



## PROPOSED AGENDA ITEM RATIONALE

**DATE:** March 22, 2021

**TO:** Matthew L. Blomstedt, Ph.D.  
Commissioner of Education

**FROM:** Shirley Vargas, Ed.L.D.  
School Transformation Officer

Lane Carr  
Director of Accountability

**PROPOSED AGENDA ITEM:** Provide the State Board a high-level update on Nebraska's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan, outline key drivers for change, and share timelines and provide an update on federal and state designations of schools.

### **RATIONALE/BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

One way the NDE delivers upon its mission to lead and support the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living is through the goals, activities, and investments detailed in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan. Since its approval in June 2018, the NDE has delivered upon many promises expressed in the ESSA plan.

Multiple factors have changed or evolved to necessitate a reconstruction of the ESSA plan. The purpose of this session is to highlight key shifts, foundational beliefs, opportunities for feedback and input, stakeholder engagement strategies, and timelines for moving forward.

Per N.R.S. 79-760.06, all public schools must be classified annually through the AQuESTT accountability system. Classifications are based on multiple indicators, including summative assessments, high school graduation rates, and reduction in chronic absence, among others. Furthermore, NDE designates schools for additional support, governed by two specific regulatory authorities – the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and state statute (N.R.S. 79-760.06) requiring the NDE to designate no fewer than three Priority Schools.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which began impacting schools in Nebraska as early as February 2020, the NDE submitted an ESSA addendum and waiver to the U.S. Department of Education. These requests afford federally designated schools an additional year of support by exempting the 2019-20 school year from total

years in the designated status. To maintain consistency across all designations – federal and state – the NDE will match processes and communications for Priority Schools.

**PROPOSED BOARD MEETING (MONTH/YEAR):** April 2021

**ESTIMATED COST:** N/A

**FOR CONTRACTS AND GRANTS:**

- Indicate the Funding Source: N/A
- New or Renewal: N/A
- If renewal, date of first approval: N/A