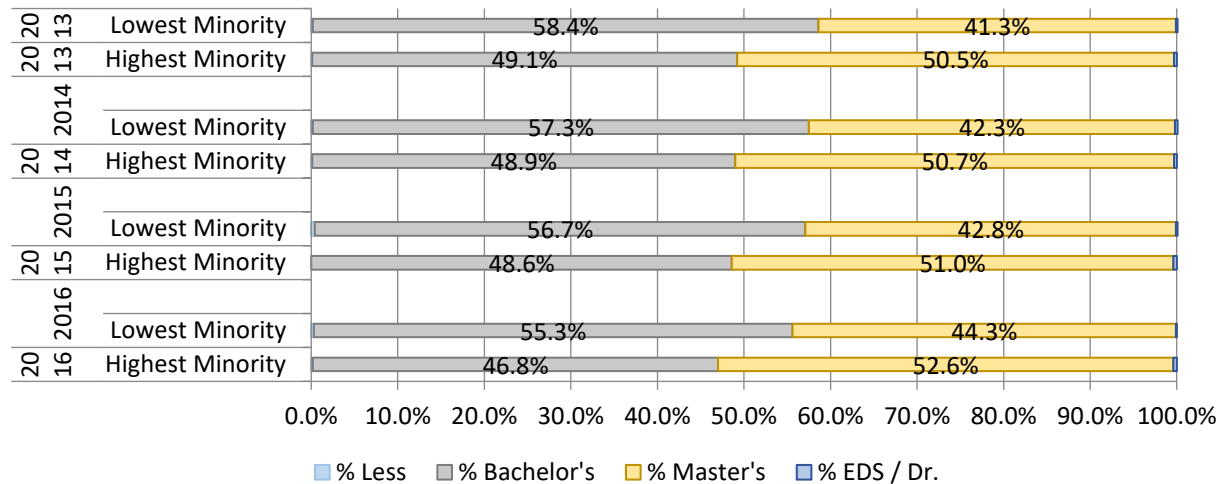
## Teacher Education Levels by Title I Designation - Elementary



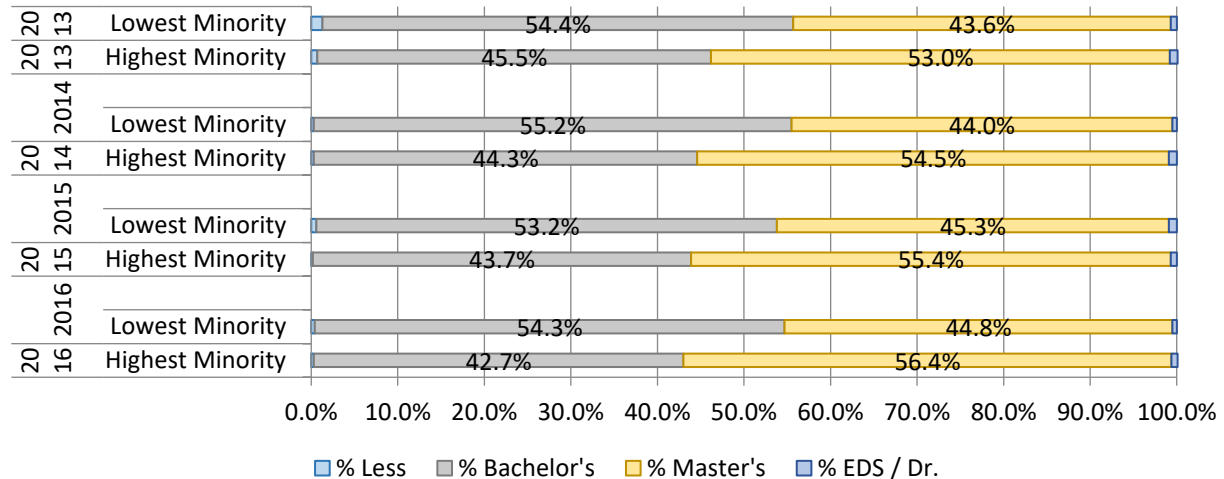
## Teacher Education Levels by Title I Designation- Secondary



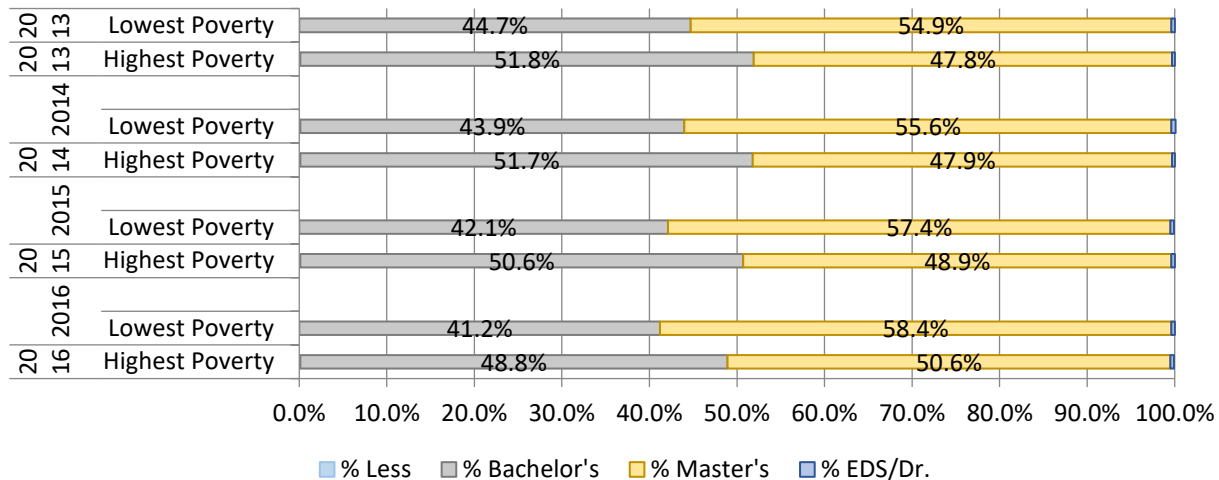
## Teacher Education Levels by Minority Quartile - Elementary



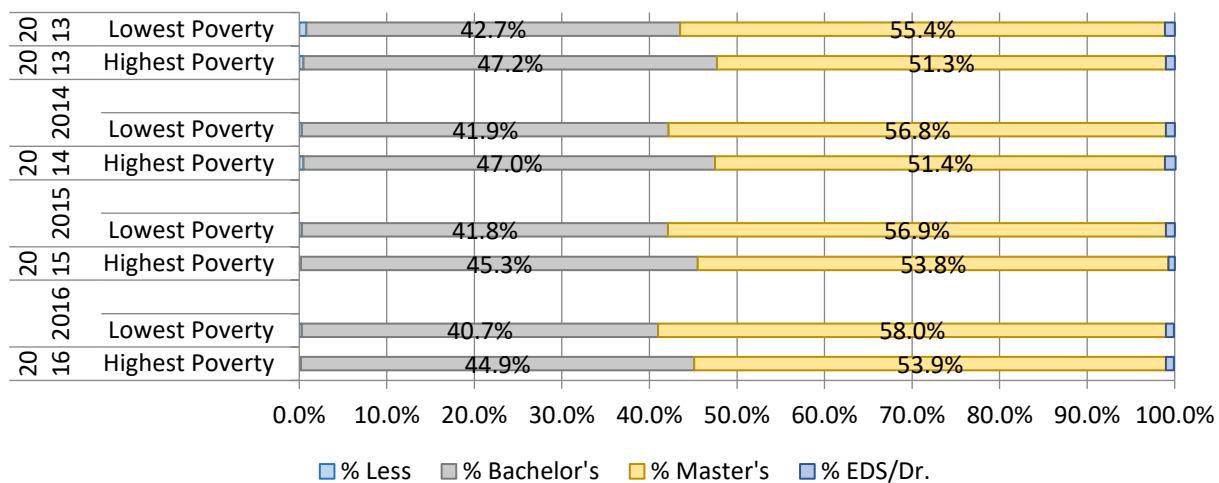
## Teacher Education Levels by Minority Quartile - Secondary



## Teacher Education Levels by Poverty Quartile - Elementary



## Teacher Education Levels by Poverty Quartile - Secondary



Note that the data report\* on Teacher Education Levels, with “teacher without an advanced degree” being utilized as a proxy for “ineffective teacher”, indicates that, in general:

- learners in Title 1 schools consistently have access to greater numbers of teachers who do **not** possess advanced degrees at both the elementary and secondary level.
- minority learners consistently have access to greater numbers of teachers who **do** possess advanced degrees at both the elementary and secondary level.
- learners living in poverty consistently have access to greater numbers of teacher who do **not** possess advanced degrees at both the elementary and secondary level.

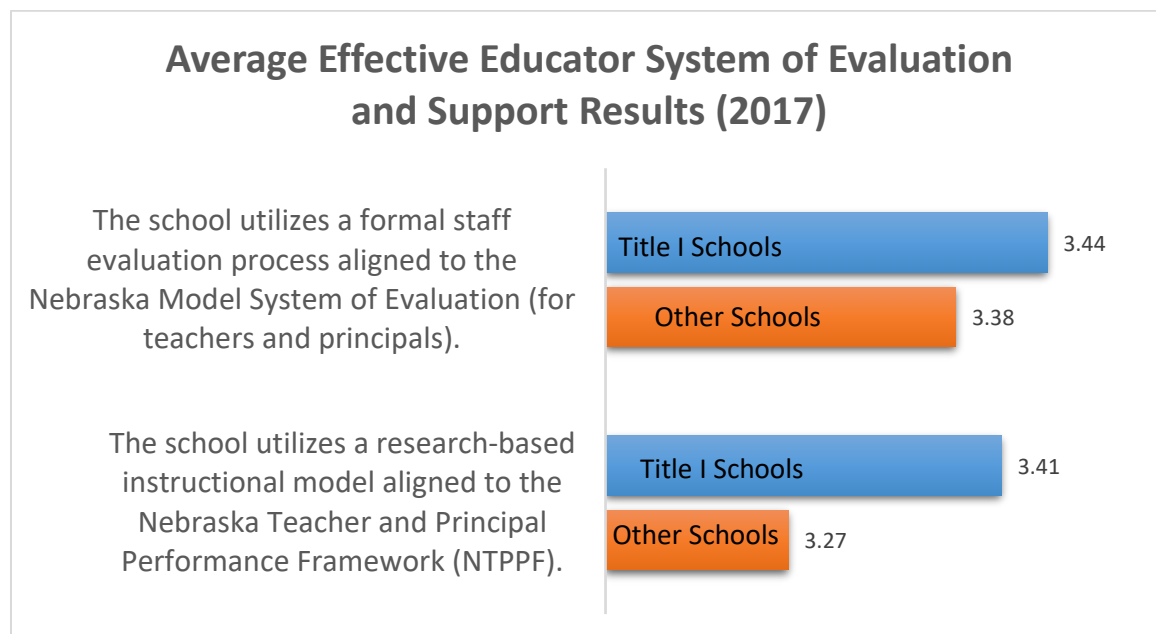
\*Tables report data that was available at the time that each series of tables was originally generated in preparation for possible inclusion for the Nebraska ESSA Plan. For this reason, 2017 data is not yet included in the Poverty and Minority analyses in relation to teacher education levels, as they were developed for the original submission of the Nebraska ESSA Plan.

### References:

Horn, A.S. and Tae Jang, Sung (March, 2017). The impact of Graduate Education on Teacher Effectiveness: Does a Master's Degree Matter? Midwestern High Education Compact. Accessed on March 13, 2018 at [http://www.mhec.org/sites/mhec.org/files/teacherprep1\\_20170301.pdf](http://www.mhec.org/sites/mhec.org/files/teacherprep1_20170301.pdf)

Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at the American Institutes for Research (2016). Teacher Effectiveness in the Every Student Succeeds Act: A Discussion Guide. Accessed on March 13, 2018, at <https://gtlcenter.org/products-resources/teacher-effectiveness-every-student-succeeds-act-discussion-guide>.

*Statutory Analysis (2017 Data): Distribution of Effective Systems to support Educator Growth (= ineffective definition)*

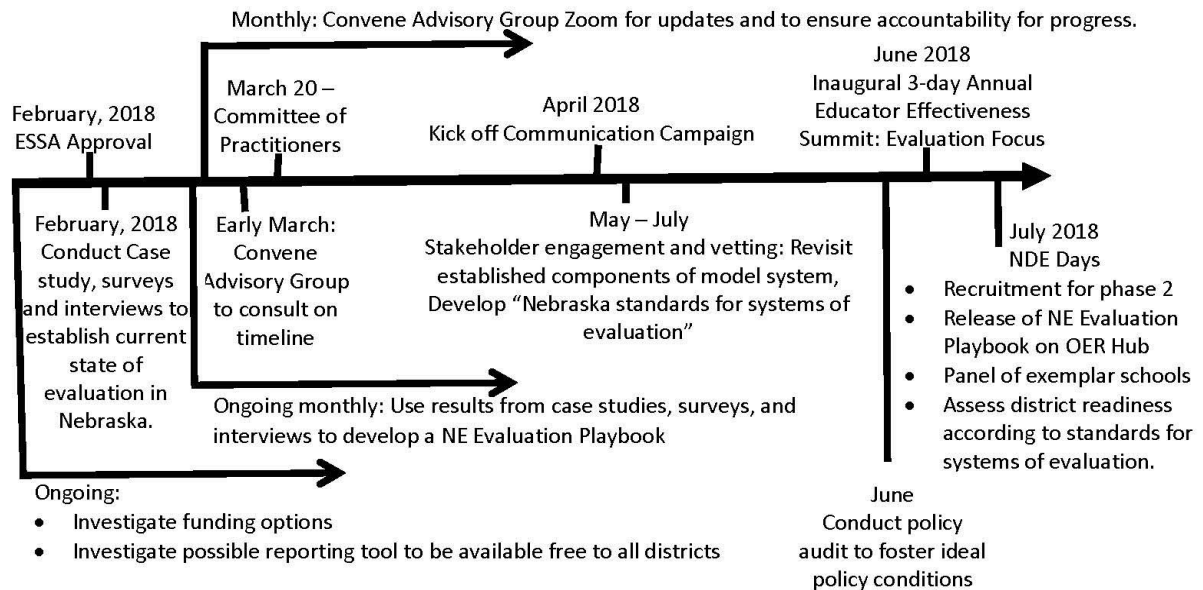


Based on data from AQuESTT Evidence Based Analysis Educator Effectiveness Items that rely on a scale in which 0 = never/least and 4 = always/most.

As previously mentioned, ESSA presents Nebraska the opportunity to more intentionally support and advance statewide work around systems of evaluation for teachers, principals, and other school leaders. The ESSA Plan paves a path for pursuing Goal 7.2 of the Nebraska State Strategic Vision and Direction of: By 2020, 100% of Nebraska schools will utilize performance standards and a research-based evaluation system for all certificated staff as aligned to Rule 10. The current menagerie of systems of evaluation and integrated supports across the state complicates this task, but the research-supported importance of quality systems of evaluation with integrated supports necessitates that we take action now. **The Nebraska Department of Education formally requests a 3 year extension to pursue the work necessary to realize Goal 7.2 of the Nebraska State Strategic Vision and Direction.** Accomplishing this goal will allow Nebraska to better fulfill statutorily required expectation of “describing how low-income and minority children enrolled in schools assisted under Title I, Part A are not served at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers.” A tentative timeline for these activities follows, though it is important to note that Advisory group input may result in an adjusted timeline or activities.

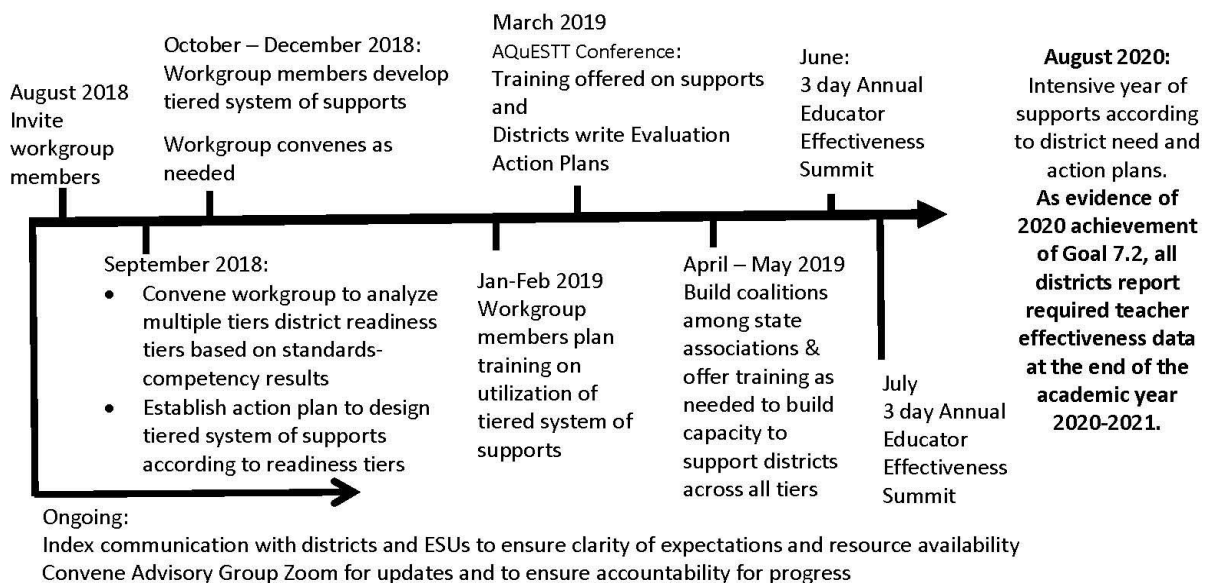
### Phase I: Objectives

- Determine necessary adjustments to current Nebraska Model System of Evaluation
- Develop Nebraska Standards for Quality Systems of Evaluation
- Develop Nebraska Evaluation Playbook to celebrate exemplars and share successful strategies
- Establish OER Hub for Nebraska Evaluation Support Resources



### Phase II: Objectives

- Develop tiered system of support & training for those responsible for supporting districts across multiple tiers
- Engage in index communication so that every district is clear on expectations and knows of available resources
- Engage ESUs in conversation around results of index communication to ensure clarity on support needs
- Prepare districts to report on teacher effectiveness data



### **C. Public Reporting**

*Provide the Web address or URL of, or a direct link to, where the SEA will publish and annually update, consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 299.18(c)(4):*

- i .The rates and differences in rates calculated in 5.3.B;*
- ii.The percentage of teachers categorized in each LEA at each effectiveness level established as part of the definition of “ineffective teacher,” consistent with applicable State privacy policies;*
- iii.The percentage of teachers categorized as out-of-field teachers consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.37; and*
- iv.The percentage of teachers categorized as inexperienced teachers consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 200.37.*

Nebraska will meet statutory requirements for public reporting of rates (i), differences in rates (i), and categorical percentage of teachers (ii, iii, iv) through an annual report process. Each district will be provided district-level and building-level Educator Workforce Index reports, but the public will have access primarily to federally required publication of state level data and analyses. An annual report of the Advancing Equity: Supporting Effective Educators component of this plan will promote annual dialog, reflection and refinements related to ongoing activities, and the annual report will be posted at the Federal Programs or the 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction webpage at the Nebraska Department of Education website. The report will also be presented to the State Board of Education, representing a second venue by which the public may access the progress. The State Board maintains a permanent public record of meetings in the Office of the Commissioner of Education, including meeting minutes, the original agenda and support materials, and copies of all materials distributed at the meeting. Agenda and support materials are also publicly accessible at the Nebraska State Board of Education meetings or on the Nebraska Department of Education website. As such, at the time of annual report, statutorily required content as outlined in 34 C.F.R. § 299.18(c)(4) will be publicly accessible as a linked document within the State Board of Education Agenda at <https://www.education.ne.gov/stateboard/Agendas.html>.

***D. Likely Causes of Most Significant Differences*** *If there is one or more difference in rates in 5.3.B, describe the likely causes (e.g., teacher shortages, working conditions, school leadership, compensation, or other causes), which may vary across districts or schools, of the most significant statewide differences in rates in 5.3.B. The description must include whether those differences in rates reflect gaps between districts, within districts, and within schools.*

Nebraska will annually explore underlying issues with stakeholder groups, eliciting their perceptions and understandings of data-indicated equity issues and related strategies to address identified equity gaps. On an annual basis, data analyses required in 34 C.F.R. § 299.18(c)(4) will guide the determination of questions to be brought to external and internal stakeholder groups for focused discussion. The discussion may include questions related to possible strategies to address identified areas of concern, such as:

- How does Nebraska, as a state, ensure equity of access to effective educators, particularly for minority students and economically disadvantaged students?
- How are new, inexperienced teachers supported and how can the effectiveness of existing educators be improved?
- What strategies will improve educator effectiveness and reduce gaps in student achievement outcomes?

Stakeholder discussions revealed “likely causes” in the 2015 Nebraska State Equity Plan. The “likely causes” are thematically represented as:

- insufficient awareness of existing inequities
- inequitable access to appropriately endorsed educators
- need for an improved, accessible, focused, statewide approach to offering support and development for current teachers and educational leaders.
- need for improved, data informed, and focused approach to attracting and preparing effective educators.

For each of these likely causes, strategies (Table 29) have been identified as possible solution:

*Table 29 Likely Causes and Strategies*

<b>Likely Causes of Most Significant Differences in Rates</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
Insufficient awareness of existing inequities.	<p>Strategy 1) Elevate the Awareness of Equity Issues</p> <p>1.1 - Nebraska Department of Education 1.0 FTE staff position to ensure continued focus on leading the Nebraska Teacher &amp; Principal Performance Framework and Nebraska Model System of Evaluation and Support.</p> <p>1.2 - AQuESTT process supports the Nebraska Equity Plan, and equity considerations are an integral part of the AQuESTT conversation.</p> <p>1.3 - Strengthen statewide emphasis on equitable access through integrated and collaborative efforts.</p> <p>1.4 - Continue Seeking Direction from Educator Equity Stakeholder Advisory Group (CoP)</p> <p>1.5 - Continue Convening Nebraska Department of Education Educator Equity work group.</p> <p>1.6 - Introduce and implement an Education Workforce Index</p>
Inequitable access to appropriately endorsed educators.	<p>Strategy 2) Support Equitable Access to Appropriately Endorsed Educators</p> <p>2.1 - Include emphasis on Equitable Access in the 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction for Education.</p> <p>2.2 - Increase the number of classes with appropriately endorsed teachers through the use of technology such as distance education.</p> <p>2.3 - Introduce and implement an Education Workforce Index</p>
Need for improved, accessible, focused, statewide approach to offering support and development for current	<p>Strategy 3) Strengthen the Effectiveness of Existing Educators</p> <p>3.1 - Expand the use of the Teacher &amp; Principal Performance Framework model evaluation systems to all districts.</p> <p>3.2 - Encourage AQuESTT-aligned continuous improvement processes</p> <p>3.3 - Require Priority Schools to address professional learning in Progress Plans.</p>



teachers and educational leaders.	3.4 - Introduce and implement an Education Workforce Index
Need for improved, data informed, and focused approach to attracting and preparing effective educators.	Strategy 4) Attract and Prepare Future Effective Educators 4.1 - Maintain support for loan forgiveness programs. 4.2 - Ensure educator preparation program accountability. 4.3 - Work with higher education programs to encourage individuals to become teachers, especially minorities.

## **Strategy 1: Elevate the awareness of equity issues**

Objective: *Integrate state and federal program efforts supporting effective educators*

**1.1** Nebraska Department of Education established a 1.0 FTE staff position to ensure continued focus on leading the Nebraska Teacher & Principal Performance Framework and Nebraska Model System of Evaluation and Support. The person in this position also works on the other areas of the Educator Effectiveness tenet of AQuESTT including professional learning. Because of the clear connections between Educator Effectiveness and Equity, this individual is also a key member of the external stakeholder group and the internal Educator Equity cross-team work group that will be overseeing the implementation of Nebraska’s Educator Equity Plan. Having a single individual involved in all phases of equity and accountability for educator effectiveness greatly enhances the probability for progress in meeting the performance goals of this plan and integrating activities into a comprehensive approach.

**1.2** The addition of AQuESTT to Nebraska resulted in a new statewide accountability and designation system implemented for the first time in the 2015-2016 school year. This process designated every school and district as either “Excellent, Great, Good or Needs Improvement” based on status, improvement and growth on the statewide assessments of English/Language Arts, Writing, Math and Science plus graduation rates. The system emphasizes improving student achievement and providing additional support to those the school identified as in greatest need, which aligns with the expectations of the Nebraska Equity Plan. Of the schools identified as “Needs Improvement”, three schools with the greatest need of assistance to improve are targeted for intervention as “Priority Schools.” The State law that requires the designation of priority schools also requires Nebraska Department of Education to establish an intervention team to assist with developing and implementing a progress plan that will be approved by the State Board of Education. The Educator Equity Plan allows for focused or prioritized efforts on Priority Schools as well as the Title I Schools receiving Section 1003 support. AQuESTT is continually being developed, and there is continual focus on ensuring that equity considerations are an integral part of the AQuESTT conversation and development. It is critical that Nebraska continue aligning Equity Plan performance goals and activities with AQuESTT and with Title II-A funded efforts, as there are no additional federal funds available to create new equity initiatives. The Educator Effectiveness position described above is state funded. The intervention teams for the three Priority Schools identified under AQuESTT are also state funded.

**1.3** Strengthen statewide emphasis on equitable access through integrated efforts – Nebraska will continue to build awareness of the Educator Equity Plan and equity issues in access and student outcomes. The Educator Equity Plan will be posted on the ESSA homepage. Nebraska Department of Education cross-team collaboration will support efforts to highlight equity issues, particularly emphasizing this plan’s performance goals. Specific components for an integrated approach include:

**Federal Programs Team**

Since 2005, Nebraska has used a consolidated application for the formula grant programs under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in an automated grants management system. During the 2015-2016 school year, the Federal Programs Administrator and NCLB program directors will review the current consolidated application to add questions asking districts how they will be using the available ESSA funds to support equity in access as well effective educators.

In their consolidated applications, districts indicate the areas of professional development that will be supported through any ESSA allocations. Title I schools receiving 1003 funds will be asked to describe how funds are being used, especially to support new or inexperienced teachers. Thus, Nebraska is already working with districts to support improving academic achievement and providing professional learning with their ESSA funds and will continue to do so.

Using the Committee of Practitioners as the external advisory group for this plan (Strategy 1.3) increases opportunities for all competitive and formula federal programs to focus professional learning activities on effective educators and equity in access.

**Accreditation and School Improvement Team**

To remain accredited, districts must have an on-site visitation by a team of external representatives to review progress on the district’s improvement plan and performance goals at least once every five years. Each year the Accreditation and School Improvement Team and Nebraska Department of Education staff provide day-long workshops across the state on the Continuous Improvement Process to assist districts in their improvement efforts and in preparing for this on-site visit. These workshops are attended by teams from districts, ESU staff who assist districts in their school improvement efforts and provide professional learning opportunities, and staff from the postsecondary teacher preparation programs.

Starting in the 2015-2016, the statewide Continuous Improvement workshops included an Educator Effectiveness strand focusing on the Nebraska Teacher & Principal Performance Framework. Beginning in 2017-2018, the Educator Effectiveness strand will also incorporate content from the Nebraska Educator Equity Plan. Moving forward, it will be a priority for these events to align with the AQuESTT tenets as Nebraska seeks to create a universal system of accountability for all schools in Nebraska.

**Data, Research and Evaluation Team**

Nebraska Department of Education's Research team and the staff developers from the ESU's have developed and provide training annually throughout the state in Data Literacy. This training provides methods, based on Victoria Bernhardt's *Data Analysis for Continuous School Improvement*, that build district staff capacity with the use of quantitative and qualitative data. District profiles have been built for the Data Literacy training in Nebraska Department of Education's Data Reporting System (DRS). This system provides both public access to Nebraska Department of Education's data and reports as well as secure access for districts. It includes tools for data analysis on multiple levels of complexity using data from the Nebraska Student and Staff Record System (NSSRS). These resources and trainings better equip state, ESU, district, and building-level personnel to use data to inform efforts around ensuring equity.

**Early Childhood Team**

Although the preschool student population data was not included in the data analysis or the development of the Educator Equity Plan, Nebraska Department of Education's Early Childhood Team is committed to ensuring access to quality educators for all students and maintaining and strengthening the effectiveness of all educators. The team continually examines ways to integrate equity expectations in their activities and initiatives including current activities like: Professional Development Institute, Ongoing GOLD assessment training; Pyramid Model implementation team training and ongoing coaching, and Step Up to Quality and Nebraska Quality Rating System.

**1.4 Continue Seeking Direction from Educator Equity Stakeholder Advisory Group**

For an external advisory group, Nebraska will use the ESSA Committee of Practitioners (COP) as the primary advisory group for the Educator Equity Plan. Representatives from teacher preparation programs in higher education, staff from the Adult Services Team, and the Educator Effectiveness tenet lead will be added as members. The COP's involvement in collecting input from stakeholders and community groups was critical to the development of the strategies and performance measures of this plan. Having the COP serve as advisors during implementation of the Educator Equity Plan is essential to ensure that the feedback loop is continuous and that there is accountability for accomplishing tasks in a timely manner. In addition, it supports integration of efforts across all the ESSA programs involved. It can be anticipated that this plan, like any other proposed effort, will need ongoing review and revision over time.

**1.5 Continue Convening Nebraska Department of Education Educator Equity Work Group**

The initial task of this cross-team group was the development of this Educator Equity plan. Through regularly scheduled meetings, the work group will continue to oversee implementation of the plan through monitoring of progress on the objectives of the work plan; measuring and reporting annual progress on the performance goals; and assisting with the coordination of activities that support the plan.

### **1.6 Introduce and Implement an Education Workforce Index**

Nebraska will utilize an Education Workforce Index to mobilize schools, districts, and ESUs to embrace systems of evaluation and support that drive continual and focused growth, produce evidence to inform focused professional growth activities, build capacity of building administrators to serve as instructional leaders and thereby positively influence the capacity of classroom teachers, establish a broader and shared understanding around comprehensive, systemic approaches to human capital management, and advance equity-focused conversations and activities across the state of Nebraska.

## **Strategy 2. Support Equitable Access to Appropriately Endorsed Educators**

*Objective: Increase access to appropriately endorsed educators*

### **2.1 Include Emphasis on Equitable Access in the 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction**

The 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Plan includes goals with benchmarks that measure disaggregated data to ensure equity and access. The State Strategic Plan devotes a goal specifically to the implementation of the statewide teacher equity plan. This ensures a continued prioritization and monitoring of general statewide issues related to equity as well as specific focus on equitable access to effective educators. The incorporation of an Education Workforce Index also contributes heavily to supporting equitable access to appropriately endorsed educators.

### **2.2 Increase the number of classes with appropriately endorsed teachers through the use of technology, such as distance education.**

Equitable access to effective, appropriately endorsed teachers may not always mean hiring new teachers or moving teachers. With Nebraska's many small rural high schools, distance education is an excellent way to expand the number and variety of learning opportunities available for students without the cost of additional staff. Previous funding from the state legislature targeted building the system and acquiring the equipment. The State Legislature has continued to support distance learning courses through funding provided to districts. Distance learning includes synchronous or asynchronous courses. This plan addresses only synchronous courses, which are defined in Rule 10 as "multi-site or distance learning courses in which the teacher and student(s) are simultaneously present; can both see and hear one another; and questions may be answered and instructional accommodations made immediately". A district may offer up to one-fourth of its required instructional units as synchronous courses.

This strategy provides access to appropriately endorsed teachers, and it also provides opportunities for students to take courses that many districts may not otherwise be able to offer. Distance learning, including synchronous courses, is one of the areas of focus in the AQuESTT tenet on Educational Opportunities and Access. It is also one of the three areas of emphasis and collaboration between the Nebraska Department of Education and the Educational Service Units. Given ongoing improvement to technology equipment, infrastructure, and classroom application,

Nebraska Department of Education anticipates continued development and utilization of this mode of delivery

### **2.3 Introduce and Implement an Education Workforce Index**

Nebraska will utilize an Education Workforce Index to mobilize schools, districts, and ESUs to embrace systems of evaluation and support that drive continual and focused growth, produce evidence to inform focused professional growth activities, build capacity of building administrators to serve as instructional leaders and thereby positively influence the capacity of classroom teachers, establish a broader and shared understanding around comprehensive, systemic approaches to human capital management, and advance equity-focused conversations and activities across the state of Nebraska.

### **Strategy 3. Strengthen the Effectiveness of Existing Educators**

*Objective: Increase the effectiveness of all educators as evidenced by improved student outcomes*

#### **3.1 Expand the use of the Teacher & Principal Performance Framework and model evaluation systems to all districts**

Nebraska developed the Teacher & Principal Performance Framework of effective practices and example indicators for teachers and principals. The Framework was informed by the profession's national standards including the 2010 Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards and the 2008 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). The Principal Framework was enhanced to align with the Performance Standards for Education Leaders (PSEL) in 2016.

The purpose of this framework is to define effective practices to improve teaching and learning and was used as the foundation for the teacher and principal evaluation system. It was piloted in 17 districts and became an option for all districts starting in the 2015-2016 school year. The Nebraska model evaluations include options for research based instructional models of Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching*<sup>170</sup> (2007) or Robert Marzano's *Causal Evaluation Model*<sup>171</sup> (2007). The model encourages the use of student learning objectives (SLOs) as a measurement of student progress and requires individualized professional learning plans for every educator. Nebraska Department of Education and the ESUs have developed and provide the training for implementing this model system of evaluation. Nebraska Department of Education has hired a 1.0 FTE staff representative to lead this initiative. This strategy addresses an aim of this plan to strengthen the effectiveness of educators and supports the integration of the Educator Equity Plan with the efforts of AQuESTT. Since the framework incorporates a universal instructional model throughout a school system it will likely improve academic achievement and help all general and special education students, including minority and children from families living in poverty, to be more successful in school. The implementation of this evaluation model statewide will improve the quantity and quality of data available, although there is no intention at this time of collecting performance data for individual educators.

### 3.2 Encourage AQuESTT-aligned continuous improvement processes in all schools

To be accredited in Nebraska, districts must develop and implement a Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP). Nebraska Department of Education provides guidance and several options for districts to accomplish this. Presently, approximately 1/2 of all schools in Nebraska elect to use AdvancED to meet their school improvement requirements for accreditation. Those not relying on AdvancED meet school improvement requirements via alternate venues.

There is a natural connection between the standards outlined by the AdvancED process, the AQuESTT state accountability system, and the 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction (Table 30). Messaging AQuESTT-aligned continuous improvement processes and supports establishes a common understanding of school improvement for all schools, regardless of whether they elect to use AdvancED to meet accreditation requirements.

*Table 30 AQuESTT- 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction-AdvancED Alignment*

AQuESTT-Tenets and the 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction	AdvancED Standards
2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction	Purpose and Direction
Positive Partnerships, Relationships, and Student Success	Resources and Support Systems
Assessment College and Career Ready	Using Results for Continuous Improvement
Educator Effectiveness College and Career Ready	Teaching and Assessing for Learning
Transitions Educational Opportunities and Access	Resources and Support Systems
2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction	Governance and Leadership

It is important that all schools and districts have access to quality resources necessary for an effective continuous improvement process. Nebraska Department of Education will continue to collaboratively develop supports and networks to encourage AQuESTT-aligned continuous improvement processes in all schools. Doing so through the lens of AQuESTT and the 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction will ensure broad relevance of resources and the promotion of a common language of school and district standards across the state of Nebraska.

### 3.3 Require Priority Schools to address professional learning in their Progress Plans

Priority Schools are identified through the AQuESTT designation process, and these schools receive support from Nebraska Department of Education and ESU collaborative intervention teams. The intervention teams, when conducting a diagnostic review of the priority school, will examine the district's professional development plan to see if the opportunities provided to teachers and principals are focused on helping them be more effective in raising the academic

achievement of all general and special education students but particularly of minority students and children in poverty.

### **3.4 Introduce and Implement an Education Workforce Index**

Nebraska will utilize an Education Workforce Index to mobilize schools, districts, and ESUs to embrace systems of evaluation and support that drive continual and focused growth, produce evidence to inform focused professional growth activities, build capacity of building administrators to serve as instructional leaders and thereby positively influence the capacity of classroom teachers, establish a broader and shared understanding around comprehensive, systemic approaches to human capital management, and advance equity-focused conversations and activities across the state of Nebraska.

### **Strategy 4: Attract and Prepare Future Effective Educators**

Objective: Increase the number and quality of new teachers and principals.

#### **4.1 Loan Forgiveness Programs**

Supporting individuals to complete teacher preparation programs, as well as to encourage teachers to access continuing professional learning through Master's programs, is important to the goal of enhancing the availability of effective educators for all Nebraska students. The state funded Excellence to Teaching forgivable loans for pre-service and in-service teachers, specifically targeting high need content areas by accelerating loan forgiveness for work in high-poverty systems. In addition, a new component extended the program to include adding endorsements – meaning that more individuals are able to access the program and use the funds to obtain endorsements in such areas as ESL, special education, reading/writing, world languages, etc. More information available at:

<http://www.education.ne.gov/EducatorPrep/TopPages/EETP.html><sup>172</sup>

#### **4.2 Educator Preparation Accountability**

Determining the effectiveness of educator preparation is foundational to building an effective teaching force. Quality assessments, which provide consistent statewide data, disaggregated by institution, can inform statewide and institution continuous improvement decisions. The following assessments are being implemented or are under development, and they support educator effectiveness.

- Statewide Clinical Experience Evaluation based on national standards for educator preparation (InTASC). This assessment includes indicators related to classroom management, adapting instruction to individual student needs, content knowledge, etc. This evaluation is the result of collaborative work between Nebraska Department of Education and the state's teacher preparation programs who have also been involved in the development of the Teacher & Principal Performance Framework to ensure consistency in training and practice.
- First Year Teacher Employer Follow-up Survey that is administered by Nebraska Department of Education to all Nebraska systems employing Nebraska-prepared 1st

year teachers. The survey is based on national standards and includes the indicators discussed above. Data is returned to institutions for program improvement considerations.

- An annual State Educator Preparation Program Report Card publicly reports indicators such as results from the new content testing and other candidate proficiency factors, candidate retention/completion rates, graduate placement, and employment retention. The Report Card uses data from the teacher preparation programs including the above noted evaluation and survey. The Report Card also uses data from Nebraska's P-20 Initiative, a collaborative data sharing effort involving K-12, Nebraska Department of Education, and all postsecondary institutions.
- Content Testing. As of September 1, 2015, individuals seeking a first time endorsement must pass a content test to verify their content knowledge. Information on candidate performance on these tests will be used by institutions to strengthen content preparation of candidates. More information is available at <http://www.education.ne.gov/EducatorPrep/TopPages/SkillsTesting.html>.<sup>173</sup>

#### **4.3 Work with Higher Education Programs to Encourage Individuals to Become Teachers, Especially Minorities**

Nebraska reports a disparity in the number of minority students and their teachers. According to the 2015 Equity Plan, the percentage of students reported as White, Not Hispanic equals 69% of the total population but the percentage of White, Not Hispanic teachers is 96.28%. Hispanic students comprise 17% of the student population but only 1.79% of the teacher population. Native American students are 1% but Native American teachers are only 0.15%. A similar situation exists for African American or Black students having 7% of the population with only 0.91% of the teacher population. Although ethnicity is not an indicator of effectiveness, minority students may not be as eager to become teachers without role models that reflect their race/ethnicity.

Several efforts are underway to encourage greater diversity in the teacher workforce. Nebraska Department of Education is partnering with the University of Nebraska – Lincoln to increase the number of Native American teachers. Nebraska Department of Education also hosts summits for Native American educators and an annual statewide conference for Hispanic students. The Educator Equity Plan will continue to provide assistance and support for these endeavors.

#### **4.4 Introduce and Implement an Education Workforce Index**

Nebraska will utilize an Education Workforce Index to mobilize schools, districts, and ESUs to embrace systems of evaluation and support that drive continual and focused growth, produce evidence to inform focused professional growth activities, build capacity of building administrators to serve as instructional leaders and thereby positively influence the capacity of classroom teachers, establish a broader and shared understanding around comprehensive, systemic approaches to human capital management, and advance equity-focused conversations and activities across the state of Nebraska.



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## Section 6: Supporting All Students

### 6.1 Well-Rounded and Supportive Education for Students

*Instructions: When addressing the State's strategies below, each SEA must describe how it will use Title IV, Part A funds and funds from other included programs, consistent with allowable uses of funds provided under those programs, to support State-level strategies and LEA use of funds. The strategies and uses of funds must be designed to ensure that all children have a significant opportunity to meet challenging State academic standards and career and technical standards, as applicable, and attain, at a minimum, a regular high school diploma.*

*The descriptions that an SEA provides must include how, when developing its State strategies, the SEA considered the academic and non-academic needs of the following specific subgroups of students:*

- *Low-income students;*
- *Lowest-achieving students;*
- *English learners;*
- *Children with disabilities;*
- *Children and youth in foster care;*
- *Migratory children, including preschool migratory children and migratory children who have dropped out of school;*
- *Homeless children and youths;*
- *Neglected, delinquent, and at-risk students identified under Title I, Part D of the ESEA, including students in juvenile justice facilities;*
- *Immigrant children and youth;*
- *Students in LEAs eligible for grants under the Rural and Low-Income School program under section 5221 of the ESEA; and*
- *American Indian and Alaska Native students.*

The SEA will ensure that each LEA has accurately collected subgroup data and considered the identified needs of each subgroup listed above through a Comprehensive Needs Assessment at the LEA level. They will obtain and monitor the reporting of this information in several ways:

- Consolidated ESEA Application review and approval process
- Three-year On-site Monitoring process by Federal Programs personnel at the SEA level
- Continuous Improvement Process (CIP) used for school accreditation
- Special Education formal monitoring process
- Nebraska Data Reporting System (DRS)
- Nebraska Education Profile (NEP)
- State funding formula (TEEOSA)
- Evidence-Based Analysis (EBA) at the district and building levels.

The inclusion of the EBA to this list of monitoring procedures helps to meet the expectation that

LEAs will address the requirements of ensuring that students receive a ‘well-rounded education’. The overall purpose of the EBA is to obtain information about measures of the six tenets to support statutory requirements of school and district classification and the designation of priority schools. In addition, the EBA is designed to obtain information to inform the strategic development and prioritization of statewide systems of support for schools and districts, as it addresses the level of success districts are having in meeting the six tenets of AQuESTT. This will be especially valuable in measuring progress in the tenets of Positive Partnerships, Relationships and Student Success, and Educational Opportunities and Access.

Even though a Comprehensive Needs Assessment is not required of districts under SSAE unless they receive \$30,000 or more in Title IV-A funds, the SEA will require through their Consolidated ESEA Grant Application, as well as through a competitive Title IV-A grant application process that each LEA receiving funding under this part must include a needs assessment to ensure that all federal funds they receive are being used to address the greatest identified needs of the LEA. The results of these locally conducted needs assessments will be utilized by each LEA in developing its goals and interventions for the use of federal funds in meeting the needs of these student populations, with specific focus on subgroups for whom evidence reflects a gap in either academic or non-academic success. In addition, the SEA will require each LEA, or a consortium of LEAs to prioritize the use of their funds on the school buildings with the greatest need as outlined in Section 4106(e)(2) of the ESEA, and to include in their grant applications a clear description of the evidence-based intervention strategies they will be supporting with these funds.

Specific to the newly required identification of children in foster care as a subgroup, the NDE, in collaboration with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child and Family Services (DHHS-CFS), has convened a task force comprising of stakeholders throughout Nebraska. The members include teachers, administrators, DHHS personnel, the required SEA point of contact, and other individuals with experience with foster children. The purpose of this task force is to determine how to best serve the educational needs of Nebraska children in foster care. DHHS-CFS is the state agency in Nebraska responsible for administering the Nebraska plans under parts B and E of Title IV of the Social Security Act. Currently, Nebraska law under Neb. Rev. Stat. §79-215, ensures that children remain in their school of origin. The task force has been exploring ways to amend the law and corresponding state regulations to harmonize with educational stability provisions. Such exploration includes state-wide consideration of the relevant factors when making a determination regarding what is in a child’s best interest, including the appropriateness of the student’s current educational setting and the proximity of the school the student is enrolled in when placed in foster care to where the student’s placement is located along with other Nebraska specific considerations. The task force is also exploring ways the law will include the coordination of the transfer of records to a new school and immediate enrollment when it is in a child’s best interest to transfer from their school of origin. The new laws and guidance will include assurances that transportation is provided and paid for to the school of origin when necessary.

In addition to the work on amending law and regulation, the task force has developed a model memorandum of understanding that DHHS-CFS and school districts may utilize when providing for and arranging transportation. This group is also developing a model policy for school districts when they have a student who enters foster care. The task force has also developed educational materials with information about the educational stability requirements that have been distributed to districts. The task force has also developed and provided training to various educational agencies to help them better understand their responsibilities for the educational stability of children in foster care.

Nebraska, through the SEA Point of Contact (POC) for foster children, had, prior to the enactment of the Every Student Succeeds Act, created the foster care liaison network. This was a collaboration between the Nebraska Supreme Court, DHHS-CFS, Nebraska State Probation Administration, and the Nebraska Educational Service Unit Coordinating Council to address the education of the children and youth served by these systems. This is a list of contacts distributed between these entities to facilitate communication between individual school districts and those responsible for the care and custody of foster children.

DHHS-CFS with the coordination, resources, and support of the Nebraska Department of Education, has developed an automated “Superintendent Letter” which provides electronic written notification to school districts when a child has entered foster care, changed school districts, changed placements, parental rights have been terminated or relinquished, exited foster care, or there has been a change in case manager. Any one of these status changes in the life of a foster child triggers an automatic notification to the school that student is currently enrolled in. This ensures improved communication between DHHS-CFS and school districts to ensure educational stability of students in foster care.

These SEA accomplishments, along with the future work of the task force, will continue to ensure all children in foster care have all available educational opportunities.

*A. The State’s strategies and how it will support LEAs to support the continuum of a student’s education from preschool through grade 12, including transitions from early childhood education to elementary school, elementary school to middle school, middle school to high school, and high school to postsecondary education and careers, in order to support appropriate promotion practices and decrease the risk of students dropping out;*

Nebraska’s strategies for supporting LEAs to support the continuum of a student’s PreK-12 education, include the following transitions:

- Neb. Rev. Stat. §79-760.01 requires that the Nebraska State Board of Education adopt measurable academic content standards in the subject areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies. In addition, the Nebraska Department of Education has developed content standards for the fine arts, physical education, health education, world languages, and Career and Technical Education. These standards are an articulation of learning expectations kindergarten through high school aligned across

grade levels to ensure a continuum of educational expectations, opportunities, and smooth transitions across all grade levels.

- Nebraska adopted the Accountability for a Quality Education System, for Today and Tomorrow (AQuESTT) to ensure every Nebraska student, upon completion of secondary education, is prepared for postsecondary education and/or to pursue their career goals. Examples of how the Nebraska AQuESTT system ensures student success include:
  - The results of multiple assessment sources are used to measure student achievement of college and career ready standards as an integral part of the instructional process;
  - Students are surrounded by effective educators throughout their learning experiences;
  - Schools provide support for students' transition between grade levels, programs, schools, districts, and ultimately college and careers.
- The Nebraska Board of Education adopted a policy for Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) which ensures quality programs during afterschool, summer, and on days when school is not in session to provide academic support for students. These programs support success by providing academic support and enriching learning opportunities for students through engagement in in-depth integrated learning experiences. These programs also support the transition of students between levels through continuity of staff, by providing experiences that develop skills needed for successful transitions, and supporting families as their children and youth transition.
- Each LEA that receives Title I funds has an individual assigned specifically to them within the Nebraska Department of Education, Federal Programs Division, to serve in a consulting capacity to provide technical support and assistance to the LEA regarding any, and all components of the federal programs they operate and the federal funds they use to support those programs. These Federal Programs consultants offer advice and suggestions throughout the school year to LEA representatives in their assigned schools on a variety of the requirements in ESSA, including the effective transition of students from elementary to middle and middle to high school grades. Resources are provided to LEA representatives through NDE staff and Educational Service Unit staff to support dropout prevention programs and intervention steps the LEA may take to address dropout issues that are tied to the LEA's annual Comprehensive Needs Assessment. These intervention steps are then included in their ESSA Consolidated Application and/or their Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP), which is required for accreditation of their school district.
- In addition to the general consultation and support provided to each LEA by their assigned consultant, any LEA operating a Title I Schoolwide Program is required to provide an outline in their Schoolwide Plan of how they are ensuring the effective transition of their students from one grade-span to the next. Section 7 of the Schoolwide Plan Self-Review Rating Rubric requires districts to evaluate how well their Schoolwide Plan is meeting this requirement in their district. During the Peer Review Process of these Schoolwide Plans, facilitated by the NDE consultant, suggestions can be provided in writing to the LEA in Sections 6.1-6.4 of the Peer Review Rating Rubric regarding any

improvements that can be made in addressing these transition requirements of their Plan.

- Any Title I schools identified for Comprehensive or Targeted Support will receive additional contacts and support via telephone, electronic media, or on-site discussion upon request, from their assigned Federal Programs consultant. If the areas of transitioning students and/or dropout rates are related to the identified lag in students' ability to meet the established State Academic Standards, NDE consultants will assist schools in creating appropriate interventions and methods of monitoring progress through their 5-year Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) process and/or annual School Improvement Accountability Grant applications.

*B. The State's strategies and how it will support LEAs to provide equitable access to a well-rounded education and rigorous coursework in subjects in which female students, minority students, English learners, children with disabilities, or low-income students are underrepresented. Such subjects could include English, reading/language arts, writing, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, geography, computer science, music, career and technical education, health, or physical education.*

**The Shared Systems and Supports** is a Nebraska Department of Education initiative that guides the development of Nebraska's Instructional Improvement System. According to the Reform Support Network<sup>174</sup> (2014), "An [Instructional Improvement System] is a system, based in technology, which provides data to enable teachers, principals and other administrators to manage continuous instructional improvement. An Instructional Improvement System offers a common technology platform with one user interface across multiple systems and navigational paths to deliver the right information at the right time to the right people for the improvement of instruction."

The Nebraska Shared Systems and Supports project creates a fundamental shift toward efficiency in access to digital learning resources and tools. The approach reduces local and state burdens, increases equitable access to digital education, and improves the privacy and security of student information across Nebraska. A core component of the Nebraska Instructional Improvement System is a professional development system that provides educators with a system to find, access and manage professional learning and development opportunities - online and in-person. Other core components include a standards database, learning object repository, course-building tool, learning management system, and assessment object repository. These components are limited neither to specific subject content nor to specific districts/schools. This System of Supports Project opens the door to greater equity of access to resources and supports for all educators in the state of Nebraska. This initiative is in its infancy, but the need for such a system has been long-expressed. It plays a critical role in Nebraska's efforts to develop effective teachers and educational leaders and ensure equitable access for learners who are most in need of support.

## Nebraska Department of Education Innovation Grant Fund

Programs targeting specific subgroups have been shown to improve student engagement and academic achievement. Nebraska's Innovative Grant Fund and the Innovation Grant Program were created with the passage of Legislative Bill (LB) 519, effective August 30, 2015. This competitive grant program provides funding opportunities to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to support the development, expansion and investment in innovative best practices that improve:

- Education outcomes for early childhood, elementary, middle school, or high school students;
- Transitions between any successive stages of education; or
- Transitions between education and the work force.

LEA's may elect to focus this grant on areas that would increase student access to a well-rounded education. Priority consideration is given to those that:

- Serve "High Need" students;
- Serve students attending "Needs Improvement" schools;
- Focus on the tenets of AQuESTT, or leverage technology in the context of innovation to support instructional practice and professional development.

*C. If an SEA intends to use Title IV, Part A funds or funds from other included programs for the activities that follow, the description must address how the State strategies below support the State-level strategies in 6.1.A and B.*

*Does the SEA intend to use funds from Title IV, Part A or other included programs to support strategies to support LEAs to improve school conditions for student learning, including activities that create safe, healthy, and affirming school environments inclusive of all students to reduce:*

- i. Incidents of bullying and harassment;*
- ii. The overuse of discipline practices that remove students from the classroom; and*
- iii. The use of aversive behavioral interventions that compromise student health and safety?*

Yes. If yes, provide a description below.

☒ No.

## School Conditions

The SEA will require each LEA receiving Title I funds to include in its ESSA Consolidated Application an explanation of how the LEA is addressing each of the three areas of School Conditions listed above. Although the SEA does not intend to use either Title I-A or Title IV-A funds directly to support LEAs in the improvement of school conditions specific to these three categories, technical support will be readily available from Nebraska Department of Education Consultants to assist LEA representatives in developing and evaluating programs at the district and building level to ensure these issues are being addressed.



Each LEA is required by State Statute to adopt a Board Policy on bullying prevention and dating violence. Nebraska State Statute also requires all certified school personnel to complete one hour of suicide prevention training each year. The approved training is designated by Nebraska Department of Education each year and focused on evidence-based training. Nebraska Department of Education has Safety and Security Standards guidance for schools to increase the level of safety and security in their schools. Nebraska State Statute also mandates that every school building must have a security assessment completed by the State School Security Director by August 2019 and that every school submit their safety plan to the State School Security Director. Nebraska Rule 10 requires every school has an annual safety audit. In addition, both LEA and SEA representatives continue to collect and analyze data at the LEA and SEA level regarding discipline practices and outcomes, especially focused on students with disabilities, minority populations, and students from low-income families. Model intervention programs, model policies and evidence-based practices surrounding bully prevention and disciplinary practices continue to be researched by SEA staff and guidance is provided to LEAs to adopt such policies and practices through a variety of venues. On-going technical support from SEA specialists is available to each LEA throughout the year to assist and respond to questions regarding any of the requirements listed here.

In addition, the SEA will continue to support each LEA in Nebraska in their efforts to address bullying and harassment; overuse of discipline; and aversive behavioral interventions, including those schools receiving Title I-A funds, through several programs and activities outlined below. Nebraska has been awarded and implementing a State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) since 1999. With the award of the 2017 grant, Nebraska will continue to implement the grant through 2021. These grants are competitive and the push from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is for states to align their SPDG goals and grants with their State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) and State Identified Measureable Result (SIMRs). Through the State Personnel Development Grant, Nebraska supports schools in the implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

The Nebraska PBIS Network was created to address schools' needs for School wide PBIS training statewide. PBIS is defined as "an approach that begins with school-wide and classroom prevention efforts, and then adds targeted and individualized support for those students with more extreme needs." PBIS has five core strategies: 1) focus on preventing the development and occurrence of problem behavior, 2) teach appropriate social behavior and skills, 3) acknowledge appropriate behavior, 4) gather and use data about student behavior to guide behavior support decisions, and 5) invest in the systems that support adults in implementation of effective practices."<sup>175</sup>

To date, the Nebraska PBIS Network has provided training and technical assistance to over 215 schools and districts across the state of Nebraska. In addition to providing regional trainings open to all Nebraska schools, the Nebraska PBIS Network provides intensive, onsite technical assistance for partner schools/districts. The number of schools expressing interest in partnering with the Nebraska PBIS Network increases each year and far exceeds its capacity to provide

support, particularly as more and more partner schools require more intensive and individualized support and staff training to meet the needs of students in tiers 2 and 3.

Through data collection several needs were identified for the Nebraska SPDG related to improving behavior and academic outcomes for students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers. The statewide needs were derived from: 1) the evaluation data from the previous NSIG and NSPDG; 2) the Nebraska State Performance Plan (SPP) and results from the last Annual Performance Report (APR); 3) input from stakeholders representing relevant agencies and organizations from all geographic areas of the state, e.g., Institute of Higher Education (IHE), Parent Training and Information Center (PTI), Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI), Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska (BHECN), ESU; 4) national research on evidence-based practices in behavior and instruction/academics; and 5) OSEP funded Centers on: PBiS, State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP), Nebraska Implementation Research Network (NIRN), Center for Educational Outcome, National Center on RTI, and National Research Center on Learning Disabilities.

Nebraska began efforts to implement and sustain PBiS with the Nebraska State Improvement Grant (1999-2005) and continued those efforts with three additional grant awards (2005 – 2010, 2011 – 2016, and 2017-2021).

Fullan<sup>176</sup> (2010) and Lusi<sup>177</sup> (1997) noted that authentic reform requires addressing education as a system. NSPDG explicitly improves and reforms systems as it expands current state efforts to coordinate professional development related to improved student achievement and behavior across multiple agencies and offices, rather than address reform in a piecemeal fashion. In Nebraska, the major systems for change are Nebraska Department of Education, Educational Service Units, LEAs, and IHEs. Additional areas of focus are parents and communities as they support these systems. Systemic change within the Nebraska Department of Education is demonstrated by the collaboration and leveraging of programs between general and special education. Originally, two Nebraska Department of Education program offices were involved in NSIG. Office of Special Education and Office of School Improvement were responsible for providing programs and professional development, which improve equity of outcomes for students. The original NSIG also partnered with an IHE and PTI. Through expansion and collaboration with other Nebraska Department of Education programs, IHEs, other state agencies, and community agencies and organizations; several PBiS initiatives were developed. With the new NSPDG 2017 grant, several of these established partnerships will be maintained and collaboration with additional offices and initiatives to better meet needs.

Nebraska SPDG staff spent many years improving the state systems of professional development and technical assistance. These systems can provide a strong foundation for the work that must be accomplished through the SSIP. An additional goal has been established to begin increasing capacity through aligning and coordinating initiatives.

PBiS is a national initiative that over the last 15 years has served as the driver to provide the

outcomes stated in the previous SPDG Grants. Through the previous grants, a foundation has been laid and developed. Within the development of the next grant phase, the focus on secondary and tertiary supports has been developed. A systematic approach to the development of schools and the advancing education effectiveness through interconnecting school mental health with school wide positive behavior support.

The implementation of School wide PBiS is proven to reduce the incidences of bullying and harassment; reduce the overuse of discipline practices that remove students from the classroom; and reduce the use of aversive behavioral interventions that compromise student health and safety.

### **How does PBiS fit into other state and federal programs?**

Results Driven Accountability (RDA) seeks to improve the results of students within the special education system. PBiS is an evidence-based practice supported by recent research in helping reduce behaviors for students most at-risk. As the outcome data indicate, schools participating for five or more years in PBiS have reduced office discipline referral rates.

One of the tenets of AQuESTT is positive partnerships, relationships and student success. PBiS could help schools meet that component of the process. Action plans developed by school teams often include steps and strategies on engaging with families and the community. PBiS focuses on developing positive relationships with students and their families.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) emphasizes the use of evidence-based strategies or interventions plus high levels of fidelity of the chosen intervention or system. The implementation drivers cited in the Nebraska MTSS system (Fixsen, NIRN) are the same drivers required for the SPDG grants. Implementation remains a focus of the SPDG grants. Additionally, MTSS best practices include having a team-based approach for implementation which is similar to that required in the Nebraska PBiS process.

Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBiS) in the context of Early Childhood Education, like PBIS in other contexts, is conceptualized best in the larger framework of prevention. The tiered model of prevention offers a hierarchy of prevention and intervention strategies with the intensity of the strategies geared to the level of perceived need. In 2003 Fox and her colleagues described an application of a tiered prevention framework for young children. They presented the “teaching pyramid” as a continuum of supports and services designed to build social competence and prevent challenging behaviors for young children.

Nebraska PBiS will work to provide regional events that are designed to provide personnel in institutes of higher education involved in the preparation of education professionals with an opportunity to learn about SPDG work with PBiS and other statewide multi-leveled systems of supports for academics and behavior. Events will highlight the critical elements of the Nebraska PBiS Framework and provide participants with structured time to network, share, and plan around how PBiS-specific content could be embedded within their curriculum and courses.

Both RtI and PBIS are grounded in differentiated instruction. Each approach delimits critical factors and components to be in place at the universal (Tier 1), targeted group (Tier 2), and individual (Tier 3) levels. The goal is to describe the shared (identified in bold) characteristics of these approaches as a basis for highlighting how best to meet the needs of children experiencing academic and social difficulties in school.

In addition, under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, states are required to identify districts with "significant disproportionality" in special education—that is, when districts identify, place in more restrictive settings, or discipline children from any racial or ethnic group at markedly higher rates than their peers.

Children of color—particularly African-American and American Indian youth—are identified as students with disabilities at substantially higher rates than their peers. It is critical to ensure that overrepresentation is not the result of misidentification, including both over- and under-identification, which can interfere with a school's ability to provide children with the appropriate educational services required by law. It is equally important to ensure that all children who are suspected of having a disability are evaluated and, as appropriate, receive needed special education and related services in the most appropriate setting and with the most appropriate discipline strategies employed.

This rule sets a common standard for identifying significant disproportionality in representation of students within special education, segregated school settings, and in receipt of disciplinary actions and ensures that school districts where disproportionality is found carefully review their policies and practices to determine root causes and whether changes are needed. The final rule ensures that school districts explore and address situations where the cause of significant disproportionality is due to under-identification of a group as well as over-identification. In addition to requiring a standard methodology, the regulations shine a spotlight on disparities in the discipline of students with disabilities on the basis of race or ethnicity by requiring states to examine districts for significant disproportionality in their disciplinary practices. Specifically, the regulations clarify that States must address significant disproportionality in the incidence, duration, and type of disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions, using the same statutory remedies required to address significant disproportionality in the identification and placement of children with disabilities.

Through the IDEA mandate, school districts found to be “significantly disproportionate” in any of the above areas, must identify a means to correct the disproportionality.

**D.** *Does the SEA intend to use funds from Title IV, Part A or other included programs to support strategies to support LEAs to effectively use technology to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students?*

Yes. If yes, provide a description below.

☒ No.

**E.** *Does the SEA intend to use funds from Title IV, Part A or other included programs to support strategies to support LEAs to engage parents, families, and communities?*

☒ Yes. If yes, provide a description below.

No.

**F.1** *Describe how the SEA will use funds received under Title IV, Part A, Subpart 1 for State-Level activities.*

Nebraska intends to use SEA funds under Section 4103 (a)(3) for activities and programs outlined in Section 4104 that may include providing monitoring of, and training, technical assistance, and capacity building to, local educational agencies that receive an allotment under Section 4105 in the following categories as are approvable under Section 4108 (1-5) to develop, implement, and evaluate comprehensive programs and activities that are coordinated with other schools and community based services and programs.

- Foster safe, healthy, supportive, and drug-free environments that support student academic achievement;
- Promote the involvement of parents in the activity or program;
- May be conducted in partnership with an institution of higher education, business, nonprofit organization, community based organization, or other public or private entity with a demonstrated record of success in implementing activities described in this section; and
- May include, among other programs and activities— (B) in accordance with sections 4001 and 4111.

The SEA will develop a system of support for LEAs to meaningfully engage parents and families, and to partner with community groups and support services agencies across all levels of the educational system, PreK-12, with attention paid to supporting access to increased mental health services for their children. This system of support may include Nebraska Department of Education staff members, as well as contracted services through public and private agencies, and institutions of higher education across the state. Additional contracted services will be particularly helpful in addressing the need for increased mental health services at the school or community level.

This area of priority was identified on the basis of information received from Nebraska schools and districts as part of the AQuESTT Evidence Based Analysis (EBA) submitted from the 2015-2016 school year, as well as feedback from numerous Stakeholder Engagement Meetings held during 2016-2017. This data indicated the LEA's need for strategies for meaningfully engaging parents and families in the education of children and youth at all levels, and that there is a severe

lack of available mental health services, as well as resources to obtain such services at the LEA level. Evidence-based strategies will be identified and implemented to benefit all students, with a focus on the families of students identified in Section 6.1 (e.g., low-income, migrant, English learners, homeless). The EBA analysis also indicated the need for strategies to grow partnerships with local, regional, and statewide community partners to strengthen and enhance educational opportunities for all students. These areas were also two of the top five most requested supports for professional development.

Further justification to focus SEA funds from Title IV, Part A on strategies to support LEAs to engage parents, families, and communities is that this area has been identified as one of the strategic priorities in the 2017-26 Strategic Vision and Direction adopted by the NE State Board of Education on December 2, 2016, and is included within two of the AQuESTT Tenets: Positive Partnerships, Relationships and Student Success; and Educational Opportunities and Access. Both of these Tenets reflect the Strategic Vision of the State Board to support school districts in the development and implementation of a comprehensive instructional program for children that expands and enhances their educational opportunities and experiences. Devotion of Title IV-A funds at the State level to provide technical assistance in supporting these two Tenets will increase the ability at the LEA level to identify evidence-based strategies that will meet the unique needs of their students and to implement such strategies at the school building level with fidelity as part of their own continuous improvement process.

The SEA will reserve five percent of the State's Title IV-A allocation (including 1% for administration) for the purposes of supporting State-Level activities targeted toward the greatest identified needs across the state, as identified through the AQuESTT accountability, NSSRS data collection systems, the EBA survey results and other stakeholder input. Due to the limited amount that this five percent reserve will create, it is anticipated that these State funds will be concentrated on supporting parent, family and community engagement strategies and increased access to mental health services for students rather than to spread them across all allowable categories under Title IV-A.

This parent, family, and community engagement concentration of state-level Title IV-A funds reflects strategic support for the state Equity Plan. The SEA models lead for equity by directing funding toward outreach and communications, with a focus on directly engaging low-income families and families of color and building partnerships with organizations that have closer ties to families and community leaders.

***F.2 Describe how the SEA will ensure that awards made to LEAs under Title IV, Part A, Subpart 1 are in amounts that are consistent with ESEA section 4105(a)(2)***

Due to the recent decreases in overall Title IV-A funds becoming available to the SEA, Nebraska has chosen to distribute Title IV-A funds at the LEA level on a competitive grant basis. The small amount of funding available for each LEA to use would otherwise result in very small grants if distributed on a formula basis and would likely not be sufficient to result in any

identifiable improvement in:

- a) Well-rounded education;
- b) School conditions for student learning; or
- c) Use of technology to improve student achievement and digital literacy.

Distribution of these funds on a competitive basis is believed to be a much more effective means of making the best use of these funds for those LEAs who are committed to implementing evidence-based activities under Title IV-A with fidelity.

The SEA will allocate 95 percent of the available Title IV-A funds to LEAs through a competitive grant application on a one-year basis only, for the 2017-2018 school year. Each LEA will be eligible to apply for these competitive grants either individually, or through a consortia of LEAs or Educational Service Units (ESUs). The minimum grant award will remain at \$30,000 for each LEA or consortia, with no established maximum. However, the SEA will ensure through the application review process that all three of the areas identified in Section 4101 of ESSA are covered by one, or more of the LEAs or consortia to which grants are awarded. Grant awards may result in amounts less than those requested in the LEA applications, to ensure that all three of these required areas of activity are being met. These funds can be utilized to meet the unique student needs within each LEA in any one of the three Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) content areas outlined in this section of the law. Priorities will be given during the application process to those LEAs or consortia with the greatest number of low-income students and consideration for distributing Title IV-A funds to both rural and urban populations. Consideration will also be given to applicants that demonstrate through the development of a comprehensive needs assessment that they have the capacity to implement their selected evidence-based intervention strategies toward an identified need, with fidelity. The SEA will ensure that the required distribution of funds across Nebraska covers the three identified content areas in the manner outlined below:

- a) At least 20% for well-rounded education;
- b) At least 20% to improve school conditions for learning; and
- c) A portion for the use of technology to improve student achievement

Any LEA proposing to use Title IV-A funds exclusively for improving technology will be restricted to budgeting no more than 25% for infrastructure and equipment purchases.

The grant application process will be modeled after similar competitive grants in Nebraska, such as McKinney-Vento funds, School Improvement Grants (SIG) and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Grants. Each LEA or consortia will be required to demonstrate, through the competitive grant application process that they have met all of the following requirements in the development of their local plan for the effective use of these Title IV-A funds:

- A Comprehensive Needs Assessment regarding the support of a well-rounded education for all students;

- Selection of measureable goals for the use of Title IV-A funds on the basis of this Needs Assessment;
- Development and implementation of selected intervention strategies, founded in evidence-based practices that ensure a high expectation of success, and;
- Implementation of an evaluation system/process to determine the effectiveness of the selected interventions being supported through Title IV-A and other funds.

## **6.2 Program-Specific Requirements**

### **A. Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by State and Local Educational Agencies**

*Describe the process and criteria that the SEA will use to waive the 40 percent schoolwide poverty threshold under section 1114(a)(1)(B) of the ESEA that an LEA submits on behalf of a school, including how the SEA will ensure that the schoolwide program will best serve the needs of the lowest-achieving students in the school.*

The following describes the process and criteria to be used by the Nebraska Department of Education to waive the 40 percent Schoolwide Program poverty threshold for Title I, Part A:

- If an LEA requests to serve a school with less than 40% poverty through a Schoolwide Program, the LEA will be required to submit a written request to the SEA, along with its Schoolwide Intent Form by Nov. 1 of the year prior to the school year during which the Schoolwide Program will begin implementation.
- The criteria for approval include:
  - Evidence of a poverty level of at least 35% in the Title I building for which the waiver is being requested;
  - A description of how the LEA's decision to implement a Title I Schoolwide Program was determined, including data from the school's Comprehensive Needs Assessment;
  - A description of how the LEA's choice of a Schoolwide Program will meet the needs of all students, including the lowest-achieving students; and
  - A description of how the LEA's service delivery model to meet the needs of the lowest-achieving students in the school will change/improve as a result of implementing a Schoolwide Program.

### **B. Title I, Part C: Education of Migratory Children**

*i. Describe how the SEA and its local operating agencies, which may include LEAs, will establish and implement a system for the proper identification and recruitment of eligible migratory children on a statewide basis, including the identification and recruitment of preschool migratory children and migratory children who have dropped out of school, and how the SEA will verify and document the number of eligible migratory children aged 3 through 21 residing in the State on an annual basis.*



Finding and enrolling eligible migrant children is a cornerstone of the Nebraska Migrant Education Program (MEP) and its importance cannot be overemphasized. The Nebraska MEP is responsible for the proper and timely identification and recruitment (ID&R) of eligible migrant children birth through 21, including preschool migratory children and migratory children who have dropped out of school.

Identification is the process of determining the location and presence of migrant children. Recruitment is defined as establishing contact with migrant families, explaining the State MEP, securing the necessary information to make a determination that the child involved is eligible for the program and certifying the child's eligibility on the national Certificate of Eligibility (COE) created by the U.S. Department of Education. The COE serves as the official record of the state's eligibility for each individual child.

The statewide ID&R Plan includes five statewide centers divided into regions. The centers serve the state with regional recruiters collaborating with LEA recruiters and numerous community and district liaisons. In all five regions, recruiters and liaisons work together to ensure collaboration, coordination, and a statewide perspective toward Nebraska ID & R efforts. A referral network has been established amongst regional and project recruiters and local liaisons. The referral network increases the likelihood of addressing all MEP needs.

The ID&R plan continues to advocate a statewide perspective in the supervision and staff development of all ID&R personnel within the community, the local districts, and among the regional recruiters.

This statewide recruiting system: a) provides year-round recruitment; b) provides ID&R coverage on a statewide basis with a focus on all aspects of the migrant population and the support services required by the unique demands of the migrant lifestyle; and c) blends local and statewide perspectives into a substantial and resourceful system of migrant support. Not only does the ID&R plan fulfill federal regulations, but it also ensures all qualifying MEP children are identified and recruited in Nebraska.

The ID&R plan includes professional development, statewide ID&R procedures, quality control, and interstate and intrastate coordination. Through the implementation of the plan, support and resources to strengthen and enhance the ID&R process and to fully comply with all federal laws and regulations pertaining to the ID&R of migrant children in Nebraska will be provided.

To document child eligibility, the Nebraska MEP uses an electronic version of the national COE to collect eligibility criteria required by U S Department of Education, Migrant Education Program. Once the COE has met quality control measures through the COE Approval Process and deemed eligible, the information is stored in MIS2000 database system to collect, store, process, and electronically transfer student educational information to meet the reporting requirements of the program.

The proper identification and recruitment (ID&R) of migrant children and youth is the foundation on which all other services and migrant education programs (MEPs) are delivered. This first step in the process of delivering high quality services to meet the educational needs of migratory children is highly critical. There has been an overarching need for improvements in the MEP community in terms of how states conduct ID&R and in the level of quality and consistency in which ID&R activities occur.

Nebraska is the lead state for the Identification and Recruitment Rapid Response Consortium (IRRC). The mission of IRRC is to develop resources, strategies, best practices, and creative solutions whose purpose is to improve and enhance ID&R activities in IRRC member states.

*ii. Describe how the SEA and its local operating agencies, which may include LEAs, will identify the unique educational needs of migratory children, including preschool migratory children and migratory children who have dropped out of school, and other needs that must be met in order for migratory children to participate effectively in school.*

The Nebraska MEP planning and implementation is guided by a continuous improvement cycle comprised of:

- A comprehensive needs assessment (CNA): a three phase model; explore what is, gather and analyze data, and make decisions; to identify major concerns, gather data to define needs, and select priority solutions;
- A service deliver plan (SDP): a multi-step process to convene stakeholders to select research-based strategies, based on the CNA findings, to meet the needs of migrant children and youth; develop a plan to implement the strategies; and establish measurable program goals and targets for accountability, and;
- Evaluation measures to determine the extent to which strategies were implemented with fidelity and the impact of those strategies on migrant student achievement.

Joint planning with local, state, and federal programs will occur through the processes in plan to develop the CNA and SDP and to inform the evaluation.

To integrate services and ensure that migrant children receive the full range of services available to address their unique needs, the MEP will consult with other programs that serve migrant children and youth on an ongoing basis. These programs include Head Start, Migrant Head Start, state funded preschool programs, Title I, Title III, 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and McKinney-Vento. Committees formed to update the CNA and the SDP will include representation from the MEP as well as other local, state, and federal programs that work with migrant children and families in the areas of education, health, and other support services. The committee members and their contributions are documented in the CNA, SDP, and evaluation reports.

In order to better understand and articulate the specific services that the Nebraska MEP should target to migrant children and youth and their families, a comprehensive assessment of needs is completed to review and improve the overall design of the Nebraska MEP. Specifically the CAN aims to:

- Identify and assess the unique educational needs of migratory children that result from the children's migratory lifestyle and other needs that must be met in order for migratory children to participate effectively in school;
- Guide the overall design of the MEP on a statewide basis;
- Help local operating agencies and the SEA prioritize needs of migrant children, and;
- Provide the basis for the SEA to sub-grant funds.

The Nebraska CNA will guide future programming and policy decisions to ensure the program's resources are directed at the most needed and most effective services for migrant children and youth. The CNA will be updated periodically as necessary to respond to changes within characteristics of the program and the migrant population in Nebraska.

The CNA process will involve the collection and review of data on migrant student achievement and outcomes, the perceptions of migrant staff and parents related to migrant students' needs, and relevant demographic and evaluation data. A committee of stakeholders and experts will use the data to formulate a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of the migrant student population in Nebraska, and describe and quantify their needs, as well as solution strategies to guide the MEP.

During the regular school year, migrant students enroll in the local school district and are screened and assessed with the instruments used for all students. When children arrive in the summer, local and comprehensive summer school projects assess newly identified migrant children and youth to determine their individual strengths and areas for growth and support in mathematics and reading. Preschool age children who receive home-based or summer preschool services are assessed by using the Nebraska Preschool Assessment Tool (NEPAT) developed by Nebraska MEP staff. Out-of-school youth who are not proficient in English take an English language proficiency screener. These assessment results are used to guide instructional services. The state of Nebraska is a member of the GOSOSY consortium and utilizes materials developed by the GOSOSY consortium to deliver services to migrant out-of-school.

The Nebraska Department of Education has developed partnerships with personnel from other federal programs and community agencies (ex: Head Start, Migrant Head Start, School Districts, Adult Basic Education, Department of Labor, Community Colleges) to ensure that all migrant students, including preschool and those that have dropped out, receive services from all community, state and federal programs for which they may be eligible.

The results of the CNA are included in the Nebraska Migrant Education Service Delivery Plan (SDP) which targets student needs and provide recommendations and strategies to meet those

needs. Each year, LEA/LOAs receiving migrant funds, as part of the local plan submit details as to how to address the needs identified in the SDP.

The Nebraska MEP implements a variety of instructional and support programs designed to meet the needs of migrant students including supplemental instructional services during the regular school year, summer school programs, secondary credit accrual opportunities, HEP and CAMP programs, parent involvement activities and Parent Advisory Committee meetings, and professional development designed to increase staff ability to provide high quality instruction. In addition, Nebraska conducts intensive statewide identification and recruitment across the state that is verified by processes and procedures for data quality control.

External evaluators are contracted to assist NDE to 1) ensure objectivity in evaluating the Nebraska MEP, 2) examine the implementation and effectiveness of services, and 3) make recommendations to help the State improve the quality of the services provided to its migrant students. The external evaluators work collaboratively with MEP staff to:

- develop and update data collection tools (e.g., surveys, observation protocols);
- conduct evaluation interviews, structured observations, and focus groups;
- review student achievement data and other outcomes such as graduation rates and courses completed toward graduation;
- observe the operation of the local MEPs through a structured observation and summarize field notes about project implementation, including the coordination of other state and federal programs (Title I, Part A, Title III and McKinney – Vento, 21<sup>st</sup> Century, etc.) with Title I, Part C to meet the needs of migratory children.
- analyze data and prepare an evaluation report containing information about the extent to which program processes such as professional development, parent involvement, and other activities described in the Nebraska SDP are implemented as planned to achieve the State's measurable objectives.

The implementation of services are examined for effectiveness through onsite visits from MEP staff to observe instructional strategies, conduct interviews and surveys, and examine data available on students served and the types of activities provided. In addition, a Fidelity of Strategy Implementation (FSI) tool is utilized by the local projects to measure the project's level of implementation of the Strategies outlined in the SDP. The purpose of the tool is to measure the level of implementation of each MEP Strategy listed in the Nebraska MEP application that aligns with the Nebraska's MEP Service Delivery; address the implementation evaluation of the Nebraska MEP as required by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Migrant Education; to determine the extent to which MEP services are delivered with fidelity; to serve as a self-assessment guide to local MEPs in implementing migrant-funded services in the 3 goal areas: School Readiness, Reading Language Arts, and High School Graduation and Services to Secondary-Aged Youth; to inform State MEP staff and the program evaluator about the level of Strategy implementation at each local project.

The Nebraska Department of Education organizational structure places most of the federal program personnel on the Federal Programs team. This structure allows for coordination and communication between program personnel to ensure the needs of all student are being met through all applicable programs.

*iii. Describe how the SEA and its local operating agencies, which may include LEAs, will ensure that the unique educational needs of migratory children, including preschool migratory children and migratory children who have dropped out of school, and other needs that must be met in order for migratory children to participate effectively in school, are addressed through the full range of services that are available for migratory children from appropriate local, State, and Federal educational programs.*

To meet the unique educational needs of migratory children and their families and to ensure that migrant students reach challenging academic standards and graduate from high school the MEP's goal specifically is to design programs to help migratory children overcome educational disruption, cultural and language barriers, social isolation, health-related problems, and other factors inhibiting migratory children from doing well in school and making the transition to postsecondary education or employment. [Title I, Part C, Sec. 1301(5)].

In order to identify and address the unique educational needs, the Nebraska MEP developed a statewide Service Delivery Plan (SDP) based on a recent Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA). Specifically, the SDP addresses the following (pursuant to *Title I, Part C, Sec. 1306* and 34 CFR 200.83).

- Provides for the integration of services with other ESEA programs.
- Ensures that the state and its local operating agencies identify and address the special educational needs of migratory children.
- Reflects collaboration with migrant parents.
- Provides migratory children with opportunities to meet the same challenging state academic content standards and challenging state student academic achievement standards that all children are expected to meet.
- Specifies measurable program goals and outcomes.
- Encompasses the full range of services that are available for migratory children from appropriate local, state, and federal educational programs.
- Reflects joint planning among local, state, and Federal programs.

The service delivery strategies identified by the SDP Committee took into consideration the needs identified during the CNA process as well as the solution strategies determined. There are five strategies for school readiness, four strategies for reading/writing and mathematics, and four strategies for high school graduation/services to Out of School Youth (OSY). The strategies will be used as the target for the implementation of the MEP.

The Nebraska MEP convened a SDP committee comprised of key stakeholders from Migrant Education as well as content area experts who also served on the CNA committee for the CNA process, ensuring continuity from one phase of the Continuous Improvement Cycle to the next.

In order to identify and address the unique educational needs, the Nebraska MEP developed a statewide Service Delivery Plan (SDP) based on a recent CNA. Specifically, the SDP addresses the following:

- Provides for the integration of services with other ESEA programs;
- Ensures that the state and its local operating agencies identify and address the educational needs of migratory children;
- Reflects collaboration with migrant parents;
- Provides migratory children with opportunities to meet the same challenging state academic content standards and challenging state student academic achievement standards that all children are expected to meet;
- Include specific measurable program goals and outcomes;
- Encompasses the full range of services that are available for migratory children from appropriate local, state, and federal education programs;
- Reflects joint planning among local, state, and federal programs.

The SDP provides distinct strategies and measurable program outcomes targeted toward School Readiness, Reading/Writing, and Mathematics, and high school graduation and services to out-of-school youth. Each year, local projects implement the program as specified in the plan in communities where migrant families reside. Local migrant project staff link children and families to existing programs and services. The MEP offers supplemental education and support services to respond to the unique needs of migrant children and youth that are not addressed through other state, local, and federal education programs.

The Nebraska MEP offers services during the regular year and in the summer for migrant children and youth. These services include:

- Preschool developmentally appropriate programs designed to prepare migrant children for a successful school experience, services are center-based and home-based;
- Family literacy programs;
- Outreach and assistance to enroll in regular school year programs;
- Supplemental instructional or tutorial support;
- Secondary school services to assist high school students in achieving graduation as well as postsecondary and career preparation;
- Youth leadership programs;
- Provide awareness of HEP and CAMP program opportunities for secondary and OSY students;
- Service providers assist OSY in developing individual goal plans;

- Outreach and instruction in HSED preparation, life skills, and English as a second language for out-of-school youth and those who have dropped out of school;
- Parent engagement activities;
- MEP summer school programs include participation in the Binational Migrant Education Initiative; visiting teachers from Mexico; migrant liaisons work with schools and migrant students and families to make sure their needs are addressed;
- Support services including health, nutrition, and transportation.

*iv. Describe how the State and its local operating agencies, which may include LEAs, will use funds received under Title I, Part C to promote interstate and intrastate coordination of services for migratory children, including how the State will provide for educational continuity through the timely transfer of pertinent school records, including information on health, when children move from one school to another, whether or not such move occurs during the regular school year (i.e., through use of the Migrant Student Information Exchange (MSIX), among other vehicles).*

On a statewide basis, the Nebraska MEP utilizes the MIS2000 database system to collect, store, process, and electronically transfer student educational information to meet the reporting requirement of the program. Section 1306(b)(2) requires SEAs to promote interstate and intrastate coordination by providing for educational continuity through the timely transfer of pertinent school records when children move from one school to another, whether or not the move occurs during the regular school year. The time transfer of student records can be an effective means of reducing the effects of educational disruption on migrant students.

The Nebraska MEP also utilizes MSIX to provide authorized users the support in decision making on student enrollment, grade placement, and credit accrual.

*v. Describe the unique educational needs of the State's migratory children, including preschool migratory children and migratory children who have dropped out of school, and other needs that must be met in order for migratory children to participate effectively in school, based on the State's most recent comprehensive needs assessment.*

The primary purpose of the CNA is to guide the overall design of the Nebraska MEP on a statewide basis as well as to assure that the findings of the CNA are folded into the Comprehensive State Plan for Service Delivery. The Service Delivery Plan (SDP) is designed to help the Nebraska MEP develop and articulate a clear vision of: 1) the needs of Nebraska migrant children; 2) the Nebraska MEP's measurable program outcomes and how they help achieve the State's performance targets; 3) the services the Nebraska MEP will provide on a statewide basis; and 4) how to evaluate whether and to what degree the program is effective.

During the Needs Assessment Committee (NAC) meetings, the Committee addressed the following:

- The CNA planning cycle and the roles/responsibilities of the NAC;

- Existing data and information to make determinations about the needs of migrant students;
- Goal areas for the MEP and preliminary concern statements; and
- Decisions on next steps in the planning cycle

The implementation of services are examined for effectiveness through onsite visits from MEP staff to observe instructional strategies, conduct interviews and surveys, and examine data available on students served and the types of activities provided. The MEP projects complete a Fidelity of Strategy Implementation.

The NAC reviewed the goal areas originally established by OME. It then indicated how the needs of Nebraska migrant students fit within these broad categories and combined areas of need that NAC practitioners and content area experts found necessary. The Nebraska Standards provide a guide to delivering challenging and meaningful content to students that prepares them for success in life. In consideration of State standards and OME recommendations for the CNA, the three goal areas established by the NAC follow:

Goal 1: School Readiness

Goal 2: Reading/Writing and Mathematics

Goal 3: High School Graduation and Services to OSY

Upon agreeing to these three goals for improving Nebraska migrant student achievement, each goal was explored in relation to the Seven Areas of Concern established by OME and ensured that concerns and solutions aligned both with the Nebraska Standards and the concerns typically associated with frequent migrancy. The seven recommended areas of concern and the Nebraska context for these concerns are: Educational Continuity, Time for instruction, School Engagement, English Language Development, Education Support in the Home, Health, and Access to Services.

During the CNA Update meeting, the NAC reviewed their previously-developed concern statements in each of the three goal areas, updated the statements based on additional data and input, and categorized needs according to the seven concern areas. The development of the concern statements followed an eight-step protocol as well as specific criteria on how to write the statements, the final concern statements, in order of importance as ranked by the committee.

*vi. Describe the current measurable program objectives and outcomes for Title I, Part C, and the strategies the SEA will pursue on a statewide basis to achieve such objectives and outcomes consistent with section 1304(b)(1)(D) of the ESEA.*

The service delivery strategies identified by the SDP Committee took into consideration the needs identified during the CNA process as well as the solution strategies determined. There are five strategies for school readiness, four strategies for reading/writing and mathematics, and four



strategies for high school graduation/services to OSY. The strategies will be used as the target for the implementation of the MEP<sup>178</sup> (Table 31).

*Table 31 Measurable Program Outcomes*

Measurable Program Outcomes (MPOs)	Evaluation Questions for Program Results	Evaluation Questions for Program Implementation
MPO 1.1a During 2016-17 and each year thereafter, 38% of eligible 3-5 year old migrant children (5% increase over the 2014-15 baseline) will participate in preschool programming to increase school readiness.	1.1a.1 What percentage of preschool migrant children (PFS & non-PFS) participated in preschool programming?	1.1b.2 How many 3-5 year old migrant children participated in preschool programming (migrant and non-migrant funded)? 1.1a.3 How many eligible migrant children ages 3-5 are in Nebraska?
MPO 1.1b During 2016-17 and each year thereafter, 75% of 3-5 year old migrant children participating in MEP-sponsored preschool instruction, will score proficient or show a 5% increase on the Teaching Strategies GOLD or the Statewide MEP Preschool Assessment Tool.	1.1b.1 What percentage of 3-5 year old migrant children (PFS & non-PFS) scored proficient or showed a 5% increase on school readiness assessments?	1.1b.2 How many children scored proficient or showed a 5% increase on school readiness assessments?
MPO 1.2 During 2016-17 and each year thereafter, 80% of parents of preschool-aged migrant children who participated in MEP-sponsored parent/family educational services will show a statistically significant gain ( $p < .05$ ) on a pre/post assessment measuring their ability to help their young children be ready for school.	1.2.1 What percentage of parents who participated in MEP-sponsored parent/family educational services showed a statistically significant gain on a pre/post assessment?	1.2.2 How many parents participated in MEP-sponsored parent/family educational services? 1.2.3 What types of parent/family educational services were provided?
MPO 1.3 During 2016-17 and each year thereafter, at least 80% of all staff who participated in professional learning will show a statistically significant gain ( $p < .05$ ) on a pre/post assessment measuring their ability to use evidence-based strategies, promising practices, and culturally-relevant instruction in school readiness to benefit PK migrant children.	1.3.1 What percentage of staff showed a statistically significant gain on a pre/post assessment?	1.3.2 What types of school readiness professional learning was provided to staff?
MPO 1.4 During 2016-17 and each year thereafter, at least 65% of all eligible 3-5 year old migrant children (same or more than the 2014-15 baseline) will receive MEP-sponsored support services	1.4.1 What percentage of eligible 3-5 year old children (PFS & non-PFS) received MEP-sponsored support services?	1.4.2 How many migrant children ages 3-5 received support services?

that contribute to their development of school readiness skills.

MPO 2.1a During 2016-17 and each year thereafter, 60% of K-12 migrant students who receive MEP-sponsored supplemental instructional services aimed at increasing student achievement in reading/writing and/or mathematics, will score proficient or above, or show a 20% increase on pre/post district assessments.	2.1a.1 What percentage of K-12 migrant students (PFS & non-PFS) scored proficient or above, or showed a 20% increase on pre/post district assessments?	2.1a.2 How many migrant students received reading/math instruction? 2.1a.3 What types of supplemental instructional services were provided?
MPO 2.1b During 2016-17 and each year thereafter, 60% of secondary migrant students entering 11 <sup>th</sup> grade will have received full credit (equivalent to one year) for Algebra I or a higher mathematics course.	2.1b.1 What percentage of secondary migrant students (PFS & non-PFS) entering 11 <sup>th</sup> grade received full credit for Algebra I or a higher mathematics course?	2.1b.2 What support is the migrant program providing to facilitate completion of Algebra I and higher math courses?
MPO 2.2 During 2016-17 and each year thereafter, 80% of parents of migrant students who participated in MEP-sponsored parent/family educational services will show a statistically significant gain ( $p < .05$ ) on a pre/post assessment measuring their ability to support their child in reading/writing and/or math.	2.2.1 What percentage of parents who participated in MEP-sponsored parent/family educational services showed a statistically significant gain on a pre/post assessment?	2.2.2 What educational services were provided to parents?
MPO 2.3 During 2016-17 and each year thereafter, 80% of staff who participated in professional learning will show a statistically significant gain ( $p < .05$ ) on a pre/post assessment measuring their ability to use evidence-based strategies, promising practices, and culturally-relevant instruction in reading/writing and/or math to benefit migrant students.	2.3.1 What percentage of staff showed a statistically significant gain on a pre/post assessment?	2.3.2 What professional learning was provided to staff?
MPO 2.4 During 2016-17 and each year thereafter, at least 75% of all eligible migrant students in grades K-8 (same or more than the 2014-15 baseline) will receive MEP-sponsored support services that contribute to their achievement in reading/writing and/or math.	2.4.1 What percentage of eligible migrant students in grades K-8 (PFS & non-PFS) received MEP-sponsored support services?	2.4.2 What type of support services were provided?
MPO 3.1a During 2016-17 and each year thereafter, 5% of the OSY population will be re-engaged	3.1a.1 What percentage of the OSY population (PFS & non-PFS) were	3.1a.2 What strategies did projects use to re-engage migrant youth?

in an educational recovery program (e.g., re-enroll in school, secondary credit accrual, GED, HEP, alternative education program).	re-engaged in an educational recovery program?	
MPO 3.1b During 2016-17 and each year thereafter, OSY utilizing OSY Lessons will demonstrate an average gain of 20% on OSY Lesson Assessments.	3.1b.1 What percentage of OSY (PFS & non-PFS) demonstrated an average gain of 20% on OSY Lesson Assessments?	3.1b.2 Which lessons did OSY find the most success with?
MPO 3.1c During 2016-17 and each year thereafter, an increasing percentage (5% increase per year over the 2014-15 baseline of 22%) of eligible secondary migrant students (grades 9-12) and OSY will receive MEP-sponsored supplemental instructional services that contribute to their graduation, GED, life skills, and/or career readiness goals.	3.2.1 What percentage of parents who participated in MEP-sponsored parent/family educational services showed a statistically significant gain on a pre/post assessment?	3.2.2 Which MEP-sponsored educational services did parents find most useful?
MPO 3.3 During 2016-17 and each year thereafter, 80% of staff who participated in professional learning will show a statistically significant gain ( $p < .05$ ) on a pre/post assessment measuring their ability to use evidence-based strategies, promising practices, and culturally-relevant instruction contributing to the achievement of secondary migrant youth and OSY.	3.3.1 What percentage of staff showed a statistically significant gain on a pre/post assessment?	3.3.2 Which professional learning did staff find most useful?
MPO 3.4 During 2016-2017 and each year thereafter, at least 75% of all eligible secondary migrant students (grades 9-12) and OSY (Same or more than the 2014-15 baseline) will receive MEP-sponsored support services that contribute to their graduation, GED, life skills, and/or career readiness goals.	3.4.1 What percentage of eligible secondary migrant students and OSY (PFS & non-PFS) received MEP-sponsored support services?	3.4.2 Which support services did secondary students/OSY find most useful?

*vii. Describe how the SEA will ensure there is consultation with parents of migratory children, including parent advisory councils, at both the State and local level, in the planning and operation of Title I, Part C programs that span not less than one school year in duration, consistent with section 1304(c)(3) of the ESEA.*

The State MEP consulted with parents and other persons in parental relation to the children and youth during the development and revision of the State MEP Comprehensive Needs Assessment. The state and local Migrant Parent Advisory Councils (PAC) meet four times during the regular

school year in order to provide them consultation in the planning, operation and evaluation of the program.

*viii. Describe the SEA's priorities for use of Title I, Part C funds, specifically related to the needs of migratory children with "priority for services" under section 1304(d) of the ESEA, including: The measures and sources of data the SEA, and if applicable, its local operating agencies, which may include LEAs, will use to identify those migratory children who are a priority for services; and*

In accordance with ESEA, Section 1304 (d) of the statute gives priority for services to migrant children who are failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet the State's challenging State academic content standards and challenging State student academic achievement standards, and whose education has been interrupted during the regular year.

Key factors that are considered by the State MEP in determining "failing" or "at risk of failing" include the following:

- Disabled/IEP – Student is identified as a student with disabilities (i.e. IEP, 504 Plan)
- Poor Attendance – Student is not attending school regularly (according to district policy).
- Retention – Student has repeated a grade level or a course
- Modal Grade – Student is placed in a class that is not age appropriate (i.e. 1<sup>st</sup>-grade placement, 8 years old)
- Credit Deficient – Student is behind in accruing credits toward graduation requirements (based on local requirements)
- LEP – Student is classified as either non-English proficient or limited English proficient according to local language assessment practice
- Low Performance – Student scores in the "not proficient" level on any of the local assessments - Reading, writing, or mathematics
- OSY – A migrant youth under the age of 22 who 1) has not graduated; 2) is not attending school; 3) is classified as having dropped out and/or is here to work
- Pre-Kindergarten. – Children ages 3-5 who are not served by any other program
- Homeless – A child who is homeless as defined by the McKinney Vento Homeless Education Act

The Nebraska MEP uses the student's school records, MIS2000 and MSIX to identify those "failing or "at-risk of failing" during the student needs assessment process. The Qualifying Arrival Date (QAD) from the child's Certificate of Eligibility is used to identify the students with a qualifying move within the previous one year period.

*2. When and how the SEA will communicate those determinations to all local operating agencies, which may include LEAs, in the State.*

Every local migrant project in Nebraska is required to enter at-risk information on every migrant child/youth into MIS2000. This provides information to determine which migrant children/youth should receive services first, provides other districts/States information should the child/youth move, and it informs audits, and assists the State MEP in determining allocations. All local migrant projects in Nebraska are to have a list of eligible migrant students; a list of students identified as PFS; a list of services available; and a list of students receiving migrant services.

**C. Title I, Part D: Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk**

*i. Describe the SEA's plan for assisting in the transition of children and youth between correctional facilities and locally operated programs.*

Title I Part D grants are offered as formula grants to four school districts and two state agencies, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, and the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services.

Steps-Resource development—Exit begins with entry:

- A Liaison Cadre has been developed in several locations around the state including the 16 Educational Service Units, the six Health and Human Services regions, as well as the 14 largest school districts and other locations. The purpose of the Cadre is to assist in the connection among teachers in public schools with timely re-enrollment and from Title I, Part D supported facilities.
- The Nebraska Department of Education has appointed a Coordinator for System Involved Youth. Among her duties; the following occurs--Coordination and collaboration with the agencies and school districts; NE Dept. of Correctional Services, NE Dept. of Health and Human Services, Office of Behavioral Health, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, the NE Families Collaborative, and NE Court Probation occurs through scheduled monthly meetings. The monthly meetings allow for joint planning in developing processes and steps used in improving youth transition.
- Nebraska has passed legislation Neb. Rev. Stat. §43-425 (2014) and Neb. Rev. Stat. §43-286 (2017) requiring a transition plan 60 days before the student exits a youth correctional facility having a Special Purpose School. This assists the youth and parent for reentry into the community and public school or alternative school. Rule 10 and Rule 18 also require that school districts accept student credits from approved and accredited schools in facilities. Students can graduate from the 3 Special Purpose Schools awarded Title I Part D funds.
- Regular meetings are scheduled with the ESIS Advisory group and Commissioner's Practitioner Committee (representatives from public, private, and alternative educational settings) in regards to the educational concerns of youth returning to their home school or alternative school placement and education in facilities. The collaborative meetings provide a forum for sharing stakeholder information and initiatives. One initiative established for smoother transition will be implemented. This will allow for acceptance of partial credits by the public schools thereby allowing graduation in timely manner for

youth in transition. This fills the need for transition of youth and their many school moves in order to graduate.

- The Nebraska Youth Council (students who have attended facility schools) can provide input and student representatives who can offer student voice for needs while in a juvenile facility and reentry. Special Ed school departments, services for English Language Learners will be included in Education of System Involved Students (ESIS) advisory collaboration.
- Professional development opportunities for educational staff are available to staff; as well as opportunities in “restorative justice” school based training, “trauma informed classroom” trainings, PBIS, and evidence based strategies. Other trainings for career and technical skills readiness and curriculum opportunities are provided such as Habitudes and the Engage Curriculum.
- Advanced ED Accreditation visits to three Special Purpose Schools will monitor the status of school accreditation and assist with continuous improvement opportunities.
- Evidence-based transition activities will be researched via the Neglected and Delinquent Technical Assistance Center (NDTAC) toolkits and the “What Works Clearinghouse”, and other research sources as designated.

#### Steps-Plan Development:

- With the review of resources and the input from various agencies a combined transition plan will be established.
- Seamless transition from the local school to the correctional facility school is an objective of transition planning for students.
- The local school receives notice through an e-notification of the superintendent’s letter that a student from their local school district has been placed in the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center for boys or for girls.
- The local school principal is directed to a secure site to obtain the name of the students and the caseworker for the student. Because of distance from the local school to a correctional facility, a virtual meeting can occur for the 504 plan, the IEP, and also a student assistance plan for transition.
- Records are transmitted to the principal of each of the facility schools from the local school in a timely manner. Through virtual meetings, assignments of incomplete credits can be discussed with the local school counselor or the principal.
- The local school notifies the vocational rehabilitation contact from the Vocational Rehabilitation office serving the local school of the new location of the student. Information can be shared by the local school with the special purpose school by way of the statewide student information system for information such as classroom instructional strategies used, course credits, attendance, and grade records.
- Information from the local school regarding English learner status is also communicated with the facility school.
- Each student has a unique student identification; this enables the correct records to be transferred to the facility school.

- Communication of state assessment timetables can be shared from the local school to the facility school. Any accommodations regarding a student can be communicated from the local school to the facility school.
- Student information is included in the Nebraska student information program and is shared from the local school in the transition process to the principal of the facility school.
- A seamless transition from the facility school back to a local school is a next step for student transition.
- Per Nebraska legislation, The Office of Probation Administration will establish an evidence based reentry process.
- Within 14 days of placement by the court a treatment plan will be established after admission to the facility.
- A transition plan (Academic Advancement Plan) will be developed by the education department in conjunction with the records and contact from the previous school setting or home school district. The plan will be transmitted on an online system now piloted by a rural county detention center, and also can be included on the Advisor SIMS system being piloted in the Department of Corrections with the Educational Service Unit #3.
- The district probation office and office of Juvenile Services personnel will review the individualized reentry plan and expected outcomes with the juvenile, guardian or parent, and the youth's support system. Parents and family will have opportunities to participate in meeting for a smooth transition. A transition plan will be completed within 30 days prior to discharge back to the community or alternative placement. Education Department, and Vocational Rehab Department will also be involved in the transition planning for the student to return to school, enroll in post-secondary, or enter the job market. Parents will be part of this planning via skype if a face to face meeting cannot be arranged.
- The plan can be communicated with the home school by the facility school transition liaison.
- Some students are assigned furlough in the reentry process to complete community and school visits in their transition plans.
- Prior to the school visit, the liaison will communicate with the home school. A caseworker or guardian ad litem, or facility school liaison can accompany the youth and parent for visit and enrollment day.
- The home school will receive credits from the educational program, continue the IEP of the student as needed, and meet with the principal of the school via skype or phone conference.
- A support system and liaison contact will be established for the student
- The Probation Office will provide a juvenile worker for the student if the student is remaining on probation. If not, the student is under the supervision of the parent.
- Follow-up on the student maintaining enrollment for school success will be monitored up to 90 days. This is one requirement of Title I Part D. Roles will be established with various agency staff for follow-up.

ii. *Program Objectives and Outcomes (ESEA section 1414(a)(2)(A))*: Describe the program objectives and outcomes established by the State that will be used to assess the effectiveness of the Title I, Part D program in improving the academic, career, and technical skills of children in the program.

Neb. Rev. Stat. §79-760.3 (2016) established an accountability system called AQuESTT. The State Board of Education's 2017-2026 *Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction* includes the mission of "education for every student each day". The *Guiding Principles for Providing High-Quality Education in Juvenile Justice Secure Care Settings*<sup>179</sup> blends with the above two systems with emphasis on the collaborative tenets: Career Ready, Educational Access, Educator Effectiveness, Positive Relationships, Transition, and Evaluation and Assessment.

- Title I Part D requirements include: improving educational services and the opportunity for youth in correctional facilities to meet the same challenging State academic achievement standards; provide services for successful youth transition, and provide students with support services for drop-out prevention.
- Assessing the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve a high school diploma or equivalent is provided by the NE State Standards. Career and technical skills are included in the Career Standards. A personal learning plan model is available online for all students, parents, and other community members. For all students, the State administers state assessments for content area accountability, and also the ACT is given to all juniors including those in facility schools. More certificate and credential programs are being investigated by the facility schools. Dual enrollment for high school and college courses is available for students.

#### Program Objectives:

- Increase student success in school performance through credit completion yearly in the three year period of 2017-2020. The action plan includes baseline data and a percentage increase of 1% each year for credit completion.
- Increase student access and opportunities for success in graduation and post-secondary activities in a three year period including baseline data on timely re-enrollment, and cohort graduation, post-secondary education, and job enrollment by 1% each year of the three year action plan.

#### Program Outcomes:

- Timely re-enrollment of students in the local school districts.(as collected through student data)
- Aggregate student cohort graduation increases, (collected through state data)
- Post-secondary enrollment increases,(collected from student data)
- An increase in number of students involved in job training and employment.(collected from state data)



- Data will be gleaned from the National Clearinghouse for Colleges, and the Nebraska Labor Department, and the NE GED Department, and school district data reported to the NE Dept. of ED through Advisor collection, and USDE ED Facts collection, student information system.
  - Methods and Strategies—Data collection --Assess program effectiveness in academics, career and technical skills—baseline data will be collected school year 2017-18 in the areas of credits completed, timely re-enrollment, regular high school diplomas, enrollment in job training and employment, and college enrollment/completion. The Dept. of Corrections is participating in pilot program on the student dashboard system through the Educational Service Unit 3 in year 2017-18. A county detention center will participate in the pilot project year for the online Education Advancement Plan for data collection and transition of records among schools.
  - A collection for anecdotal information will be conducted via a collection of baseline data (from the public schools) in number of family engagement activities, types of drop-out prevention programs, career, vocational skill curriculum, and social emotional curriculum offerings. A survey developed by collaborative agencies will be directed to district and state agencies receiving Part D grants to collect this data.
  - Per review of the survey, if there are specific gaps, another objective could be added to the three-year action plan as reflected in the survey needs assessment.
  - State agencies including the Career Education Department, Department of Labor, the Office of Higher Education, the Special ED Parent Training Institute will be included in collaborative needs assessment in the baseline year for the facility schools. This will be collected through a multi-agency survey (for facility schools) to supply baseline data on types of learning support services and curriculum opportunities for students in schools receiving Title I Part D.
  - Per the baseline findings, a percent of increase in the indicators chosen for transition and for performance outcomes will be established through the Commissioner's Practitioner Committee in year 17-18. Currently an increase of 1 percent each year for three years is set. A three-year action plan will be developed by collaborative multi-agency committee.
  - A review of the needs assessment and data collected will be accomplished by the Federal NE Committee of Practitioners, spring of 17-18. Their guidance will provide any further objectives that may be added to the action plans to reach goals through the needs assessment and an evaluation system to establish the impact of Title I Part D.

### **Title III, Part A: Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students**

*i. Describe the SEA's standardized entrance and exit procedures for English learners consistent with section 3113(b)(2) of the ESEA. These procedures must include valid and reliable, objective criteria that are applied consistently across the State. At a minimum, the standardized exit criteria must:*

1. *Include a score of proficient on the State's annual English language proficiency assessment;*
2. *Be the same criteria used for exiting students from the English learner subgroup for Title I reporting and accountability purposes; and*
3. *Not include performance on an academic content assessment.*

Nebraska state rule, *Title 92, Nebraska Administrative Code Chapter 15: Rule 15 Regulations and Procedures for English Learner Programs in Nebraska Public Schools* outlines uniform procedures for entrance and exit from the EL status.

Rule 15<sup>180</sup>

Identification procedures outlined in Section 003 of Rule 15 include the administration of a Home Language Survey to all students enrolling in Nebraska districts that includes the state's required questions. If the parent's or guardian's answers to any of the questions indicate a language other than English, the district must administer an English language proficiency assessment, commonly known as a screener, that has been determined to be valid and reliable in measuring English language acquisition. Based on the composite results of the assessment, the student shall be determined to have met the state's definition of an English learner, which is the same as the federal definition, and therefore, will be identified on the state record system as an EL and provided language development services.

Exiting students from the EL status requires a score of Proficient on the state's required ELP assessment, the ELPA21. The ELPA21 proficiency determination is not a composite score, but rather a profile of proficiency based on the student's performance on the four language domains of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Student scores may range from 1-5 on any given domain. Students scoring any combination of the two highest levels (4 or 5) on all four domains are considered to be proficient on the assessment and should be exited from the EL status. Students scoring level 4 are described as *demonstrating the English language skills required for engagement with grade-level academic content instruction at a level comparable to non-ELs*. Students scoring level 5 are described as *exhibiting superior English language skills, as measured by ELPA21*.

On August 30, 2017, the Nebraska Department of Education convened a stakeholder group with the purpose of soliciting feedback regarding Rule 15 provisions, including entrance and exit requirements in Rule 15 and other state resources. Care was taken to ensure stakeholders representing the diversity of Title III LEAs were included. The stakeholder group included administrators and practitioners representing a mix of rural and urban Title III LEAs across the state. Based on the consultation from this group, Rule 15 was revised to reflect feedback from stakeholders as well as to eliminate any conflicts with the new ESSA requirements. Changes identified to Rule 15 and its companion guidance include:

- All references to Limited English Proficient (LEP) were changed to English learner (EL);
- A required timeline for identifying students as English learners within 30 days of enrollment was added to *Section 003, Identification of English Learners* to the Rule;

- Established a procedure for identification of ELs after the initial identification period for students who were enrolled but were not previously identified;
- *Exit Requirements, Section 007* of the Rule were revised to exclude other assessments and criteria previously used to exit general education EL students from the EL status. The state will no longer allow the use of the English language arts assessment to exit students from the EL status. The Rule has been revised to require districts to use only a determination of proficiency as measured by the state's annual required English Language Proficiency Assessment, which is currently the ELPA21, for exit decisions
- A procedure was established for removing the EL designation from any student who was erroneously identified as an English Learner;
- Monitoring of academic progress of former ELs was increased from two to four years in *Language Instruction Program Review, Section 008* of the Rule;
- Other wording changes were made to reflect current ELP assessment terminology.

ii. SEA Support for English Learner Progress: (ESEA section 3113(b)(6)): Describe how the SEA will assist eligible entities in meeting:

- The State-designed long-term goals established under ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(A)(ii), including measurements of interim progress towards meeting such goals, based on the State's English language proficiency assessments under ESEA section 1111(b)(2)(G); and
- The challenging State academic standards.

The Nebraska Department of Education has provided and will continue to provide support to LEAs in meeting Long-Term Goals, Interim Measures of Progress, and the challenging State academic standards by:

- The adoption and implementation of rigorous English language proficiency standards aligned to the state's English language proficiency assessment, the ELPA21.<sup>181</sup>
- Conducting alignment studies of the Nebraska ELP standards and the state's College and Career Ready Standards (CCR); including the development of resources to aid content and EL teachers in the implementation of both sets of standards.
- Providing resources and technical assistance on allowable EL testing accommodations for content tests, including the administration of native language assessments.<sup>182</sup>
- The adoption of State Rule 15 and accompanying resources outlining the regulations and provisions for the education of English learners including programming and staffing of programs.
- Including an allowance for districts with ELs in the state funding formula that is tied to the submission of an annual EL Plan by the LEA.<sup>183</sup>
- Leading a statewide team of EL professional developers with members representing all Title III LEAs and consortia; the team, partnering with the North Central Comprehensive Center implements a turn-around approach to professional development focusing on EL instructional strategies, curriculum, standards and assessment with a shared focus on the needs of both EL teachers and content teachers serving ELs. The goal of this group is that

the professional development strategies learned in this setting will be “turned around” by taking what was learned back to their districts and consortia and providing similar opportunities for both EL and content teachers. The members of the group are dedicated and experienced professional developers with the common goal of providing professional learning that has a positive and lasting impact on classroom and student performance.

- Hosting focused professional learning collaboration workshops on challenging topics such as improving programming and increasing on-time graduations for high school newcomers and Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE).
- Reducing the number of Long-Term ELs (LTELs) by identifying students not making their growth targets for the first time as measured by the ELPA21. Instead of waiting until students have missed the 6-year timeline to proficiency, it makes sense to highlight the students missing the targets early on so interventions, additional professional development, and other supports may be offered.

*iii. Monitoring and Technical Assistance (ESEA section 3113(b)(8)): Describe: How the SEA will monitor the progress of each eligible entity receiving a Title III, Part A subgrant in helping English learners achieve English proficiency; and*

*1. The steps the SEA will take to further assist eligible entities if the strategies funded under Title III, Part A are not effective, such as providing technical assistance and modifying such strategies.*

The Nebraska Department of Education implements a consolidated Federal Programs application system and monitoring process. The Federal Programs staff members approve grants and monitor LEAs and consortia for Titles I, II, and III. Each member is assigned a geographic area of the state and conduct reviews on a three-year cycle. The Title III team provides assistance to federal programs team members monitoring LEAs with Title III programs by either conducting the Title III section of the review or by providing technical assistance, resources, and support. LEAs are required by Rule 15 to conduct an annual review of their Language Instruction Educational Program’s effectiveness. The areas of review include but are not limited to:

- Program implementation processes in place including a process for identifying students, implementing the language instruction educational program, adequate staffing, assessment and accommodations, and exiting procedures.
- Analysis of student data including performance on the ELP and content assessments.
- Monitoring academic progress of former ELs.
- Identifying and implementing modifications to program based on the review of district practices and data.
- Summarizing findings of the review in a written report to be made available to the public.

Should an LEA’s program be found not to be effective or otherwise in need of improvement through the ESSA consolidated monitoring, through the Continuous Improvement Process tied to accreditation, submission of the annual LEP Plan, by or other means, Nebraska Department of Education provides technical assistance by:

- Providing targeted workshops to address topics of common concern across LEAs;

- Conducting on-site technical assistance visits to individual LEAs or consortia;
- Connecting the LEA to a member of the statewide EL Professional Development team to provide technical assistance to staff or onsite workshops centered on EL friendly strategies and effective program practices;
- Providing dedicated Title III staff members for phone assistance or online support.

**E. Title IV, Part B: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers.**

1. Use of Funds (*ESEA section 4203(a)(2)*): Describe how the SEA will use funds received under the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program, including funds reserved for State-level activities.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) program will use Title IV, Part B funds, as well as other federal funds, to establish and implement strategies that support educationally at-risk students identified in 6.1.A and 6.1.B above. This system of support addresses both students' academic and non-academic needs during times when school is not in session including afterschool, non-school days, and in the summer. All sub-grantees are required to participate in applicable USDA nutrition programs ensuring healthy snacks and/or meals are provided to students who attend programs afterschool and in the summer. The 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funds ensure students' academic success through implementation of strategies that support three overarching program goals:

- Improve student learning performance,
- Increase student social benefits and positive behavioral changes,
- Increase family and community engagement in supporting students' education.

These three program goals are accomplished through an intentionally designed program aligned to the Nebraska State Board of Education goals and Strategic Plan, as well as the six tenets of Nebraska's accountability system, AQuESTT. Examples of this alignment and support include:

- **Positive Partnerships, Relationships and Student Success:** Collaborative partnerships between school day and afterschool educators, families, community partners and local businesses provide a system of support, meaningful engagement, and enhanced learning and leadership opportunities for students.
- **Transitions:** Continuity of program staff who remain with students across school years and in the summer support student transitions Pre-K through college and/or career through focused activities and mentoring opportunities.
- **Educational Opportunities and Access:** Additional learning time is provided afterschool and in the summer that gives students the opportunity for more in-depth, student-centered learning experiences and time and support for homework completion. In addition, summer programs reduce the risk of students experiencing the "summer slide" when at-risk students can potentially lose academic gains made the previous school year.
- **College and Career Ready:** Partnerships allow students to connect in meaningful ways with local business and industry, postsecondary institutions, school day educators, and program staff to develop interests and skills for future success.

- **Assessment:** Programs employ sound data collection and management practices focused on the continuous improvement process.
- **Educator Effectiveness:** Programs employ formal and informal educators who partner to provide additional learning time for students who may benefit from added educational support. Ongoing professional development is provided to develop skills, knowledge, and strategies for supporting student learning.

Funds reserved for State-level activities will comply with Sec. 4202 (c). State administration funds will be used for administration, establishing and implementing a rigorous peer review process and awarding of funds to eligible entities. State Activities funds will be used for monitoring and evaluating programs and activities, providing capacity building, training and technical assistance, conducting a comprehensive evaluation, providing training and technical assistance to eligible entities that are applicants for or recipients of awards, ensuring that recipients align the activities provided by the program with the challenging State academic standards, ensuring that recipients identify and partner with external organizations, working with teachers, principals, parents, the local workforce, the local community, and other stakeholders to review and improve State policies and practices to support the implementation of effective programs, coordinating 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funds with other Federal and State funds to implement high-quality programs and providing a list of prescreened external organizations.

*2. Awarding Subgrants (ESEA section 4203(a)(4)): Describe the procedures and criteria the SEA will use for reviewing applications and awarding 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers funds to eligible entities on a competitive basis, which shall include procedures and criteria that take into consideration the likelihood that a proposed community learning center will help participating students meet the challenging State academic standards and any local academic standards.*

The processes procedures, and priorities used to award 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC subgrants are as follows:

**Grant competition:** A 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grant competition is conducted annually and several months prior to the postmark deadline date, the Request for Proposals (RFP) is released. The RFP is developed in consultation and coordination with a 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC advisory group that includes appropriate state officials and others identified in statute, as well as other stakeholders who bring a variety of perspectives as experts in the field. In the project design section, applicants must describe how they will ensure students' academic and overall success through implementation of research or evidence-based strategies that support the three overarching Nebraska 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program goals. Applicants are required to consult with eligible nonpublic schools to assure equitable services. Applicants must describe how the transportation needs of participating students will be addressed. The competition is advertised widely through the website, press release to the public and direct emails to public and nonpublic administrators and other stakeholder groups. A grant writing technical assistance workshop(s) is conducted shortly after the RFP's release and technical assistance documents are posted on the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC website.

**External review process:** In step one of the review process, external teams comprised of educators and other professionals with knowledge of afterschool and summer programming from diverse areas of the state and varying sizes of communities are selected to represent a variety of viewpoints. Team members independently read and score proposals. Step two of the process includes the on-site review where fellow team members discuss individual scores and rationale. SEA staff do not serve as reviewers but are present to answer questions and ensure that proposals are evaluated according to the objective criteria in the RFP. Teams discuss each proposal and arrive at a team consensus score and feedback, including funding recommendation and any conditions of funding. Recommended proposals are forwarded to the State Board of Education for final approval.

**Criteria used to award subgrants:** To be eligible to apply for a Nebraska 21st CCLC grant, proposals must target students and family members of those students who attend schools in which at least 40% of the students qualified to receive free or reduced-cost meals in the most recent school year in which data is available. Competitive priority points are awarded to programs targeting students who attend school buildings receiving a classification of “Needs Improvement” on the most recent AQuESTT Classification Report, applications submitted jointly by at least one school building and at least one public or private community-based organization, programs targeting students who attend schools with a mobility rate or English learner rate above the statewide average, and programs targeting students who attend schools in which 60% or 80% or more of the building students qualified to receive free or reduced-cost meals in the most recent school year in which data is available.

**Title V, Part B, Subpart 2: Rural and Low-Income School Program.**

*i. Provide the SEA’s specific measurable program objectives and outcomes related to activities under the Rural and Low-Income School Program, if applicable.*

The goal for all Rural and Low Income Schools (RLIS) school districts in Nebraska, as outlined in its June 2002 Consolidated State Application, was for all students to meet, or exceed the Nebraska State Standards of academic achievement in reading, math and writing.

Since 2002 RLIS funds have been consistently awarded to the Scottsbluff Public Schools. Each year, one or two additional LEAs have been eligible to receive RLIS funds, but due to fluctuations in the federal census data used to determine poverty levels, their eligibility typically remained for no more than one year. Scottsbluff Public Schools and Mitchell Public Schools have been approved for RLIS funding during the 2016-2017 school year.

Scottsbluff is the only Nebraska school district that has consistently received RLIS funding. Below is an outline of the progress Scottsbluff Public Schools have made toward meeting the Nebraska State Standards over the past five years.

**Overall Performance Percentages for All Students Meeting or Exceeding Standards for the past five years: (All statistics reported in percentages.)**

***Overall Performance Percentages***

*Table 32 Scottsbluff Public Schools: Reading % Mastery*

Years	Grade 03	Grade 04	Grade 05	Grade 06	Grade 07	Grade 08	Grade 11
2011-2012	74	74	69	68	80	71	66
2012-2013	76	81	76	69	72	74	67
2013-2014	79	77	68	80	77	70	61
2014-2015	79	79	84	78	84	74	64
2015-2016	77	78	84	82	87	82	79

*Table 33 Scottsbluff Public Schools: Math % Mastery*

Years	Grade 03	Grade 04	Grade 05	Grade 06	Grade 07	Grade 08	Grade 11
2011-2012	70	63	54	54	59	52	43
2012-2013	72	73	68	52	53	55	46
2013-2014	82	79	66	76	61	55	52
2014-2015	76	79	69	74	71	60	51
2015-2016	74	71	75	75	74	58	52

*Table 34 Scottsbluff Public Schools: Writing % Mastery*

Years	Grade 04	Grade 08	Grade 11
2011-2012	98	84	66
2012-2013	73	75	78
2013-2014	69	**	**
2014-2015	77	63	76
2015-2016	67	62	77

\*\*Data not available due to errors in testing system. Information excerpted from the Nebraska Department of Education State of the Schools Report (SOSR), and the Nebraska Education Profile (NEP), which can be found at: <https://www.education.ne.gov/documents/SOSR.html>; <http://nep.education.ne.gov>

**(H.1: Outcomes and Objectives)**

School districts receiving RLIS funds will be required to include an explanation in their annual RLIS grant application, addressing how these federal funds will be used to support their efforts in meeting at least one of the long-term goals (reading, math, or science) outlined in Tables 4, 5,



and 6 of the Nebraska ESSA plan. This explanation must include a target objective in the identified academic area as well as one or more target populations (subgroups) to reflect the level of improvement expected as a result of the activities/strategies and interventions being supported with these funds.

LEAs are expected to tie the activities/strategies and interventions outlined in their annual RLIS grant application to disaggregated data from their comprehensive needs assessment that identifies which academic area reflects the greatest need for improvement. The application requires the LEA to outline how it will ensure that all students, including children with disabilities, English language learners, economically disadvantaged students, and students from every racial/ethnic group are achieving at high levels of performance. Each LEA may determine how to make the most effective use of these RLIS funds in combination with other local, state, and federal resources in addressing their greatest area(s) of academic need.

Included in the annual RLIS grant application are requirements for each LEA to identify the specific federal program (Titles I-IV) authorized in Section 5222(a)(1-5) of ESSA for which the funds will be used. The LEA will be required to include a line-item budget in their application that designates both the category via object code in the budget and activity description (Titles I-IV) for RLIS fund use.

#### (H.2: Technical Assistance)

A designated NDE staff person is assigned specifically to provide technical support for each LEA that submits an annual RLIS grant application. This support is provided throughout the grant writing process, as well as ongoing support to RLIS funded districts. Technical support is provided via telephone, electronic media, and on site face-to-face support upon request. The designated NDE staff member serves as the state liaison with the U.S. Department of Education staff regarding all REAP requirements and submission of updated school district information to determine RLIS eligibility. This individual notifies all RLIS districts of their eligibility to apply for RLIS funds; availability of online resources and webinars in preparation for completion of their RLIS grant application; as well as assistance in the actual completion of all grant application forms. All grant applications are reviewed by this same NDE staff member and any required changes are accomplished via telephone and electronic media submission of final grant documents before submission for final approval by the NDE Director of Federal Programs. The designated NDE staff member is also responsible for providing assistance to the LEA in monitoring the outcomes of the objectives included in the grant application and in helping to submit all required documents to confirm LEA expenses as well as requests for reimbursement of their RLIS funds.

In addition, SEA staff specialists are available annually at the Nebraska Administrator Days Conference to address any questions LEA staff have regarding all REAP related programs. Nebraska Department of Education staff are available via telephone and e-mail contacts

throughout the year, and meet with RLIS district representatives in person one time every three years during the regular on-site ESSA review of all programs funded under ESSA. Information regarding SEA contacts, RLIS application processes and eligibility requirements are also posted on the SEA website.

### **McKinney-Vento Act**

*i. Consistent with section 722(g)(1)(B) of the McKinney-Vento Act, describe the procedures the SEA will use to identify homeless children and youths in the State and assess their needs.*

Identification of homeless and runaway children and youth remains the responsibility of each LEA. The SEA ensures that the LEAs are following the requirements set out in the McKinney-Vento Act, including requirements for coordination and accessibility to early childhood services for homeless children. The SEA ensures this by including questions on the ESEA Consolidated application dealing with homeless and runaway children and youth. Every three years each LEA undergoes an on-site monitoring visit from SEA staff to determine if the list of requirements pertaining to the education of homeless and runaway children and youth in the monitoring guide checklist are being met. The ESEA Monitoring Guide Checklist guides the SEA in determining if the district has developed the necessary procedures/guidelines for identifying, enrolling, assessing, and serving homeless and runaway children and youth, including those children in public preschool programs. In addition, the SEA monitors each LEA through required responses in the ESEA Consolidated Application reflecting that the LEA has accurately assessed the needs of all identified homeless and runaway children and youth, including homeless children enrolled in public preschool programs at the SEA or LEA level.

*ii. Describe the SEA's programs for school personnel (including liaisons designated under section 722(g)(1)(J)(ii) of the McKinney-Vento Act, principals and other school leaders, attendance officers, teachers, enrollment personnel, and specialized instructional support personnel) to heighten the awareness of such school personnel of the specific needs of homeless children and youths, including such children and youths who are runaway and homeless youths.*

Trainings for local McKinney-Vento liaisons are available in a variety of formats and locations. In Nebraska the majority of local liaisons are district superintendents, so instructional sessions are targeted to locations that have the best chance to reach the greatest number of administrators. This includes yearly sessions at Administrators Days, a section at the Title I conference, sessions at the local ESUs during the annual Title I meetings, and the ESUs' superintendents back to school meetings in September. McKinney-Vento instructional PowerPoint presentations are available on the NDE website for self-training or to use for district trainings. An online training program will also be available.

The McKinney-Vento grantee liaisons receive additional training at an annual meeting. One-on-one training and technical assistance is available by email, by phone, or by school visitation for LEA liaisons. The SEA and LEA liaisons have formed a strong support group that is available at any time to assist with problem solving including sharing of ideas, best practices, and forms that

have been developed to identify and enroll students. LEA liaisons are responsible to train district and school staff. Local liaisons and the SEA liaison have collaborated for these presentations. The format for these dual presentations is that the SEA liaison talks about a specific part of the McKinney-Vento Act and the local liaison relates how that is implemented at the district level. The SEA liaison also assists with the development of PowerPoint presentations that can be used by the LEA liaisons. The PowerPoint presentations are available on the NDE website for easy access.

All liaisons are encouraged to sign up with NCHE, NAEHCY, and Schoolhouse Connection to access the many webinars, materials, and services offered. Notices are sent to the LEAs to remind them of upcoming trainings. Liaisons are informed of and encouraged to take advantage of national trainings and conferences.

Discussions and technical support are provided to early childhood program representatives and Head Start coordinating staff within the Nebraska Department of Education. All of these trainings deal with the identification, enrollment, and rights of homeless and runaway children and youth. The definition of homeless in the McKinney-Vento Act is compared to the definition of HUD homeless. Resources are made available for posting throughout the communities and the school buildings. Information about the acquisitions of free resources is presented.

The SEA liaison provides training and technical assistance to NDE Title I consultants to increase their knowledge of the McKinney-Vento Act and the identification, enrollment, assessment, and rights of homeless and runaway children and youth. This training facilitates their ability to guide districts during the three year monitoring cycle.

The SEA Homeless Liaison serves as a member of the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC) to coordinate services for homeless and runaway children and youth among public schools and other agencies across the state. Participation of the SEA Homeless Liaison on this Council helps to ensure that the needs and rights of homeless and runaway children and youth are being met, including those homeless and runaway children and youth with disabilities and those in public preschool and Head Start programs. These relationships help to develop a more detailed understanding of the needs of the homeless population and a more effective system for serving homeless and runaway children and youth.

*iii. Describe the SEA's procedures to ensure that disputes regarding the educational placement of homeless children and youths are promptly resolved.*

Nebraska Department of Education Rule 19 describes all necessary steps each LEA must take to develop, implement and monitor their dispute resolution policy and procedures. This rule follows the guidelines set out in the McKinney-Vento Act. The ESEA Monitoring Guide Checklist used by SEA staff also has an extensive section on the dispute resolution process allowing the SEA to determine if each district has approvable policies and procedures in place. On-site monitoring interviews, with LEA personnel, guided by specific questions in the Monitoring Guide Checklist

also confirm that the LEA dispute resolution process is being implemented and followed consistently, and that any disputes filed at the LEA level are resolved promptly.

*iv. Describe the SEA's procedures to ensure that youths described in section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Act and youths separated from the public schools are identified and accorded equal access to appropriate secondary education and support services, including by identifying and removing barriers that prevent youths described in this paragraph from receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school, in accordance with State, local, and school policies.*

The SEA ensures this through the 3-year monitoring process as outlined above. Equitable access at the LEA level to programs and services, and the removal of all barriers to continued educational success are addressed both through assurance statements contained within the ESEA Consolidated application, as well as required components in the ESEA Monitoring Guide Checklist utilized during on-site monitoring visits by SEA staff members of each LEA. The McKinney-Vento requirements are reviewed and enforced through this process both for school-age programs as well as any LEA operating a public preschool program.

*v. Describe the SEA's procedures to ensure that homeless children and youths:*

- 1. Have access to public preschool programs, administered by the SEA or LEA, as provided to other children in the State;*
- 2. Who meet the relevant eligibility criteria, do not face barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities; and*
- 3. Who meet the relevant eligibility criteria, are able to participate in Federal, State, and local nutrition programs.*

Nebraska does not have compulsory public preschool so there are no set procedures for admission of homeless children. However, as a member of the ECICC, the SEA liaison has the opportunity to provide technical assistance to the members in understanding the definition of homelessness and to help members develop registration materials that will facilitate the identification of homeless children.

The LEAs are responsible to find and identify youth that have become homeless and separated from school. The state staff and student reporting system is useful in identifying students who are no longer attending school. LEA liaisons become familiar with places or areas where homeless youth who are separated from school might be located.

In the liaison training process it is clearly emphasized that the definition of enrollment is to attend classes and participate fully in school activities. The SEA and LEAs monitor the full participation of youth experiencing homelessness in all areas including magnet schools, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, online learning, gifted and talented, and other programs available at the local level. At this time, Nebraska does not allow charter schools. Technical assistance is provided to liaisons and districts to ensure compliance with this

piece of the McKinney-Vento Act. The SEA liaison also helps to review state and local policies that could affect compliance.

The SEA liaison is part of the Commissioner's School Practitioners Advisory Group that has advanced partial credits recommendations to the Commissioner. These four recommended practices would be for any student who enters a new approved or accredited school.

NDE Nutrition Services received a grant to upgrade the technology, integrate the state student information system, and incorporate homeless data sets to ensure that free meals will be available immediately upon enrollment and entry into the student reporting system.

The SEA ensures this through the 3-year monitoring process as outlined above. Equitable access at the LEA level to all programs and services, including early childhood and public preschool programs operated by the SEA or LEA is monitored and enforced by the SEA. This includes the removal of all barriers to continued educational success, including transportation and continued placement in schools and preschools of origin, as well as all nutritional services to which the homeless children are automatically eligible to receive. These requirements are addressed both through assurance statements contained within the ESEA Consolidated application, as well as required components in the ESEA Monitoring Guide Checklist utilized during on-site monitoring visits by SEA staff members of each LEA.

*vi. Describe the SEA's strategies to address problems with respect to the education of homeless children and youths, including problems resulting from enrollment delays and retention, consistent with sections 722(g)(1)(H) and (I) of the McKinney-Vento Act.*

The SEA addresses these issues through ongoing technical assistance to each LEA. As outlined above, requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act are enforced through the annual ESEA Consolidated application, the 3-year on-site monitoring process, and any formal disputes filed with the SEA Homeless Liaison. The SEA liaison receives ongoing training from the NCHE and NAEHCY to ensure clear and consistent guidance is offered to LEAs, including the extension of the requirements under McKinney-Vento to early childhood, preschool and Head Start programs operated by the SEA or LEA.

**6. Policies to Remove Barriers (722(g)(1)(I) of the McKinney-Vento Act:** *Demonstrate that the SEA and LEAs in the State have developed, and shall review and revise, policies to remove barriers to the identification of homeless children and youth, and the enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth in schools in the State, including barriers to enrollment and retention due to outstanding fees, or fines, or absences.*

NDE trainings stress the importance of homeless and runaway children and youth being able to access all educational and school programs and activities, including extracurricular activities. The SEA liaison works with other staff in the SEA federal programs office to target policies that many require changes. LEA liaisons are encouraged in their training to bring forward for

discussion any local policies that could put the district out of compliance.

The SEA and LEAs have developed and continue to review policies to remove barriers to identification, enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth. This includes policies and best practices regarding fees, fines, absences or lack of proper paperwork. Technical assistance is provided through trainings offered at NDE workshops, webinars and one-on-one technical assistance to keep school districts informed of the requirements and best practices regarding fees, fines, absences or lack of proper paperwork in regard to identification, enrollment and retention of homeless and runaway children and youth. During the Federal Programs monitoring process Title I consultants and LEA liaisons discuss district policies and procedures used to identify, enroll and retain homeless children and youth. Enrollment forms that support best practices are developed and shared by the LEA and SEA liaisons. Best practices are provided not only at the training venues previously mentioned but also through the strong state system of support that has been developed through the use of the LEA liaisons' ListServe.

The SEA works with other NDE and state entities to develop, review and revise policies regarding fees, fines, absences or lack of paperwork that could create a barrier for the enrollment and/or retention of homeless and runaway children and youth.

The SEA ensures through both the ESEA Consolidated Grant Application process, as well as the 3-year on-site monitoring process that each LEA has policies and procedures in place to ensure that all barriers are removed to enrollment and retention of homeless children, including children in public preschool programs. Ongoing technical assistance and communication from SEA staff with LEA personnel help to provide the support necessary to hold school districts accountable for the consistent implementation of the policies they have established to ensure the rights of homeless and runaway children and youth are upheld.

**7. Assistance from Counselors (722(g)(1)(K)):** *A description of how youths described in section 725(2) will receive assistance from counselors to advise such youths, and prepare and improve the readiness of such youths for college.*


Rule 10 in Nebraska requires that each LEA has a guidance counselor on staff to address the needs of all students to become college and career ready prior to graduation, and to provide such youth with the readiness skills necessary to transition beyond their K-12 program. Through the ESEA 3- Year On-Site Monitoring process, each LEA is required to identify a Homeless Liaison, whose duties include support to families of homeless children as well as individual guidance to any unaccompanied homeless youth in order to ensure their equitable access to all services for which they are legally entitled. This includes access to, and coordination of guidance and counseling services, on the same basis as is provided to all other students in the school district.

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- <sup>174</sup> Reform Support Network (2014). *Instructional Improvement Systems: Planning and Implementation Guide*, 5. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/implementation-support-unit/tech-assist/instructional-improvement-planning-guide.pdf>
- <sup>175</sup> *School-wide Positive Behavior Support: Investing in Student Success*. Impact Newsletter, University of Minnesota, 2005 (Horner, Sugai, & Vincent, 2005)
- <sup>176</sup> *All Systems Go: The Change Imperative for Whole System Reform*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press., (Fullan, M., 2010).
- <sup>177</sup> *The Role of State Departments of Education in Complex School Reform*. New York: Teachers College Press, (Lusi, S.F., 1997).
- <sup>178</sup> Nebraska Department of Education. 2016. Migrant Education Program Service Delivery Plan (SDP), Title 1, Part C. <https://www.education.ne.gov/migrant/>
- <sup>179</sup> *Guiding Principles for Providing High-Quality Education in Juvenile Justice Secure Settings*, U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, Washington, D>C., 2014.
- <sup>180</sup> Nebraska Department of Education. 2012. Rule 15. [https://www.education.ne.gov/Legal/webrulespdf/CLEAN15\\_2012.pdf](https://www.education.ne.gov/Legal/webrulespdf/CLEAN15_2012.pdf)
- <sup>181</sup> Nebraska Department of Education. 2014. *Nebraska English Language Proficiency Standards*. <https://www.education.ne.gov/NATLORIGIN/ELPStandards.html>
- <sup>182</sup> Nebraska Department of Education. 2016. 2016-2017 *Guide for Including English Language Learners in the NESa Tests*. [https://www.education.ne.gov/Assessment/NeSA\\_Accommodations.htm](https://www.education.ne.gov/Assessment/NeSA_Accommodations.htm)
- <sup>183</sup> Nebraska Department of Education. *Resource Guide 2016*. <https://www.education.ne.gov/povertyandlep/>

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Appendix A:  
2017-2026 Strategic Vision and Direction



*To lead and support the preparation of all  
Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living.*

# **2017-2026 STRATEGIC VISION AND DIRECTION**

Nebraska State Board of Education and Nebraska  
Department of Education

12/02/16

## Nebraska State Board of Education

The State Board of Education is an elected, constitutional body that is the policy forming and evaluative body for the state school program (79-301 (2) R.R.S.) in addition to ensuring the State Department of Education functions effectively within the framework developed by the state Legislature and the Board. The Board is elected on a non-partisan ballot, with one member from each district. Board members serve four-year terms.

District 3: Rachel Wise, President  
District 1: Lillie Larsen, Vice President  
District 2: Glen Flint  
District 4: John Witzel  
District 5: Patricia Timm  
District 6: Maureen Nickels  
District 7: Molly O 'Holleran  
District 8: Patrick McPherson

## Nebraska Department of Education

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is a constitutional agency comprised of services, programs, Vocational Rehabilitation (Nebraska VR), and Disabilities Determination Section (DDS). The NDE operates under the authority of an elected State Board of Education (Board) and the Commissioner of Education (Commissioner). The NDE is organized into teams that carry out the duties assigned by state and federal statutes and the policy directions of the Board. Teams are organized around distinct functions and responsibilities that encompass leadership and support for Nebraska's system of early childhood, primary, secondary, and postsecondary education; direct services to clients; and internal support to the agency.

The NDE carries out its duties on behalf of Nebraska students and parents involved in public and nonpublic school systems. The NDE staff interacts with schools, parents, businesses, community partners, and institutions of higher education to develop, coordinate, and improve educational programs and services.

Commissioner of Education: Matthew L. Blomstedt, Ph.D.

# Strategic Vision and Direction – 2017-2026

## Introduction

In January of 2016, the Board and the NDE initiated the development of a Strategic Plan to guide the vision and direction of education in Nebraska for the next ten years. Nebraska's Strategic Plan to be known as **Nebraska Quality Education Systems for Today and Tomorrow (NEQuESTT)** represents the evolution of a philosophical and practical approach to supporting education in Nebraska. This commitment unifies and strengthens positive outcomes for each and every Nebraskan through bold and achievable goals. **NEQuESTT** not only outlines the critical needs and strengths within the system, but also reflects innovative approaches to ensure each Nebraskan has equitable access to opportunities and are ready for success in postsecondary, career, and civic life. **NEQuESTT** is the educational journey that puts forth a new vision and bold agenda for the system of education in Nebraska. This vision will require new and different ways of working together, stretching beyond the status quo, and engaging stakeholders through collaborative processes. The strategic plan defines a direction for accountability and a system of services and supports without losing sight of the importance of ensuring compliance with state and federal policies.

**NEQuESTT** guides the Board and the NDE to address some of the most urgent priorities within Nebraska. With an intentional and comprehensive focus on ensuring a reduction in educational inequities for the most vulnerable populations, this strategic plan directs focus on student- or client-centered outcomes, high quality opportunities, and a strong system of support **for every student, every day**.

## NEQuESTT and AQuESTT

**NEQuESTT** aligns with Nebraska's accountability system, Accountability for a Quality Education System Today and Tomorrow (**AQuESTT**). The six critical tenets of **AQuESTT** holistically address accountability and quality education in Nebraska. Originally designed to meet statutory accountability requirements, **AQuESTT** has quickly grown beyond and guides the NDE and its work.

**AQuESTT** provides a fundamental focus on achievement and opportunity gaps and ensures strategies produce equitable outcomes for each and every learner. As a result, **NEQuESTT** includes goals with benchmarks that measure disaggregated data to ensure equity and access.

## Roles:

In order to support strategic priorities, a suite of approaches is utilized that reflects the nuance of the work and the many stakeholders, systems, and partners that intersect to support a state education system. The various roles are:

**Champion - NDE actively leads the strategic vision, goals, and policy direction to support learning, earning, and living by:**

- Engaging key stakeholders and partners on emerging needs in the educational landscape and corresponding policy advocacy approach
- Exercising policy leadership and proactively engaging and partnering with the Unicameral and Governor on priority issues
- Advocating for necessary resources to meet needs and/or address issues to execute the vision

**Regulator - NDE leverages policy authority to ensure delivery of high-quality, equitable education and services, beyond compliance with state and federal regulations by:**

- Assuring access to fair, equitable, and high-quality education and services
- Monitoring school and districts to ensure adherence to regulations and setting expectations beyond compliance for accountability and growth in learning
- Promoting best practices for leadership and using data and resources to ensure effective continuous improvement

**Capacity Builder - NDE directs technical assistance and professional development opportunities and promotes the sharing of best practices by:**

- Providing technical assistance and professional development opportunities for educators, staff, and community providers
- Actively engaging with priority and needs improvement schools as well as continuing to support the improvement of all schools
- Identifying schools and districts across the state with effective educational practices to gather data on successful practices
- Acting as a facilitator to connect schools to highlight learnings, share lessons learned, and communicate best practices
- Developing, maintaining, and leveraging strong working relationships with education and community partners to extend and enhance capacity across the state

**Connector - NDE helps bridge the divide between learning, earning, and living, connecting schools, families, business, and communities by:**

- Connecting, convening, and partnering with schools, businesses, out-of-school programs, postsecondary education, state agencies, and community providers to create a more comprehensive approach to education and service delivery
- Supporting other agencies and organizations in active engagement and relationship building amongst individuals, parents, and families

**Change Agent - NDE explores and supports promising new innovations by:**

- Researching, promoting, and providing support for promising new initiatives and innovations in education across the state and nation (e.g., promising activities in rural areas, blended learning, personalized learning, adult basic education)
- Providing ongoing training, support, and resources to drive the adoption of new practices and to assure implementation

## Strategic Direction:

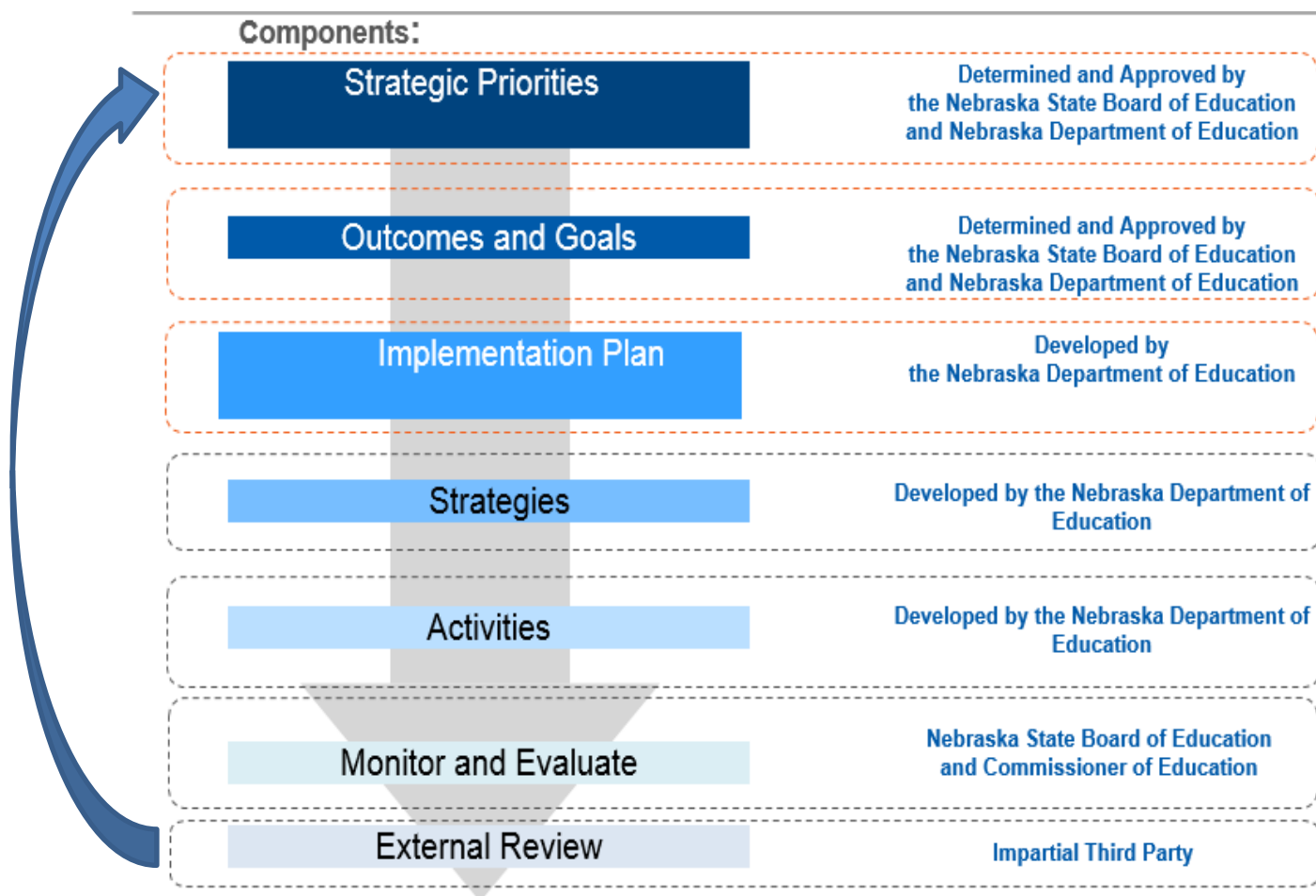
To realize the new strategic vision it can no longer be business as usual.

	FROM	TO
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizational structure primarily oriented around subject area silos</li> <li>Decision-making authority mostly concentrated in hands of senior agency leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More cross-functional, with collaboration and communication across teams</li> <li>More distributed decision-making authority, where staff closer to the issue is empowered to make relevant decisions</li> </ul>
<b>PERSONNEL &amp; STAFFING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff with very specific skills focused primarily on content knowledge</li> <li>Traditional focus on regulation and compliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broader staff expertise, including both content knowledge and breadth of experiences (e.g., relationship building, background in business, work with underserved communities)</li> <li>Focus on leadership, innovation, and learning</li> </ul>
<b>STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sporadic engagement on an as-needed basis</li> <li>Limited engagement with specific populations or cultural communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistent and tailored stakeholder engagement plans for specific audiences, allowing authentic relationships and dialogue to develop</li> </ul>
<b>DATA &amp; SYSTEMS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited publicly accessible data</li> <li>Focus on accountability and compliance</li> <li>Cumbersome website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Readily available data for all stakeholders from an easy to use, up-to-date platform</li> <li>Focus on performance management</li> <li>User-friendly website and an online portal with lessons learned and best practices for practitioners</li> </ul>

## Moving Forward:

The Board has taken into account the multiple roles of the NDE in the development of this strategic plan and in the expectations set forth for the NDE. This recognition is coupled with the expectation of providing quality, equitable support through a multi-faceted system under the charge of the NDE. The shared responsibility of leadership between the Board and the Commissioner includes developing this plan, monitoring goals, and implementing strategies through the NDE's programs and supports for schools, students, systems and clients across the state. The Board carries out this strategic plan through direction to the Commissioner. The Commissioner has the responsibility to build an implementation plan that makes **NEQuESTT** a living document utilizing the aforementioned roles and strategic direction outlined for organizational structure; personnel and staffing; stakeholder engagement; and data and systems.

## The strategic plan is multi-layered.



## Operational Approach:

**NEQUESTT** provides a framework for measuring multiple levels and processes to ensure success through standard, quantifiable metrics, artifacts, and evidence-based analyses utilizing a three-tiered approach:

- **NDE Accountability** – Process, regulations, support, interagency collaboration, data systems, fiscal responsibility, and evaluation
- **Service Accountability** – Quality and success of services provided by the agency
- **District and School Accountability** – School and agency progress and improvement

## Strategic Priorities, Outcomes, and Goals:

The Board and Commissioner will regularly review these goals as organized by the strategic priorities and outcomes. The NDE goals will include Commissioner and Board activities necessary to build the department's system of accountability and support for services and schools. The NDE will track progress on these goals and other metrics required by state and federal law. The Commissioner will annually report progress on these goals and other measures to report progress and performance to the Board.

## Implement, Monitor, and Evaluate:

The Board and the Commissioner share the responsibility to:

- champion and lead the strategic vision and goals.
- serve as change agents and capacity builders.
- ensure progress on the strategic priorities.

The Board and the Commissioner will be responsible for implementing this plan including the development of strategies, and activities, and monitoring on an annual basis. A review will be presented by the Commissioner and appropriate NDE personnel annually or as directed. An objective external review of **NEQUESTT** will be conducted by an impartial third-party reviewer two years after adoption and thereafter as determined by the Board with results being presented to stakeholders.



<b>MISSION</b>	<b>To lead and support the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living</b>	
<b>GUIDING PRINCIPLES</b>	<b>NDE will:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create a dynamic vision that drives change through proactive leadership to support learning;</li> <li>▪ Build connections amongst stakeholders to take action in support of success for all learners;</li> <li>▪ Provide all Nebraskans significant opportunity to receive fair, equitable, and high-quality education and services to close achievement gaps;</li> <li>▪ Allow all learners to achieve their fullest potential in transitioning through phases of school and into civic life;</li> <li>▪ Ensure all educators are effective in instructional strategies and monitoring student progress using multiple measures of proficiency; and</li> <li>▪ Prepare all learners to be college, career, and civic-ready.</li> </ul>	
	<b>STRATEGIC PRIORITIES</b>	<div> <div>Ensure that all Nebraskans, regardless of background or circumstances, have equitable access to opportunities for success</div> <div>Increase the number of Nebraskans who are ready for success in postsecondary education, career, and civic life</div> </div>
<b>OUTCOME STATEMENTS</b>	<b>Leadership</b> Provide leadership and high quality services in processes, regulations, interagency collaboration, data systems, fiscal responsibility and evaluation that enhance the success of educational systems in Nebraska.	
	<b>Success, Access, and Support</b> <b>Positive Partnerships and Student Success</b> – Increase student, family, and community engagement to enhance educational experiences and opportunities. <b>Transitions</b> – Provide quality educational opportunities for student success through transitions between grade levels, programs, schools, postsecondary institutions, and careers. <b>Educational Opportunities and Access</b> – Ensure that all students have access to comprehensive instructional opportunities to be prepared for postsecondary education and career. <b>Teaching, Learning, and Serving</b> <b>College, Career, and Civic Ready</b> – Ensure every student upon completion of secondary education is prepared for postsecondary education, career, and civic opportunities. <b>Assessment</b> – Use assessments to measure and improve student achievement and inform instruction. <b>Educator Effectiveness</b> – Assure that students are supported by qualified/credentialed, effective teachers and leaders throughout their learning experiences.	

## Leadership

**Strategic Priority:** Ensure that all Nebraskans, regardless of background or circumstances, have equitable access to opportunities for success.

**Strategic Priority:** Increase the number of Nebraskans who are ready for success in postsecondary education, career, and civic life.

**Outcome Statement:** Provide leadership and high-quality services in processes, regulations, interagency collaboration, data systems, fiscal responsibility, and evaluation that enhance the success of educational systems in Nebraska.

- Goal 1.1** By 2018, the NDE will be organized through personnel and processes to provide leadership in school support systems, regulations, interagency collaboration, data systems, fiscal responsibility, and evaluation that will enhance the success of educational systems in Nebraska.
- Goal 1.2** By 2018, the Board and Commissioner will have a process in place to evaluate and ensure timely, high-quality services and systems of support provided by the Nebraska Department of Education.
- Goal 1.3** By 2020, 100% of teachers, service providers, school leaders and local school board members will have access to quality professional learning opportunities through an NDE facilitated professional learning directory.
- Goal 1.4** By 2020, the NDE will collaborate with the Governor, Legislature, postsecondary institutions, and the Educational Service Units (ESUs) to create a uniform process to align dual credit opportunities for students across the state.

## Success, Access, and Support

### Positive Partnerships, Relationships, and Success

**Strategic Priority:** Ensure that all Nebraskans, regardless of background or circumstances, have equitable access to opportunities for success.

**Outcome Statement:** Increase student, family, and community engagement to enhance educational experiences and opportunities.

**Goal 2.1** By 2019, the NDE will develop a system to regularly engage and survey clients, schools, and stakeholders to gather input, and measure engagement and satisfaction.

**Goal 2.2** By 2026, the dropout rate of all Nebraska students including subgroups will be less than 1%.

**Goal 2.3** By 2026, 100% of Nebraska schools will have all students in grades 7-12 create and utilize a personal learning plan.

**Goal 2.4** By 2026, there will be a reduction in the percentage of students who are absent more than 10 days per year from 27.46% to 15%.

## Success, Access, and Support

### Transitions

**Strategic Priority:** Ensure that all Nebraskans, regardless of background or circumstances, have equitable access to opportunities for success.

**Outcome Statement:** Provide quality educational opportunities for student success through transitions between grade levels, programs, schools, postsecondary institutions, and careers.

- Goal 3.1**      **By 2018, a baseline and benchmarks will be developed to track all students with a disability having access to participate in career counseling, explorations, self-advocacy training, and work-based learning experiences.**
- Goal 3.2**      **By 2026, the 4-year cohort graduation rates for all Nebraska students will be greater than 92% and not less than 85% for any one subgroup.**
- Goal 3.3**      **By 2026, the 7-year cohort graduation rates for all Nebraska students will be greater than 95% and not less than 90% for any one subgroup.**
- Goal 3.4**      **By 2026, 100% of Nebraska schools will fully implement a systematic process for supporting the needs of highly-mobile students.**

## Success, Access, and Support

### Educational Opportunities and Access

**Strategic Priority:** Ensure that all Nebraskans, regardless of background or circumstances, have equitable access to opportunities for success.

**Outcome Statement:** Ensure all students have access to comprehensive instructional opportunities to be prepared for postsecondary education and career.

**Goal 4.1** By 2020, NDE will develop a statewide digital course and content repository.

**Goal 4.2** By 2026, 85% of all Nebraska students, upon graduation from high school, will have completed Advanced Placement coursework, earned dual credit and/or obtained industry certification.

**Goal 4.3** By 2026, 95% of Nebraska elementary schools would be able to identify at least one high-quality early childhood educational program accessible to all of the school's resident preschool age population.

**Teaching, Learning, and Serving**  
**College, Career, and Civic Ready**

**Strategic Priority:** Increase the number of Nebraskans who are ready for success in postsecondary education, career, and civic life.

**Outcome Statement:** Ensure every student upon completion of secondary education is prepared for postsecondary education, career, and civic opportunities.

- Goal 5.1**      **By 2018, the State Board will adopt a comprehensive approach to define and measure civic readiness.**
- Goal 5.2**      **By 2020, all Nebraska elementary schools will provide evidence-based interventions for any students not on grade level in reading and/or math.**
- Goal 5.3**      **By 2026, 100% of Nebraska schools will provide all students with a program for career awareness, exploration, and preparation.**
- Goal 5.4**      **By 2026, at least 50% of all Nebraska high school students from any given cohort year, will have earned a college degree, credential, or certificate within five years of graduating from high school.**

## Teaching, Learning, and Serving

### Assessment

**Strategic Priority:** Increase the number of Nebraskans who are ready for success in postsecondary education, career, and civic life.

**Outcome Statement:** Use assessments to measure and improve student achievement and inform instruction.

- Goal 6.1** By 2018, utilizing baseline data from the ACT, long-term goals will be developed for 11<sup>th</sup> grade achievement, including goals for subgroups.
- Goal 6.2** By 2018, the NDE will implement an assessment system to measure achievement and growth in grades 3-8 that meets the requirements of federal and state law and is timely for instructional purposes.
- Goal 6.3** By 2026, the percent of Nebraska students in grades 3-8 and 11 proficient in reading will increase from 79% to 89%.
- Goal 6.4** By 2026, the percent of Nebraska students in grades 3-8 and 11 proficient in math will increase from 72% to 82%.
- Goal 6.5** By 2026, the percent of Nebraska students in grades 3-8 and 11 proficient in science will increase from 72% to 82%.

## Teaching, Learning, and Serving

### Educator Effectiveness

**Strategic Priority:** Increase the number of Nebraskans who are ready for success in postsecondary education, career, and civic life.

**Outcome Statement:** Assure students are supported by qualified/credentialed, effective teachers and leaders throughout their learning experiences.

**Goal 7.1** By 2018, NDE will develop and implement a statewide teacher equity plan.

**Goal 7.2** By 2020, 100% of Nebraska schools will utilize performance standards and a research-based evaluation system for all certificated staff as aligned to Rule 10.

**Goal 7.3** By 2022, 100% of Nebraska schools will be staffed by teachers who have or are actively pursuing a teaching certificate with the appropriate endorsement for the subject(s) and grade level(s) of the course(s) being taught.



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The Nebraska State Board of Education and the Nebraska Department of Education give special thanks to the many partners who have provided input in the development of this strategic plan. We also recognize and appreciate the grant support of the Peter Kiewit Foundation and the Sherwood Foundation. The NDE is excited to continue collaboration in leading and supporting the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living.

Appendix B:  
AQuESTT Task Force Members

Appendix B  
AQuESTT Task Force Members (2014-2015)

Bill Auty, Consultant, Nebraska Department of Education  
Patty Bentzinger, Norris School Board Member, Norris District 160  
Pam Boehle, Curriculum and Assessment Coordinator, Umonohon Nation Public School  
Cheryl Burrell, Assistant Superintendent, Winnebago Public Schools  
Joe Crum, Data and Assessment Associate – Assessment Research and Evaluation, Millard Public Schools  
Dan Dandurand, Technical Coordinator, South Sioux City Community Schools  
Julie Downing, Professional development, ESU #13  
Leslie Eastman, Assistant Superintendent for Evaluation, Lincoln Public Schools/ESU #18  
Dean Folkers, Data, Research and Evaluation, Nebraska Department of Education  
Valorie Foy, Director of Assessment and Accountability, Nebraska Department of Education  
Kristi Gibbs, Assistant Superintendent for Learning, Ralston Public Schools  
Deeann Goesser, Data/Research, Omaha Public Schools  
Michaela Goracke, Language Arts Teacher, Sandy Creek Middle School  
Cindy Gray, Associate Superintendent, Elkhorn Public Schools  
John Hakonson, Superintendent, Lexington Public Schools  
Michael Hart, Principal – Norfolk Junior High School, Norfolk Public Schools  
Frank Harwood, Superintendent, Bellevue Public Schools  
Matt Hastings, Data, Research and Evaluation, Nebraska Department of Education  
Sharon Heater, SPED, Nebraska Department of Education  
Tracy Heilman, District Assessment Contact, South Sioux City Community Schools  
Jeremy Heneger, Assessment and Accountability, Nebraska Department of Education  
Renee Hyde, Assistant Superintendent, Papillion – La Vista Public Schools  
Kami Jessop, Director of Special Services, Westside Community Schools  
Darin Kelberlau, Director of Assessment, Research and Evaluation, Millard Public Schools  
Kim Korgan, Data/Research, McCook Public Schools  
Freida Lange, Accreditation and School Improvement, Nebraska Department of Education  
Mary Ann Losh, Federal Programs, Nebraska Department of Education  
Cara Lucas-Richt, SPED Director, Blair Community Schools  
Brain Maher, Former Superintendent, Kearney Public Schools  
Terri Martin, District Assessment Contact, Gering Public Schools  
Russ Masco, Data, Research and Evaluation, Nebraska Department of Education  
Kyle McGowen, Superintendent, Crete Public Schools  
Dennis McGuire, Accreditation, Nebraska Department of Education  
Linda Meyers, Early Childhood Education, Nebraska Department of Education  
Dustin Mitchell, Principal – Sutherland High School, Sutherland Public Schools  
John Moon, Assessment and Accountability, Nebraska Department of Education  
Carla Noerrlinger, Data/Research, Omaha Public Schools  
Jennifer Reid, ELL Director, Millard Public Schools – Don Stroh Administration Center  
Carol Rempp, Multicultural and Native American, Nebraska Department of Education  
Donlynn Rice, Curriculum, Nebraska Department of Education  
Sara Robinson, Teacher, Gates Elementary, Grand Island Public Schools  
Kris Schneider, ELL Director, Grand Island Public Schools  
Terri Schuster, ELL, Nebraska Department of Education  
Jay Sears, Program Director, Nebraska State Education Association

Amy Shane, Superintendent, O'Neill Public Schools  
Gayle Sharkey, District Assessment Contact, North Platte Public Schools  
Mike Sieh, Superintendent, Stanton Community Schools  
Deila Steiner, Federal Programs Director, Lincoln Public Schools  
Diane Stuehmer, Federal Programs, Nebraska Department of Education  
John Skretta, Superintendent, Norris District 160  
Liz Standish, School Improvement, Lincoln Public Schools  
Dr. Bob Uhing, Administrator, ESU #1  
Tami Williams, District Assessment Contact, Millard Public Schools  
Angie Wright, Curriculum, Elkhorn Public Schools  
Brenda Zabel, Teacher, Westside High School

Appendix C:  
2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction Stakeholders

## Appendix C

### 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction Stakeholders

Lucas Bingham, Nebraska Educational Technology Association Technology Coordinators  
Linda Black, Nebraska Department of Economic Development  
Joan Modrell, Nebraska Department of Labor  
Jay Sears, Nebraska State Education Association  
Courtney Matulka, 2015 Nebraska Milken Educator Recipient  
Shelby Aaberg, 2015 Nebraska Teacher of the Year  
Larianne Polk, ESU 7 Administrator  
Toby Boss, ESU Professional Development Organization; ESU 6 Staff Development Director  
John Spatz, Nebraska Association of School Boards, Executive Director  
Beth Maloney, Nebraska Association for the Gifted  
Grant Norgaard, McCook school superintendent  
Mary Derby, North Platte elementary school principal  
Brian Fleischman, Overton Public Schools secondary principal  
Jon Nguyen, Nebraska Medical Center  
Pearl Van Zandt, Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
John Wyvill, Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
David Scott, Embassy Suites, Papillion/La Vista  
Sandy Petersen, Parent Training Institute  
Cherice Williams, Druid Hill elementary school principal  
Dan Ferhinger, Winnebago School Superintendent  
A'Jamal Byndon, Omaha citizen  
Henry Burke, Omaha citizen  
Yolanda Williams, Omaha Public Schools Board Vice-President  
Lorraine Chang, Learning Community Council President  
Cheryl Kreikemeier, Wisner-Pilger school counselor

Appendix D:  
2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction Key Influencers

## Appendix D

### 2017-2026 Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction Key Influencers

Allison Hatch, Department of Economic Development  
Bruce Rieker, Nebraska Farm Bureau  
Chuck Schroeder, Rural Futures Institute  
David G. Brown, Greater Omaha Chamber  
David Jackson, Nebraska University System  
Dr. Mike Chipps, Northeast Community College  
Dr. Sam Meisels, Buffet Early Childhood Institute Group  
Dr. Valerie J. Calderon, Gallup  
Eric Evans, Disability Rights Nebraska  
Fr. Patrick Slattery, Archdiocese of Omaha  
Greg Adams, Accelerate Nebraska  
Jeff Cole, Beyond School Bells  
Jenny Geiler, Gallup  
Joseph Young, Nebraska Chamber of Commerce  
Kathy Hoell, Nebraska Statewide Independent Living Council  
Kathy Tenopir, Nebraska Legislature  
Lazaro Arturo Spindola, M. D., Latino American Commission  
Linda Black, Department of Economic Development  
Mark Adler, President, Nebraska Council on Teacher Education  
Michael Chittenden, Arc of Nebraska  
Nancy Edick, University of Nebraska Omaha, College of Education  
Nick Cusick, IMSCORP  
Rene' Ferdinand, Autism Center of Nebraska, Inc.  
Roger Stortenbecker, Collaborative Industries, Inc.  
Sarah Swanson, Nebraska State Independent Living Council  
Stan Carpenter, Nebraska State College System  
Susan Fritz, Nebraska University System  
Thomas H. Warren, Urban League of Nebraska  
Vernon Miller, Omaha Tribal Council  
Wayne Stuberger, University of Nebraska Medical Center



## Appendix E: ESSA Survey

## Intro Block

### ESSA Stakeholder Feedback Survey

In 2016, the Nebraska State Board of Education developed a Strategic Plan to guide the work of the state's PK-12 schools for the next 10 years. One avenue by which this work will be accomplished is through federal funding and reporting requirements outlined by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed into law in 2015.

ESSA is a bipartisan federal law that advances equity by upholding protections for America's most disadvantaged and high needs students, requiring high academic standards, helping support and grow innovations, and maintaining an expectation of accountability for the lowest-performing schools where groups of students are not making progress.

As part of this law, each state must submit a plan detailing how it will meet federal requirements. Nebraska will address requirements in ESSA in a way that complements the Strategic Plan. Your input will help to prioritize how these funding and reporting requirements will support the state's Strategic Plan.

Before you complete the survey, please take a moment to familiarize yourself with the [Nebraska ESSA Plan](#) and the [Strategic Plan](#). This survey should take no more than 10 minutes.

*Before you proceed, we would like to ask you a few questions about yourself.*

1. Which of the following best describes your role in relation to PK-12 education in Nebraska?

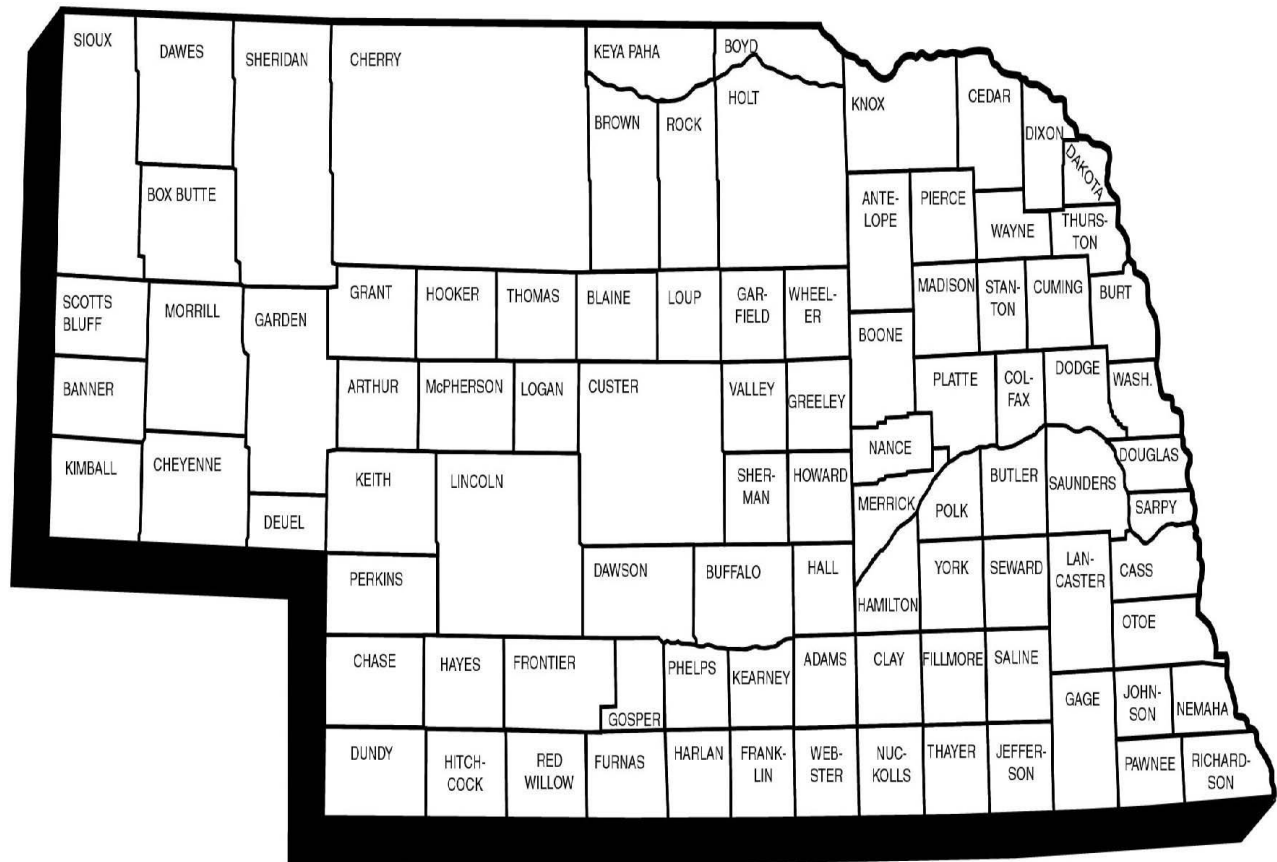
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Parent or family member
- ☐ Educator or education-related professional in Nebraska

- ☐ Member of tribal organization (Native American)
- ☐ Representative of a Nebraska civil rights organization
- ☐ Nebraska employer or businessperson
- ☐ Community member in Nebraska

2. Please select the county you live in.

## Nebraska Map

showing county outlines and names



Map dimensions have been skewed to fit on this page with maximum readability

**Accountability, Support, and Improvement**

*The following questions seek your input on Accountability, Support, and Improvement.*

3. How can we ensure that all Nebraska students, especially those with disabilities or those who are historically disadvantaged, have quality education that prepares them for success?

*Please select up to 3 options you find most important to you.*

- ☐ Focused resources on early learning in early grades
- ☐ Highlight best practices that have increased student performance
- ☐ Increase transparency of district academic performance
- ☐ More supports and resources for low-performing campuses
- ☐ Provide high-quality principal training and supports
- ☐ Provide high-quality teacher training and supports
- ☐ Use evidence-based instructional resources
- ☐ Other (please specify):

4. What is your level of familiarity with Nebraska's school accountability and improvement system, [AQuESTT](#)?

Not at all familiar      Slightly familiar      Somewhat familiar      Moderately familiar      Extremely familiar

☐                      ☐                      ☐                      ☐                      ☐

5. Which of the following are most critical to improving a low-performing school?

*Please select up to 3 options you find most important to you.*

- ☐ Classroom assessment and district benchmarks
- ☐ Comprehensive and effective planning
- ☐ Curriculum
- ☐ Effective leadership
- ☐ Instruction
- ☐ Organizational structure and resources
- ☐ Professional growth, development, and evaluation
- ☐ School culture

☐ Student, family, and community engagement

☐ Other (please specify):

## Nebraska's Academic Standards and Assessment

*The following questions seek your input on Nebraska's Academic Standards and Assessment.*

6. Which academic opportunities are most important to you?

*Please select up to 3 options you find most important to you.*

☐ Advanced academics

☐ Blended learning or technology-integrated learning

☐ Career education programs

☐ College preparation coursework

☐ Fine arts opportunities

☐ Gifted education programs

☐ Physical education

☐ Rigorous coursework

☐ Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM)

☐ Special education programs

☐ World language opportunities

☐ Other (please specify):

7. How should student success be measured?

*Please select up to 3 options you find most important to you.*

☐ Attendance rates

☐ Career certifications and placement rates

☐ Class grades (A-F Grading Scale)

☐ College and career readiness

- ☐ Discipline rates
- ☐ Dropout rates
- ☐ Interim assessments showing growth
- ☐ Standardized test scores
- ☐ Other (please specify):

## Nebraska's Educational Goals

*The following questions seek your input on Nebraska's Educational Goals.*

8. What do you see as the greatest challenges facing students in schools today?

9. What can be done to address the concerns you listed above?

10. After looking at the goals outlined in the [Strategic Plan](#) and the academic benchmarks in [ESSA](#), do you agree or disagree that the goals are reasonable and achievable?

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

11. Please state the reasons for your selected response above.

12. What is missing from the goals outlined in the [Strategic Plan](#)?

## Final Block

*The following questions seek your final thoughts as an ESSA stakeholder.*

13. What do you think are the most important areas considered in the [ESSA](#) plan?

*Please select up to 3 options you find most important to you.*

- ☐ Academic standards and assessment
- ☐ Developing current and future educators
- ☐ Nebraska's educational goals
- ☐ Supports and equity for student subgroups (e.g., students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups)
- ☐ Supports for English learners
- ☐ Supports for low-performing schools
- ☐ Other (please specify):

14. For which areas of the plan do you wish you had more information?

*Please select up to 3 options you find most important to you.*

- ☐ Academic standards and assessment
- ☐ Developing current and future educators
- ☐ Nebraska's educational goals
- ☐ Supports and equity for student subgroups (e.g., students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups)

- ☐ Supports for English learners
- ☐ Supports for low-performing schools
- ☐ Other (please specify):

15. If you have any additional comments on [ESSA](#), please provide them in the box below.

16. If you have any additional comments on the overall survey experience, please provide them in the box below.

#NDE 02-1709

For more information about this survey, please contact:  
Nebraska Department of Education | [nde.essa@nebraska.gov](mailto:nde.essa@nebraska.gov)

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Appendix F:  
AQuESTT Final Classification Business Rules

## **Addendum to AQuESTT Business Rules**

The original business rules determining the calculation of AQuESTT were finalized in 2015. Due to recent changes in the summative assessments in Nebraska, and additional indicators resulting from ESSA, the business rules will need to be revisited. It is the intent of the NDE to convene a group of stakeholders including the Technical Advisory Committee, in February and March of 2018 to update and finalize new business rules for AQuESTT 2.0.

The following 2015 business rules are included to illustrate how existing indicators are calculated. With the addition of chronic absenteeism, English language proficiency, and science, however, the following information illustrates anticipated changes that will be made to the business rules.

### **Weighting of Indicators:**

The Task Force that was initially charged with creation of the AQuESTT accountability system did not prescribe weights for any of the indicators. While the unique system does not have explicit weights for each indicator, the weight can be described by examining the impact or potential impact on the classification of schools. For example, in the current AQuESTT system, 84% of schools' classifications were determined solely by academic achievement (status indicator). This means that 84% of the weight in the current system is academic achievement.

The following table captures the approximate weight of each indicator in the current system and the anticipated weight of each indicator once the proposed ESSA version is implemented with data from 2017-2018. The anticipated weight is listed as a range of likely values. The NDE is committed to meeting the expectations of weight for specific indicators as described in ESSA. As is evident by the table below, in both the current and developing system, academic indicators have significantly more weight than the School Quality and Student Success indicators, for example. Differences may exist because of the use of different indicators within grade spans.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Current Weight (based on impact)</b>	<b>Proposed Weight</b>
Academic Achievement	84%	50-65%
Academic Progress (Growth, Improvement, Non-Proficiency)	12%	10-25%
English Language Proficiency/Progress	N/A	5-15%
Graduation Rate	2.5%	<5%
Participation	2.5%	<5%
Chronic Absenteeism	N/A	<5%
Science	N/A	<5%
Evidence Based Analysis	3%	2.5-5%

**Academic Achievement:**

- A separate writing test and the science test are removed from the calculation for this indicator.
- The denominator used to calculate academic achievement for each school will be the greater of 95 percent of all students, or the number of students participating in the assessments.

**Chronic Absenteeism:**

- A student is identified as chronically absent when a district reports that he or she has not been present for 10 percent or more of the days that he or she was “in membership” at a school. “Membership” is defined as the number of school days in session in which the student is enrolled and registered during the annual reporting period from July 1 to June 30.
- NDE staff in coordination with the Technical Advisory Council and the AQuESTT 2.0 task force will recommend a final method for evaluating reduction of chronic absenteeism in elementary, middle, and high schools.

**Progress toward English Language Proficiency:**

- Nebraska is member of the ELPA21 consortium of states. The consortium was originally funded with an Enhanced Assessment Grant to develop a next-generation online English language proficiency assessment and is currently housed at the Center for Research, Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing (CRESST) at the University of California (UC). Nebraska currently contracts with UC to deliver the annual assessment to all K-12 ELs.
- NDE staff, in coordination with the Technical Advisory Council and the AQuESTT 2.0 task force will recommend a final method be based on progress toward meeting growth targets in English Language Proficiency.

**Science:**

- Due to requirements in ESSA, the NDE removed science from the Academic Achievement indicator (Status) in AQuESTT. Instead, it will be a stand-alone indicator.
- Nebraska adopted college and career ready science standards in 2017. Since the new standards are fundamentally different from previous versions, Nebraska will proctor the first new science examinations in 2021.
- Stakeholders have been convened statewide to discuss the appropriate role of formative, interim, and summative assessments in the calculation of progress and proficiency in science. Work continues on this important topic.
- NDE staff in coordination with the Technical Advisory Council and the AQuESTT 2.0 task force will recommend a final method for including science in the classification of elementary, middle, and high schools.

**n-size:**

- Previously, the NDE used a unique system grounded in the combination of examination scores. This ensured that all schools were captured in the accountability system. However, due to feedback from stakeholders, it was determined that using students was better aligned to statute and clearer. As such, 10 students have been selected as the new

n-size for all indicators. This decision also aligns accountability and reporting n-sizes.

- Stakeholders have been clear since the development of the AQuESTT system that the n-size should protect students' identities and be fair to schools, but be as small as possible so that as many schools are included in the accountability system as possible. With these guidelines in mind, NDE determined an n-size of 10 would be appropriate because it is the current n-size used for public reporting.

### **Growth Indicator**

- Since 2017, Nebraska has used the ACT as its summative assessment for high schools. As this examination is given only once to all juniors, the Growth indicator for high schools is no longer able to be calculated.
- Other measures of academic progress remain for high schools, however. High schools are still able to show student progress with the Improvement and Non-Proficiency Indicators.

### **Graduation Rate:**

- Based on stakeholder feedback, the NDE has decided to focus the Graduation indicator on the adjusted 4-year cohort graduation rate. Still, since the Nebraska constitution provides for the free instruction of children until 21 years old, the 7-year cohort graduation rate will also be used to give schools/districts credit for students that they continued to work with, especially students with disabilities that may require services until they are 21 years old.
- NDE staff in coordination with the Technical Advisory Council and the AQuESTT 2.0 task force will recommend a final method for including Graduation rate (4- and 7-year) in the classification of the state's high schools.

## AQuESTT Classification System

12/3/2015

The following business rules are used to calculate AQuESTT school/district classifications for accountability. The data used is collected from NeSA assessments and NSSRS data submitted by districts.

- i. Every eligible public school and district is included and held accountable. The same process is used to classify districts and schools into four rating levels: Excellent (4), Great (3), Good (2), or Needs Improvement (1).
  - a. A school or district's overall classification rating is a combination of ratings in six areas (Status, Improvement, Growth, Graduation, Non-Proficiency, and Participation). The rules for combining these areas into the overall ratings are defined throughout this document.
  - b. Starting with the list of all Nebraska schools for the current school year as collected in the NSSRS system, these school buildings will be excluded from eligibility:
    - i. All schools with a *District Type* other than Public; such as Interim, State Operated, ESU, Non-Public, etc.
    - ii. Schools that are wholly SPED or Prekindergarten programs (*Kind of School* codes 16 or 20, or *High Grade Level* code "PK")
    - iii. Schools that are wholly Alternative programs (*Type of School* code "NA")
    - iv. Note: any otherwise eligible school that contains any grade levels between Kindergarten and 3<sup>rd</sup>, and therefore may not have NeSA assessments, is still included in the Classification process as an elementary school. The school's Status rating is copied from their district's Status rating as detailed later in this document.
  - c. The list of eligible districts is defined by selecting all districts that contain at least one eligible school after taking into account the above rules.
  - d. School ratings will be set per school building and school type (elementary, middle, high), so a single school building may have two or three "schools" as defined in this process.
    - i. The school buildings have been split into schools according to their preference and these AYP rules. Please refer to NDE's internal Federal Accountability Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Manual – Version 17.0.0 – June 08, 2014 document.
    - ii. Accordingly, the grade levels that constitute the elementary, middle, or high schools are customized for each school building and school year. The resulting elementary/middle/high school divisions have been prepared before the Classification process begins.
    - iii. Whenever the Classification process references previous school years' data, the E/M/H division logic for the corresponding years will be used rather than only using the current year's logic.

- ii. **Status (Initial Rating of 4, 3, 2 or 1) – Current Year NeSA Performance:** For each eligible district and school as defined above, a Status rating will be determined based on the average NeSA score in the district/school for the current school year.
- Scores from all four NeSA subjects (reading, mathematics, science and writing) at the district/school will be combined.
    - Reading, math and science assessments are scored on a 0-200 point scale, while Writing is scored from 0-70 points.
    - In order to combine all four subjects into a single average, the Writing scores will be scaled up to a 200 point maximum by using a linear regression based on the NeSA Below/Exceeds Expectations cutoff scores for each grade level that takes the writing assessment.
      - These cut scores are used in the regression formulas:  
 RMS cuts: 85, 135  
 Grade 4 writing cuts: 40, 57  
 Grade 8 writing cuts: 40, 55  
 Grade 11 writing cuts: 40, 53
      - Example formula for 4<sup>th</sup> grade writing:  
 Scale Adjust =  $(135-85) / (57-40)$   
 Intercept Adjust =  $135 - (57 * \text{Scale Adjust})$   
 Adjusted Score =  $(\text{Score} * \text{Scale Adjust}) + \text{Intercept Adjust}$
      - Any adjusted score that results in a negative number will be changed to zero instead.
  - For reference, this chart shows which grade levels participate in NeSA assessments by subject, as well as in which school year each subject's assessments were first available for use in Classification:

Subject	Participating Grade Levels							First School Year Subject Available
	3	4	5	6	7	8	11	
Reading	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	2009-2010
Math	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	2010-2011
Science			x			x	x	2011-2012
Writing		x				x	x	2011-2012*

- \*Due to a change in the NeSA writing assessment format, writing scores from before the 2011-2012 school year will be excluded. Similarly, the 4th grade writing scores in 2011-2012 will be excluded as well (other grade levels in that school year are valid).
  - Due to formatting issues with the NeSA writing assessment, 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade writing scores from the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years will be excluded.
- A NeSA assessment score will be excluded from counting towards a school's average if the student has not been enrolled at the school for the full academic

year (enrolled continuously from the last day of September through their school's NeSA testing date in the spring).

- i. Similarly, a score will be excluded from a district's average if the student has not been enrolled within the district for the full academic year. However, the student may still count if they moved between schools within a district during the year.
- d. A NeSA assessment score will also be excluded from counting towards the average if it is marked with a valid *Reason Not Tested* in regards to Performance calculations, as defined by this SOSR guidance document:  
[http://www.education.ne.gov/assessment/pdfs/SOSR\\_Guidance-NeSA-RMSW\\_%20Calculations\\_%208.1.14.pdf](http://www.education.ne.gov/assessment/pdfs/SOSR_Guidance-NeSA-RMSW_%20Calculations_%208.1.14.pdf)
  - i. Note that the rules for valid *Reason Not Tested* codes vary depending on the school year, NeSA subject, and whether you are calculating Performance scores or Participation rates.
  - ii. If an assessment has a *Reason Not Tested* value other than those on the approved list above, its score of 0 will count towards the school/district average.
  - iii. A school must have a minimum of 25 eligible assessment scores to calculate a Status rating. If a school doesn't have 25 assessments, or does not contain any grade levels that participate in NeSA assessments, their district's Status rating will be assigned as their school Status rating.
- e. A school's average NeSA score is calculated by finding the sum of the eligible assessment scores at the school, divided by the number of eligible assessments. This average is then compared against the cut scores for the corresponding school type in order to determine the school's initial Status rating:

#### **Elementary**

Level 4: Average NeSA Score > 132  
Level 3: Average NeSA Score > 114 but ≤ 132  
Level 2: Average NeSA Score > 96.5 but ≤ 114  
Level 1: Average NeSA Score ≤ 96.5

#### **Middle School**

Level 4: Average NeSA Score > 129.5  
Level 3: Average NeSA Score > 113.5 but ≤ 129.5  
Level 2: Average NeSA Score > 96.8 but ≤ 113.5  
Level 1: Average NeSA Score ≤ 96.8

#### **High School**

Level 4: Average NeSA Score > 129  
Level 3: Average NeSA Score > 112 but ≤ 129  
Level 2: Average NeSA Score > 95 but ≤ 112  
Level 1: Average NeSA Score ≤ 95

- f. The district's average NeSA score is calculated by finding the sum of the applicable assessment scores at all eligible schools in the district, divided by the number of applicable assessments at those same schools. This district average is then compared against the district cut scores listed below to determine the district's Status rating of 4, 3, 2, or 1:

**District**

Level 4: Average NeSA Score  $> 130.1667$

Level 3: Average NeSA Score  $> 113.1667$  but  $\leq 130.1667$

Level 2: Average NeSA Score  $> 96.1$  but  $\leq 113.1667$

Level 1: Average NeSA Score  $\leq 96.1$

iii. **Improvement (+1 or 0 Rating Adjustment) – 3-Year NeSA Performance**

**Trend:** For each school/district an adjustment to the rating generated in the Status area may be made based on an upward trend in average NeSA scores in the school/district across all subjects for the last three school years. This adjustment can reward schools that are generally improving their NeSA scores across all students.

- a. The trend for Improvement at a school/district is determined by calculating a linear regression for available average NeSA scores across three years using all available subjects and grade levels, this being equivalent to the score used in the Status rating.
- i. Details about the linear regression formula used can be found in this document – [AQuESTT Linear Regression Calculations.pdf](#):



AQuESTT Linear  
Regression Calculatio

- ii. As in the Status area, for each school year used in the trend calculation: assessment scores from students that weren't enrolled for the full academic year in the corresponding school year(s) will be excluded from this calculation as well as the previously mentioned writing assessment scores.
- iii. Unlike Status, all assessments with a score of 0 will be excluded from Improvement calculations, regardless of the *Reason Not Tested*.
- b. A minimum of 25 eligible assessment scores are required for any of the three school years included in the calculation. A school year may be available to be used in the trend line calculation independently of the other two school years.
- i. If a school/district has only two years of score data the equivalent of the linear regression slope calculation can still be performed.
- ii. If a school/district has only a single year for score data, then the slope will be 0 and the Improvement rating adjustment will be 0.
- c. If the slope of the trend line (representing the change in average NeSA scores per year) is greater than or equal to the calculated cut score for the



corresponding school/district, then the school/district overall rating is increased by one, otherwise it is unchanged.

- i. The cut scores for the Improvement rating adjustment use a formula that is based on the number of eligible assessments available for each school/district. The cut score is not represented by a single value, but by slope and intercept values that describe a cut score line for each school type. For each school/district: the count of all Improvement-eligible assessments in the current year, across all four subjects, is multiplied by the given slope value and the result is added to the intercept value to create this school/district's specific Improvement cut score.

#### **Elementary**

Cut score line slope: -0.003164845

Cut score line intercept: 10.57234

#### **Middle School**

Cut score line slope: -0.001393162

Cut score line intercept: 9.768585

#### **High School**

Cut score line slope: -0.001646391

Cut score line intercept: 11.91494

#### **District**

Cut score line slope: 0

Cut score line intercept: 9.778745

#### iv. **Growth (+1 or 0 Rating Adjustment) – Rate of Individual Student NeSA**

**Improvements:** For each district/school an adjustment to the rating may be made based on the percent of NeSA assessment scores that showed improvement compared to the same individuals' performance in the previous year.

- a. Only reading and math scores will be used in Growth rate calculations, since science and writing assessments are not taken in consecutive grades.
  - i. Each individual student may be counted up to two times in the Growth percentage, one for math and one for reading.
- b. Each district/school will calculate a Growth rate, which is the percentage of Growth-eligible assessment scores that showed an improvement (as defined in the table below) compared to the performance level/score in the previous year for that same student and subject area.
  - i. Since the Growth calculation uses data from individual students across multiple years, it will attempt to match the current Student ID against any retired IDs for the same student.

- ii. Any scores from students that were not enrolled for the full academic year in the current school year are excluded from the Growth rate calculation. This is not checked for in the previous year however.
  1. School Growth scores require a full academic year at that particular school, while district Growth scores only require a full academic year in the district. Students that move between schools within the same district during the school year are still eligible for district Growth.
- iii. Unlike Status calculations, an assessment will be excluded from the Growth rate if it has a score of 0 in the current year, regardless of the *Reason Not Tested*.
- iv. Any student that didn't have an assessment score in the previous year for the corresponding NeSA subject areas, or that had a score of 0 for any reason, is excluded from the Growth rate.
  1. Because of this rule and the grade levels that participate in NeSA assessments, all 3<sup>rd</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders are excluded. This also means that all high schools are excluded from receiving an adjustment for Growth.
- v. For both school and district Growth calculations, if a student's NeSA assessments were not located at a school within the same district in the previous year, any school scores for that student are excluded.
- vi. A school/district must have a minimum of 25 growth-eligible assessment scores to take part in the growth calculation.
- c. For all Growth-eligible NeSA assessments, the following table is used to determine whether or not that assessment is assigned a Growth point by comparing the current year NeSA performance level and score against the previous year for the same subject area. An "X" indicates when an assessment qualifies for a Growth point:

		Current Year			
Previous Year	Performance Levels	Exceeds	Met		Not Met
	Exceeds	X	-		-
	Met	X	Score Gain < 0	Score Gain ≥ 0	-
			-	X	
	Not Met	X	X		Score Gain ≤ 0
					Score Gain > 0
					-
					X

- d. The Growth is determined by finding the percentage of eligible assessments that qualify for a Growth point at each school/district. If that percentage is greater

than or equal to the calculated cut score, the school/district overall rating is increased by one, otherwise it is unchanged.

- i. The cut scores for the Growth rating adjustment use a formula that is based on the number of eligible assessments available for each school/district. The cut score is not represented by a single value, but by slope and intercept values that describe a cut score line for each school type. For each school/district: the count of all Growth-eligible assessments in the current year is multiplied by the given slope value and the result is added to the intercept value to create this school/district's specific Growth cut score.

**Elementary**

Cut score line slope: -0.003292874

Cut score line intercept: 85.63568

**Middle School**

Cut score line slope: 0.0003376768

Cut score line intercept: 76.97569

**High School: N/A**

**District**

Cut score line slope: 0

Cut score line intercept: 82.17609

- v. **Graduation (*Rating Limitation*) – Cohort Graduation Rates:** For each district/high school their four or seven year cohort graduation rate in the previous year (the school year used for Graduation data lags one year behind the NeSA data) defines the maximum possible overall classification rating.
  - a. The cohort graduation rates are the percentage of members in a cohort who graduated with a diploma. The preexisting rules that define a cohort can be reviewed here:  
[http://www.education.ne.gov/nssrs/docs/Guidance for Graduation Cohort 4 0 0.pdf](http://www.education.ne.gov/nssrs/docs/Guidance%20for%20Graduation%20Cohort%204%200.pdf)
  - b. The graduation rate will be determined using the set of district-corrected data that is used for AYP calculations.
  - c. Only high schools are eligible, other schools will not have their overall rating affected. All districts are eligible.
  - d. A school or district cohort must have at least 25 members for it to be used in the Graduation rating.
    - i. If a cohort doesn't have 25 members, the previous year's counts for the matching cohort year (four or seven) can be added – i.e. for the 2013-2014 classification rating, if the 2012-2013 seven year cohort only has 18 members, the 2011-2012 seven year cohort can be added to it.

- ii. If either cohort is still lacking enough members, the 2<sup>nd</sup> prior year can be added as well, but no more than that.
- e. The greater of the eligible four or seven year cohort rate in the current year will be used for determining the Graduation rating limitation.
  - i. If neither cohort at a school/district has at least 25 members, then the school/district will not have a Graduation limit placed on it.
- f. The Graduation rating limitation is determined by comparing the highest cohort rate against these cut rates, which will limit the school/district overall classification rating:

No limitation: graduation rate  $\geq 90\%$   
 Limit rating to 3: graduation rate  $< 90\%$  and  $\geq 80\%$   
 Limit rating to 2: graduation rate  $< 80\%$  and  $\geq 70\%$   
 Limit rating to 1: graduation rate  $< 70\%$

- vi. **Non-Proficiency (+1, 0, or -1 Rating Adjustment) – 3-Year NeSA Non-Proficiency Trend:** For each district/school an adjustment to the overall classification rating may be made based on a decreasing or increasing three year trend of the percentage of NeSA assessment scores that are defined as non-proficient according to the yearly NeSA score cutoffs determined by the assessments team.
  - a. The non-proficiency rate uses only reading and math scores from the set of assessments used in the Status calculation earlier.
    - i. As in the Status area, for each school year used in the trend calculation: assessment scores from students that weren't enrolled for the full academic year in the corresponding school year(s) will be excluded from this calculation as well as the previously mentioned writing assessment scores.
    - ii. Unlike Status, all assessments with a score of 0 will be excluded from Non-Proficiency calculations, regardless of the *Reason Not Tested*.
  - b. The non-proficient rate is calculated by dividing the number of reading/math assessments with scores in the Below Expectations range by the total number of reading/math assessments. This rate is calculated for the current year as well as the two previous years for each school/district, and this data will be combined into non-proficiency trend lines using linear regressions.
    - i. The linear regression will be performed using the same formula detailed in the Improvement area above.
    - ii. A minimum of 25 eligible assessment scores are required for any of the three school years included in the calculation. A school year may be available to be used in the trend line calculation independently of the other two school years.
    - iii. If a school/district has only two years of score data, the equivalent of the linear regression can still be performed.

- iv. If a school/district has only the current year for score data, then the slope will be 0 and the Non-Proficiency rating adjustment will be 0.
- c. The slope of the Non-Proficiency rate trend line is compared against the calculated cut scores as describe below. This determines the school/district Non-Proficient rating adjustment.
  - i. The cut scores for the Non-Proficiency rating adjustment use a formula that is based on the number of eligible assessments available for each school/district. The cut score is not represented by individual values, but by slope and intercept values that describe two cut score lines for each school type. For each school/district: the count of all Non-Proficiency-eligible assessments in the current year is multiplied by the given slope value and the result is added to the intercept value to create this school/district's specific Non-Proficiency cut scores.

#### **Elementary**

+1 adjustment: cut score line slope: 0.004615919  
 +1 adjustment: cut score line intercept: -11.5498

-1 adjustment: cut score line slope: -0.004971438  
 -1 adjustment: cut score line intercept: 8.073698

#### **Middle School**

+1 adjustment: cut score line slope: 0.0004769387  
 +1 adjustment: cut score line intercept: -8.284611

-1 adjustment: cut score line slope: -0.002725164  
 -1 adjustment: cut score line intercept: 8.591097

#### **High School**

+1 adjustment: cut score line slope: 0.004569985  
 +1 adjustment: cut score line intercept: -11.64624

-1 adjustment: cut score line slope: -0.00787609  
 -1 adjustment: cut score line intercept: 9.396319

#### **District**

+1 adjustment: cut score line slope: 0  
 +1 adjustment: cut score line intercept: -9.782147

-1 adjustment: cut score line slope: 0  
 -1 adjustment: cut score line intercept: 7.182314

- vii. **Participation (0, -1, or -2 Rating Adjustment/Rating Limitation) – Current Year NeSA Participation Rate:** For each school/district an adjustment or limitation

to the overall classification rating may be made based on the NeSA assessment participation rate.

- a. For all subjects and grade levels, the participation rate is defined as the percentage of eligible assessments with scores (completed assessments) compared to the total number of eligible assessments.
  - i. A score will be excluded from the participation rate if it is marked with a valid *Reason Not Tested* for the current school year in regards to Participation calculations. Note that this is a different set of reasons than those used for performance calculations, again refer to this document for details: [http://www.education.ne.gov/assessment/pdfs/SOSR\\_Guidance-NeSA-RMSW\\_%20Calculations\\_%208.1.14.pdf](http://www.education.ne.gov/assessment/pdfs/SOSR_Guidance-NeSA-RMSW_%20Calculations_%208.1.14.pdf)
  - ii. If a writing assessment does not have an excused *Reason Not Tested* but has a *Not Scorable Code* of “B” or “R” (indicating that the student left the test blank or indicated they would not create a response) then that assessment will be marked as non-participating.
  - iii. A student does not have to be enrolled for a full academic year to be counted in the participation rate.
  - iv. Due to a change in the NeSA writing assessment format, writing scores from before the 2011-2012 school year will be excluded. Similarly, the 4<sup>th</sup> grade writing scores in 2011-2012 will be excluded as well (other grade levels in that school year are valid).
  - v. Due to formatting issues with the NeSA writing assessment, 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade writing scores from the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years will be excluded.
  - vi. A school/district must have a minimum of 25 eligible assessment scores to take part in the growth calculation.
- b. The current year’s participation rate is compared to these cut rates to determine if the school/district receives a rating adjustment or a rating limitation:

-1 rating adjustment: Participation rate < 95%

-2 rating adjustment: Participation rate < 90%

Limit rating to 1: Participation rate < 85%

viii. **Raw Classification (4, 3, 2, or 1):** Each district and school receives a raw rating.

- a. The first step to determining the raw rating is to add or subtract any rating adjustments (Improvement, Growth, Non-Proficiency, Participation) from the initial Status rating.
  - i. During the adjustment calculations it is acceptable to go above the highest rating of 4. If a school/district is above 4 at the end of the formula then it will be reset to 4. For example: if a school has a Status rating of 4, has an Improvement adjustment of +1, and a Participation adjustment of -2, their overall rating will be 3.
  - ii. If the adjustments result in a rating less than 1, it will be reset to 1.

- b. After all adjustments have been calculated for each school/district, the lower of the two possible rating limitations (Graduation, Participation) will be applied when applicable.

ix. **Final Classification (4, 3, 2, or 1):** Each district and school receives an overall final classification.

- a. The final classification is based on the school/district's raw classification described above. The final classification can then be raised one level above the raw classification if the school or district receives an Evidence-Based Analysis (EBA) adjustment. Refer to the Resources page on [AQuESTT.com](http://AQuESTT.com) for examples of the school and district EBA contents.
  - i. EBA adjustments do not apply to District classifications.
  - ii. The EBA adjustment does not apply to schools that are already classified as Excellent (4) in the raw classification.
  - iii. Each school/district is assigned a total EBA response score that combines the responses of the 5 "policies, practices, and procedures" questions in each of the 6 tenets. A response of "Never" is worth 0 points, "Seldom" is worth 1 point, "Sometimes" is worth 2 points, and "Usually" is worth 3 points. This results in a maximum score of 90 points for each school/district.
    - 1. If a school/district were to not submit an EBA, their score would be 0.
  - iv. For a school to receive an EBA adjustment, their total response score must be in the top percentile amongst the other schools that share their raw classification. The percentiles needed to be considered for an EBA adjustment for each raw classification level are:

Great (3): EBA score at the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile (88 points) or higher amongst schools classified as Great

Good (2): EBA score at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile (84 points) or higher amongst schools classified as Good

Needs Improvement (1): EBA score at the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile (83 points) or higher amongst schools classified as Needs Improvement

- 1. Once the schools that have reached these target percentiles are identified, their EBA responses may be subject to audit and confirmation before an EBA Adjustment is assigned to them.

## Revision Summary

8/17/2015

- ii.c. and ii.c.i. was changed to specify that district status ratings only require a full academic year in the district, no change for schools. This change also affects Improvement (iii.a.ii.) and Non-Proficiency (vi.a.i.) but no change to the text was required.
- A new section vii.a.ii. was added to indicate Not Scored codes that will include or exclude a Writing assessment in the Participation rate.

10/6/2015

- i.b.iv. was modified to clarify that all eligible schools with K-2 grade levels will receive an elementary school rating.
- iii.a.ii. was modified and iii.a.iii. was added to indicate that all NeSA assessments with a score of 0 are excluded from Improvement calculations, regardless of the *Reason Not Tested*.
- iv.b.iii. was modified to indicate that all NeSA assessments with a score of 0 in the current year are excluded from Growth calculations, regardless of the *Reason Not Tested*.
- vi.a.i. was modified and vi.a.ii. was added to indicate that all NeSA assessments with a score of 0 are excluded from Non-Proficiency calculations, regardless of the *Reason Not Tested*.

10/13/2015

- ii.e. and ii.f. were modified with new Status cut scores due to the adjustment to the distribution of schools and districts across the classification levels.
- iii.c. was modified to describe the new size-based cut score lines for Improvement rating adjustments.
- iv.d. was modified to describe the new size-based cut score lines for Growth rating adjustments.
- vi.c. was modified to describe the new size-based cut score lines for Non-Proficiency rating adjustments.

10/27/2015

- ii.e., ii.f., iii.c., iv.d., and vi.c. were modified with new District cut scores.

11/25/2015

- ix. was added to describe the final classification process.

12/3/2015

- ix.a.iv. was updated to include the specific 2015 cut scores



Appendix G:  
Example Raw Classification Details Report



DRS Secured Home > Guided Inquiry > Continuous Improvement > Raw Classification Details Report

Datayears  Agency ID

1 of 2 ? Find | Next

## Example COMMUNITY SCHOOLS 2016 District Classification Details

### Raw Classification – Status

	Reading	Math	Science	Writing	Writing (Adjusted)	Total
# of Eligible NeSA Assessments	1041	1040	545	540		3166
Total Score	134073	125961	61795	25150	58291.81	380120.81
Average NeSA Score	128.79	121.12	113.39	46.57	107.95	120.06

(Reading, math, and science assessments are scored on a 0-200 point scale. Writing is scored from 0-70 points. The Adjusted Writing score has been converted to a 200 point scale in order to be included in the total.)

Your 2015-2016 Total Average NeSA Score: **120.06**

Applicable Cut Score Range for Districts: Average NeSA Score > 113.1667 but ≤ 130.1667

Your Status Score: **3**

### Raw Classification – Improvement Adjustment

	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
# of Eligible NeSA Assessments	3466	3466	3158
Average NeSA Score	119.96	119.96	120.06

Number of School Years Available for Trendline: 3

Improvement Trendline Slope: **0.204350 (Points Per School Year)**

Your Cut Score: 9.778745

(Cut Score is defined using a formula for Districts based on the number of eligible assessments in the current year.)

Improvement Adjustment: **No**

### Raw Classification – Growth Adjustment

	Reading	Math	Total
# of Eligible Students	812	810	1622
# of Students Showing Growth	557	514	1071
Growth Percentage	68.60	63.46	66.03

Your Growth Percentage: **66.029593**

Your Cut Score: 82.17609

(Cut Score is defined using a formula for Districts based on the number of eligible students.)

Growth Adjustment: **No**

## Raw Classification – Graduation Limitation

(Note: for AQuESTT purposes, the Graduation cohorts are lagged a year behind the NeSA results)

	4-Year Graduation Rate 2015 Cohort		7-Year Graduation Rate 2012 Cohort
<b>Cohort Members</b>	152	<b>Cohort Members</b>	182
<b>Graduates</b>	141	<b>Graduates</b>	177
<b>Graduation Rate</b>	92.76	<b>Graduation Rate</b>	97.25

Highest Graduation Rate: **97.25**Applicable Cut Score Range:  $\geq 90\%$  (No Limitation)Graduation Limitation: **No Limitation**

Your Raw Classification: Great (3)

Raw Classification Affected By Limitation: No

## Raw Classification – Non-Proficiency Adjustment

	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
# of Non-Proficient Reading & Math Assessments	455	407	308
% of Non-Proficient Assessments	18.79	16.80	14.86

Number of School Years Available for Trendline: 3

Non-Proficiency Trendline Slope: **-1.964217 (% Per School Year)**

Your Cut Score for Adjustment Up: -9.782147

Your Cut Score for Adjustment Down: 7.182314

(Cut Scores are defined using a formula for Districts based on the number of eligible assessments in the current year.)

Non-Proficiency Adjustment: **No**

## Raw Classification – Participation Adjustment

# of Eligible Assessments: 3209

# of Completed Assessments: 3201

Participation Rate: **99.75**Applicable Cut Score Range:  $\geq 95\%$ Participation Adjustment: **No**

Funding and support provided by a Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems grant from the U. S. Department of Education through P. L. 107-279 Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 (ACT).

Nebraska Department of Education Data Reporting System

Home | Quick Facts | Guided Inquiry | Advanced Inquiry | Training Center

Appendix H:  
Senator Deb Fischer Letter of Support

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

Commissioner Matthew L. Blomstedt  
301 Centennial Mall South  
P.O. Box 94987  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4987

Greetings Commissioner Blomstedt:

Thank you for providing me an opportunity to review the statewide plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that you intend to submit on behalf of Nebraska to the Secretary of Education. As a former member of the Nebraska Coordination Commission for Post-Secondary Education and former local school board member, those experiences have shaped my views on education as a United States Senator, and I recognize the strength of Nebraska's public schools.

In enacting ESSA, Congress recognized that education is the responsibility of each state and that the federal government's role is to assist states in providing opportunities for all students to learn, earn, and live. I appreciate the commitment in the plan to forming a single school accountability system for Nebraska by aligning the current state-level system of AQuESTT (Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow) with the federal-level requirements found in ESSA. Furthermore, the alignment of the ESSA plan with the 2017–2026 Strategic Vision and Direction adopted by the Nebraska State Board of Education demonstrates the connection between Nebraska's priorities and the ESSA requirements.

The plan drafted for Nebraska is clearly unique to the needs of our children, families, schools, and communities. I support your efforts to implement the Every Student Succeeds Act in the State of Nebraska.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review the Nebraska ESSA proposal. I look forward to seeing the results of your ambitious plan to better our schools and promote educational opportunity in Nebraska. I am confident that you will fulfill the Nebraska Department of Education's mission, "to lead and support the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living."

Sincerely,



Deb Fischer  
United States Senator

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