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2020-21 Summative Assessment and Accountability

The mission of the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is to lead and support the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living. [Nebraska's Student Centered Assessment System](#) (NSCAS) and [AQuESTI](#), our system of accountability, have been designed to provide a holistic view of student and school performance. COVID-19 has presented significant challenges and disruptions to the teaching and learning in Nebraska's schools, necessitating changes to statewide assessment and accountability. *The purpose of this document is to highlight the key changes for statewide assessment and accountability in the 2020-21 school year.*



For the Spring of 2021, NSCAS Phase 1 Pilot replaces NSCAS Summative for English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics in grades 3-8. This pilot is a proof of concept assessment for the [through-year adaptive model](#) announced last year and will include both ELA and mathematics. The pilot balances a focus on summative assessment priorities with the uncertainties presented by COVID-19.

The NSCAS ACT will proceed as normal. The NSCAS Science field test for grades 5 and 8 will also take place this year.

2020-21 Summative Assessment Priorities

- Support districts in leveraging assessment data, including existing data, to inform and guide teaching and learning.
- Assist with the transition to through-year adaptive summative assessment.
- Conduct research related to the impact of COVID.
- Help identify unfinished learning that may exist for each student, especially for 2020-21.

NSCAS Phase 1 Pilot Design

- 35 item assessment for both ELA and mathematics (grades 3-8).
- 23 items based on current weights in the Table of Specifications (blue print).
- Fully adaptive at grade level.
- Seven field-test items to produce additional content for through-year adaptive item banks.
- Five MAP Growth items to assist in understanding the relationship between NSCAS and MAP Growth.

Pilot Rationale

- The fully adaptive computer adaptive test (CAT) version allows for the quickest transition to through-year assessment.
- Estimated to take most students about half the time of NSCAS Summative.
- Uses Nebraska's content area standards and blueprint.
- If districts utilize the Fall and Winter MAP Growth tests, this approach will create a similar experience to the through-year adaptive assessment.

Pilot Details

- In an effort to distinguish the unique context under which learning occurred this year, public reporting will be available as part of a special report, not the Nebraska Education Profile.
- As part of the special report, NDE will provide important context about results for 2020-21 and also link results to research about the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Nebraska.
- Districts and schools will receive individual student results on the NSCAS Scale, linked RIT score, and Achievement Level.

More information on assessment in the 2020-21 school year can be found on the Launch Nebraska site [here](#). Please contact Dr. Jeremy Heneger, Director of Statewide Assessment at jeremy.heneger@nebraska.gov with further questions.

AQuESTT

AQuESTT classifications and designations are one way to signal specific areas for school improvement. They also tell the NDE and ESUs how best to target specific supports.

However, the **NDE is recommending that no new classifications and designations be implemented for the 2020-21 school year** for the following reasons:

- Changing nature of NSCAS Summative (movement to through-year adaptive)
- COVID impact on 2019-2020:
 - Lack scores for AQuESTT Growth and Improvement Calculation
 - Lack scores for spring 2021 Science field test.
- COVID Uncertainty on 2020-2021:
 - Inability to accurately administer assessments to test students remotely
 - Uncertainty of impacts on teaching & learning.
 - Mixture of remote, in-person, and hybrid learning.

With this recommendation, 2018-19 classifications and designations will be carried over to this school year. Schools identified for TSI/ATSI/CSI will continue to receive support. Additionally, NDE will review waiver processes with the USDOE and Nebraska officials.

The NDE maintains its commitment to accountability as a means for improving student outcomes. We will continue to work with partners to share relevant data, and support schools through differentiated approaches. If you have questions, please contact Lane Carr at lane.carr@nebraska.gov.