



FAQs for Principals and Superintendents:

Q: What is the NLLN?

A: In the Nebraska Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Plan, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) committed to using Title II funds to support Nebraska's school leaders. The Nebraska Leadership and Learning Network (NLLN) is a result of that commitment. It focuses on a statewide process of ensuring equity-driven school leadership support beginning with principals and their superintendents in schools receiving comprehensive support and improvement (CSI). The NLLN will support these leaders in strengthening their practices to deepen their impact on those they supervise and ultimately their districts' students. The NLLN is guided by a systemic strategy that:

- Focuses on developing learning focused leadership capacity of principals and their superintendents
- Incorporates design thinking processes for the initial cohort to enhance ownership
- Uses network meetings for collective learning and coaching for both principals and superintendents
- Builds a sustainable in-state model that is dependent on Nebraska's resources, expertise and organizations working in partnership
- Ensures that the NLLN is contextually responsive to the needs of districts, schools and communities
- Integrates and works in collaboration with key partners (Educational Service Units (ESUs), Council of School Administrators (NCSA), the Rural Council of School Administrators (NRCSA), the University of Nebraska-Lincoln UNL)

Q: What is the goal of the NLLN? (for year one and beyond)

A: The NLLN has two main goals for year one: 1) to build equity-driven leadership capacity in principals and superintendents, and 2) to create a collaborative environment for those organizations (ESUs, NRCSA, NCSA, and higher education, for example) who understand the importance of the role of school leadership in bringing equity to all. Bringing these organizations to the table will provide the forum for cross-organizational conversations with the hope that the conversations lead to interdependencies among the participants. State-wide school leadership support is like a big jigsaw puzzle. The goal is for us all to determine what our individual pieces of the puzzle look like and how all those puzzle pieces fit together with the needs of the design team (the principals and superintendents) to create a unified picture.

The goal for NLLN beyond year 1, is for all participants to take the learning and the plan (the unified picture described above) and enact it for all needs improvement schools. It is our intention that this will be a cross-organizational effort and will be different than anything that has happened in Nebraska before.

Q: Who will be involved in the NLLN?

A: The NLLN is comprised of two groups: the design team, comprised of the principals and superintendents (or assistant superintendents depending on the district) of Bayard ES, Walnut MS (Grand Island), Wauneta-Palisade MS and Winnebago MS and HS, will work throughout the summer and the 2019-20 school year to design a system of supports for these principals and their superintendents in Nebraska's schools with the highest need.

The other group is comprised of participants whose purpose is to inform the design process as it develops. This group will consist of members from the NDE, and representatives from ESUs across the state, NCSA, NRCSA, UNL, and another higher education institution (to be determined at a later date). The NDE will facilitate the convenings of these two groups throughout the upcoming summer and 2019-2020 school year.

Both groups will meet, participate, and collaborate in the NDE-facilitated convenings simultaneously.

Q: What are the belief statements that guide the NLLN?

A:

- We believe that leaders learn best when engagement is sustained and relationships are built.
- We believe that leadership is contextually dependent
- We believe that to have desired outcomes, you have to know why you do what you do.
- We believe that we are often trapped in what we know now.
- We believe that professional learning has been constrained by past accountability efforts.
- We believe that reflection and growth are essential to success.
- We believe that sustainability and long-term growth are most impactful when built by the user for the user.

Q: What is the time commitment?

A: The principal and superintendent (or assistant superintendent, depending on the district) attending would commit to attending all meetings. Convening One, on May 6, in Kearney, will be a full-day, face-to-face meeting. At that meeting, the design team (the principals and superintendents) will determine how many follow-up meetings will be held in the future. We anticipate one meeting per month, or every other month, with the initial meeting in person, and then using a combination of shorter 2-3 hour Zoom meetings with an occasional in-person meeting throughout the year. (Ultimately, the number and locations of convenings will be up to the design team to determine.) Attempts to connect face-to-face meetings to events such as NDE Administrator Days, for example, will be made.

Q: What is the role and purpose of the principals and superintendents in the NLLN?

A: The principals and superintendents (the design team) will be participating in two learning paths throughout this process. In path one, they will engage in conversations and activities designed to build equity-driven leadership capacity around issues they are facing in their schools and districts. Because this work involves change management, leaders will be engaging in ways to use research on best practices, as well as design thinking methodologies, to affect change at the school and district level.

In path two (concurrent with path one) principals and superintendents will be part of a design team. This team will be using design thinking strategies (specific to school leadership) to develop a system of support for themselves that will be scaled to support all needs improvement schools, and eventually all schools, statewide. This system of support will evolve as the participants design the system, based on their needs, and the anticipated needs, of other principals and superintendents within the state. By the end

of the 2019-20 school year, it is the goal that principals and superintendents, will have a support network consisting of their peers within the design team, as well as the NDE, ESUs and various partners (NRCSA, NCSA, and higher education) who have committed to being at the table along with the participants throughout the process.

Q: What is the role and purpose of the NDE in the NLLN?

A: The NDE has the capacity (Title II funds and Kelly Heineke) to serve as the primary support in creating and facilitating the content of the activities portion of each convening for path one of the learning for the summer and the 2019-20 school year. The NDE will also serve as support for principals and superintendents during path two as the school leaders design the system of support for their context and the contexts of other needs improvement schools.

The role of the NDE (and also for ESUs, NCSA, NRCSA, and higher education) after the first year will depend on what the design team (the principals and superintendents) identifies as their needs for support. We don't know what the system of support will look like by the end of the 2019-2020 school year, other than the fact that the goal is for the system of support to be cross-organizational. We must all come to the table to watch and learn from the design team as they create the system of support they will need after this first year. Once the process has informed us of the districts' wants/needs, we can collaborate to determine what the support will look like for us all in the future.

Q: What is the role and purpose of NRCSA, NCSA, ESUs and higher education in the NLLN?

A: The role of the NRCSA, NCSA, ESUs and higher education in the NLLN for this first year is two-fold:

- 1) To inform the design process as it develops, because we recognize that many these organizations are already doing wonderful things in the area of leadership support and who equally understand Nebraska districts' struggles and needs for support to provide equitable opportunities for their students. What better people to have at the table than those who are in Nebraska schools, and understand their struggles, and have tools and the ability to collaborate to support the districts,
- 2) To observe the process that the design team (the principals and superintendents) takes as they progress throughout the year. This will enable the participating organizations to take what they are observing from the process, and apply and align it to what they are already doing in their own organizations to support leaders. Additionally, participants will be able to listen and observe principals and their superintendents as they productively struggle to develop solutions to the problems they face in their buildings and districts.

The role of NCSA, NRCSA, and higher education (and also for the NDE and ESUs) after the first year will depend on what the design team (the principals and superintendents) identifies as their needs for support. With all participants at the table, solutions to those needs for support can and should be determined collaboratively.

Q: What will the content address?

A: The NLLN content is focused on helping leaders make sound, equity-driven decisions informed by research by Wallace, Fullan, Manna, Nebraska Principal Performance Framework, etc. As facilitators for this first year, the NDE will concentrate on providing guidance based on the above mentioned research; however, as a design team (the principals and superintendents) much of the content after the first convening will be created by the design team (the principals and superintendents) itself, with support

from NDE, ESUs, and a variety of other partners around best practices in equity-driven leadership. Therefore, the NLLN is as much a leader development process as it is a network of supports for NLLN principals and their supervisors, with the goal to scale to all school leaders statewide.

Q: Will participating in the NLLN add more work or change the work that the participating schools, ESU, NRCSA, NCSA and higher education participants are already doing within these schools?

A: No. Schools shouldn't stop engaging in leadership activities that they are already doing with NRCSA, NSCA, higher education organizations, and ESUs, nor should participation in the NLLN prevent schools from starting to engage in leadership activities with these organizations.

Q: How were design team members (the principals and superintendents) selected to participate in the NLLN?

A: Principals and their superintendents were invited to participate using data gathered from the CSI workshops in tandem with a series of readiness factors, and with feedback from the ESU and NDE staff members.

Q: Will community and other education partners be involved in this?

A: NDE will be partnering with ESUs, NCSA, NRCSA, and higher educational personnel to support principals and superintendents with the NLLN.

Q: How does this align with AQuESTT and CSI?

A: The NLLN will build on the work that began at the CSI workshops and aligns to the AQuESTT tenets of *Educator Effectiveness; Positive Partnerships, Relationships, and Success; and Educational Opportunities and Access* via the lens of leadership development and equity-driven leadership.

Q: Will there be equal distribution between rural and urban districts?

A: The first cohort of the NLLN will be comprised of smaller, rural districts. We know that OPS and LPS will be involved differently, but what this support will look like is still being determined.

What facts/details do we know at this point:

1. We know schools with the highest needs are the participants to be given special consideration in the convening of the NLLN. They are the ones who will help all involved learn and grow through this process. Their students are the reason for this process because they deserve successful leaders. The onus is on those of us who understand the importance of school leadership to ensure that we support these leaders as they grow in their leadership skills.
2. We know this whole process is about equity. Equity is the through line. For this to be successful, we must collaborate to positively support these schools so that equitable opportunities exist for all students in Nebraska.
3. We know Nebraska's students cannot wait; we owe it to them to make this a success. And we can, if we work together.
4. We know that by the end of the 2019-20 school year, we need to have supported the design team (the principals and superintendents) in designing a system of supports that will involve organizational interdependency to support all needs improvement schools across the state.
5. We know there are other organizations, the Urban League, Nebraska State Education Association (NSEA), The Nebraska Association of School Boards (NASB), etc...) who are also engaged in

school leadership initiatives. Even though they will not be actively participating in the NLLN convenings, a plan is in place to provide regular webinars to engage these and other organizations to keep them informed of the process as it moves forward.

6. We know that this is a big undertaking, because it involves lots of different organizations. We also know that by the end of the 2019-20 school year, we all have to know what the plan will be moving forward, which is a big lift. However, we believe that anything is possible if we put our minds to it. That is why it is important for us to all be at the table to hear what the principals and superintendents identify as their needs. Once we hear from them, we need to put our collective heads together to make the plan work for them.
7. We know that the NLLN convenings will not be work days during which schools and ESUs work on their CSI Action Plans. The principals and superintendents will be provided opportunities to discuss their Action Plans, because those plans are a large part of their current context; however, the CSI Action Plans will not be the major focus of the convenings.
8. We know that ESUS are committing to attending the meetings of the design team. No other commitment through May 2020 other than being a voice for best practices in leadership supports at the convenings.
9. We know the design and participants will be meeting for two hours via Zoom in June (date and time TBD soon. More than likely the date chosen will be in early June).
10. We know the design team would like to convene (without participants present) for dinner on the eve of the NDE Administrator Days conference to get to know one another better.
11. We know the design team and the participants will meet in person during the NDE administrator days (date and time TBD). The design team has asked for us to find a two hour window to convene a meeting. We are tentatively thinking this will occur from 10:00-12:15 CDT on August 1, 2019.
12. We know the design team and their ESU support people will engage in what we are calling min-cohorts in between NLLN convenings for the purpose of applying learnings to their context.
13. We know the date of the first invitation only engagement webinar (referenced in #5 above) will occur on Tuesday, May 14, 2019. The invitees are representatives from these organizations: NSEA, NSAB, the Urban League, Omaha Public Schools, and Lincoln Public Schools.
14. We know the first convening was successful in achieving the day's outcomes and set the stage for a productive and exciting year for the NLLN moving forward.
15. We know this process is going to require all of us, design team and participants alike, to ask ourselves, "What might we have to do differently to support the process?"
16. We know we have a communication plan developed that supports the importance we are placing on transparency and two-way communication lines because this is unprecedented in Nebraska.
17. We know the Wallace Foundation support will be available for only another year, so the ELLC advisory group is planning for what the support system for the NLLN will look like after that time.

What facts/details we do NOT know at this point, but will have answers to as the process moves forward:

1. We don't know what the system of support will look like by the end of the 2019-2020 school year, other than the fact that the goal is for the system of support to be cross-organizational. We must all come to the table to watch and learn from the design team as they create the system of support they will need after this first year. Once the process has informed us of the districts' wants/needs, we can collaborate to determine what the support will look like for us all in the future.