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**2019-2020 KEY MESSAGES**

**NSCAS Anchor Statement:**

In 2017-2018, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) began the development and implementation of Nebraska’s Student-Centered Assessment System or NSCAS. NSCAS is a statewide assessment system that embodies Nebraska’s holistic view of students. The system and its supports provide valuable information to schools and districts as they prepare students for success in postsecondary education, career, and civic life.

* One goal of the system is to provide educators with multiple types of assessment for instructional purposes throughout the year. This enables educators to monitor student progress towards rigorous content area standards and adjust instruction in the moment, as well as track growth and target learning needs over time.
* The system features formative, interim, and summative assessment approaches. In addition to assessments provided by NDE, the system includes resources and professional learning around the development and use of classroom-embedded assessment strategies.

**FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT**

**Anchor Statement:**

Formative assessment is a way for Nebraska educators and students to use formal and informal processes and tools during instruction to check for understanding and adjust teaching and learning accordingly. Educators in Nebraska use it daily in their classrooms to support student success. Districts and schools provide a variety of formative assessment tools, practices, and opportunities for professional learning to teachers. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) also provides onsite professional learning workshops to districts to help Nebraska educators build their formative practice. Workshops guide educators through the understanding, interpretation, and application of formative instructional practices and assessment tools. In addition, the NDE has added to the formative assessment resources already in place at the district level by making TestWiz and the Navigate Item Bank, technology tools that help educators efficiently build formative assessments, available to districts.

**Key Messages for Testwiz and Navigate Item Bank:**Districts and schools provide a variety of formative assessment tools and learning opportunities to teachers. Adding to those resources, the NDE provides:

* **Technology.** Educators in districts that signed up to use the TestWiz assessment platform and the Navigate Item Bank, can use the tools to easily assess students’ understanding of concepts and track standards mastery. Thousands of items are available with Navigate, as well as pre-built assessments that allow educators to quickly measure student performance. These tools are provided by the NDE to schools and districts who signed up to use them.

**Key Messages for Formative Assessment Professional Learning in Partnership with NWEA:**

* **Workshops.** A series of formative assessment workshops held fall, winter, and spring led by Nebraska Certified Facilitators will help Nebraska educators cultivate their skills in developing learning targets, monitoring student progress, providing learner-focused feedback, and motivating students to sustain learning based on their individual passions and goals. The workshops are provided by the NDE at no cost to schools and districts.
* **Online resources.** Nebraska educators will have year-round access to NWEA Professional Learning Online, which includes, among other resources, extensive teacher toolkits for formative assessment.

**INTERIM ASSESSMENT**

**Anchor Statement:**

As part of NSCAS, the NDE makes an optional interim growth assessment – MAP Growth – available to districts to use in concert with other interim assessments of their choice. MAP Growth assessments are adaptive and can be given up to four times a year (fall/winter/spring/summer). Educators in all Nebraska districts use MAP Growth assessments and data to identify student learning needs and measure academic growth – both within and across school years. MAP Growth helps educators better understand what a student knows and is ready to learn and determines progress toward learning goals. In addition, MAP Growth allows educators to track growth toward proficiency levels and predict performance on the NSCAS General Summative assessment. The NDE is providing MAP Growth for reading, language arts, math, and science for grades 3-8 in all public school districts.

**Key Messages for MAP Growth:**

* **Adaptive, timely, and accurate.** By dynamically adjusting to each student’s performance, MAP Growth creates a personalized assessment experience that accurately measures performance. The assessments are untimed; most students take about 45 minutes to complete each subject. Students can see their individual results immediately upon completion. Aggregate test results are available shortly after the close of the testing window.
* **Better instruction for students**. MAP Growth shows what students know and are ready to learn. Since students with similar MAP Growth scores are generally ready for instruction in similar skills and topics, it makes it easier for teachers to plan instruction. MAP Growth reports also help students set goals and understand what they need to learn to achieve their goals.
* **Consistently compare scores over time**. MAP Growth uses a scale that remains continuous across grade levels. This allows for consistent comparison of scores over time to discern how much growth has occurred. Teachers can see the progress of individual students and of their class as a whole. Principals and administrators can see the progress of a grade level, school, or the entire district.

**NSCAS SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT**

**Anchor Statement:**

The Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System (NSCAS) General Summative assessment is a computer-adaptive statewide assessment that in 2017-2018 replaced the Nebraska School Accountability (NeSA) tests in English language arts (reading and writing) and math for grades 3 – 8 and science for grades 5 and 8. It is a culminating assessment that measures student performance against Nebraska’s content area standards, showing whether students have learned what they were expected to learn. The NSCAS General Summative assessment adapts dynamically based on each student’s ability and includes innovative, interactive question formats that engage students and enable them to demonstrate higher-order thinking. As a result, it takes less time for students to complete and provides deeper information about what they know. At the high school level, the ACT college entrance exam, provided to all students in their third year of high school, typically juniors, continues to serve as the summative assessment in English language arts, math, and science.

**Key Messages & Supporting Points for the NSCAS Summative assessment:**

The NSCAS General Summative:

* **Is built from Nebraska’s College and Career Ready standards with help from Nebraska educators.**
  + Nebraska educators are partnering with NWEA to develop achievement level expectations that are specific to Nebraska’s content area standards.
  + Each item is reviewed by content specialists for alignment to the Nebraska standard being assessed. Item reviewers ensure test items measure what they are supposed to and are free from bias.
  + An independent alignment study was also conducted to ensure that all items effectively measure Nebraska’s content area skills and standards.
* **Yields deeper and more precise insights into students’ grade-level performance.**
  + Adapts dynamically based on each student’s ability, challenging top performers without overwhelming students whose skills are below grade level.
  + Includes innovative question formats that engage students and enable them to demonstrate higher-order thinking.
* **Maximizes classroom time and supports student learning.**
  + Computer adaptive tests quickly adjust to students’ abilities instead of requiring responses to items across all ranges of knowledge.
  + Preliminary 2020 NSCAS General Summative results will be made available to districts within approximately 48 hours. These results are preliminary only. Psychometric checks will need to be conducted before the results are shared publicly.
  + The NDE is invested in getting Nebraska educators the data they need to inform instruction and support student learning in a timely fashion and is working with NWEA to explore approaches that will enable a more rapid return of summative test results.
* **Provides a stable and secure testing experience, reducing stress for students and educators.**
  + The NSCAS General Summative assessment operates on the NWEA Comprehensive Assessment Platform that all Nebraska school districts know and trust, as MAP Growth uses the same platform. Item type samplers provide students the opportunity to experience questions before testing.
  + The platform supports 40 million student test events each year. The current configuration has been certified and tested for at least 250,000 students actively testing at one time.
* **Creates opportunities for students of all abilities to participate via accommodations and alternate assessments.**
  + All students have access to an array of universal tools such as notepad, highlighter, eraser, zoom, strikethrough tool, and masking.
  + Accessibility supports – both online and on paper – are available to support English language learners and students with disabilities. Assessments are available in English, Spanish, Braille, and large-print. Linguistic supports and approved accommodations such as text to speech are also available.
  + The NSCAS Alternate Summative Assessment is available to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

**NSCAS General Summative for science**

* In 2020, all students in grades 5 and 8 will take a field test for Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards for Science.
* The purpose of the field test is to test the new assessment questions/prompts. Based on this and a waiver we received from the U.S. Department of Education, no science results will be reported to districts or the public in 2020.
* The field test will inform Nebraska's transition to the operational test that will be administered for science in 2021.

**Key Messages for the NSCAS Alternate Summative assessment:**

* Aligns to Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards with Extended Indicators.
* Provides meaningful access to grade-level content for students characterized by significant cognitive disabilities.
* Maximizes potential for direct student interaction with the alternate assessment via the new online administration procedure, which also reduces administration effort and leads to faster delivery of results.

**Key Messages for the ACT College entrance exam:**

The NSCAS ACT:

* **Is the summative assessment in English language arts, mathematics, and science at the high school level and is administered in the spring to all students in their third year of high school, typically juniors, at no cost.**
  + The Nebraska ACT is aligned to the national ACT standards and meeting expectations on the exam indicates college readiness in Nebraska students.
* **Provides more postsecondary opportunities for students in Nebraska.**
  + The ACT presents equal testing opportunities for all students in their third year of high school.
  + Students may choose to send their scores to the colleges of their choice at no cost.
  + The ACT paves the way for more college scholarship application opportunities.
* **Brings increased rigor, relevance, and expectations for students.**
  + All students in their third year of high school take the ACT, giving a more comprehensive view of ALL Nebraska students.\*
  + As state standards are raised to meet national ACT standards, and instruction reflects those standards, scores are expected to rise.

\* *An alternate exam will be available for the one percent of students who qualify for having significant cognitive disabilities.*

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

**Anchor Statement:**

In addition to existing professional learning opportunities and resources provided by NDE, districts, and schools, the NDE provides comprehensive professional learning opportunities to districts to support Nebraska educators in understanding assessment results and effectively using data to inform instruction and make decisions that support student learning. Onsite workshops offered by Nebraska Certified Facilitators, along with supplemental extended learning content online, helps Nebraska educators for grades 3 - 8 strengthen their experience in applying MAP Growth data to instructional practice, understand assessment literacy, and build formative practices that support in-the-moment instructional adjustments focused on clearly-defined learning targets. Workshops are funded by the NDE.

**Key Messages & Supporting Points for Professional Learning in partnership with NWEA**

* **Professional learning helps educators *understand* the various types and purposes of assessment, *interpret* and meaningfully discuss assessment data, and *apply* assessment information to inform instructional decisions.**
  + Workshops engage educators in understanding assessment literacy and building a formative assessment practice.
  + A focus on formative instructional practice helps teachers develop their skills in creating learning targets, monitoring student progress, providing learner-focused feedback, and motivating students to sustain learning based on their individual passions and goals.
  + In addition, workshops focused on applying MAP Growth reports and using them to inform instruction are provided to new facilitators and educators.
* **Taught by Nebraska Certified Facilitators, the professional learning workshops are rooted in local context and provide connections to the Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System (NSCAS).**
  + 72 Nebraska Certified Facilitators deliver professional learning across Nebraska in support of school districts and teachers.
  + To become certified, facilitators attend in-person, two-day trainings for each workshop and participate in ongoing learning opportunities provided by NWEA. All training for certified facilitators is conducted by NWEA. Many certified facilitators are Educational Service Unit (ESU) staff developers and district leaders.
  + Nebraska Certified facilitators deliver the professional learning workshops onsite based on district needs and time.
  + The variety of workshops offered enables Nebraska Certified facilitators to adjust depth and focus of content based on the needs of the districts they support.
* **Year-round access to online professional learning resources provides Nebraska educators with ongoing support and community.** 
  + NWEA Professional Learning Online includes extensive assessment courses and topics as well as opportunities to collaborate with fellow educators.