



NEWS RELEASE

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STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT RESULTS SHOW PANDEMIC IMPACT, HIGHLIGHT AREAS TO FOCUS SUPPORT

The Nebraska Department of Education released the Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System (NSCAS) results and the Accountability for a Quality Education System Today and Tomorrow, or AQuESTT classifications today. Both reports provide insight into how students are performing academically on Nebraska's rigorous college and career readiness state standards. The results, which closely match those recently released from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, show while Nebraska student performance dipped during the pandemic, the state didn't have as large of a setback as others in the nation.

"Three weeks ago, NAEP showed us what we were expecting," said Commissioner of Education Matthew Blomstedt. "Nebraska public schools, while impacted by the pandemic, remained strong. Our statewide assessments are showing similar trends and now is the time for schools to focus supports on the areas that have the most need."

The NAEP results showed that while student scores dipped slightly, no other state scored higher than Nebraska in fourth-grade math. Only one state scored higher in eighth-grade math. Only three states outscored Nebraska in fourth grade reading and only seven states scored higher in eighth grade reading.

NSCAS English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics and Science are rigorous assessments with high expectations for postsecondary readiness. NSCAS ELA and Mathematics are given in grades three through eight. NSCAS science assessments are given in fifth and eighth grades and Nebraska juniors take the ACT assessment.

The following are among the key findings from this year's NSCAS:

- 47% of Nebraska students across all grade levels were considered proficient in English Language Arts (performing at the On Track or Advanced level), and 46% were proficient in Math.
- More than 66% of Nebraska students were proficient on the NSCAS Science assessment, a new assessment this year that measures against the state's rigorous science standards.
- In 2020-21, almost 8,500 students did not take the NSCAS assessments, lowering Nebraska's assessment participation rate to just below 95%. This year, Nebraska's traditional high participation rate returned to its pre-pandemic level of over 99%.
- At the high school level, Nebraska's juniors were 46% proficient in ELA, 44% in Math, and 48% in Science.
- Moving forward, Nebraskans must focus on historically marginalized student groups that were particularly impacted. Achievement gaps present before the pandemic were widened by disruptions in teaching and learning.
 - 19% of students with disabilities were proficient in English Language Arts, and 18% were proficient in Math
 - 30% of students who qualified for free or reduced lunch were proficient in ELA and 27% for Math.

- English learners saw the greatest declines in assessment results: 5% of this student group were proficient in ELA, and 8% were proficient in Math.

In addition to assessment results, Nebraska released accountability ratings. State and federal law require the NDE to annually classify and designate schools to provide signals for specific supports. Nebraska's system, AQuESTT – helps ensure all students across all backgrounds and circumstances have access to opportunities and access. AQuESTT annually classifies schools and districts as Excellent, Great, Good, and Needs Support to Improve.

A breakdown of classifications indicated that 144 (13 percent) of schools were classified as Excellent, 356 (32 percent) were Great, 430 (39 percent) were Good, and 166 (15 percent) were designated as Needs Support to Improve.

The state also updated schools that are listed for Comprehensive School Support (CSI), Targeted School Support (TSI) and Additional Targeted Support (ATSI). Those designations allow the state to focus resources and support in schools that need it most. Details on those designations can be found at <https://www.education.ne.gov/csds/school-improvement/csi-tsi-atsi/>.

“Our accountability results illustrate that not every student group is performing at their highest level. It is our role to give all students the resources they need to succeed and move all students toward excellence” noted Commissioner Blomstedt. “In speaking with schools, I am confident they are using their resources, including the historic appropriations through the American Rescue Plan to target funds to support unfinished teaching and learning.”

State Senators Lou Ann Linehan and Lynne Walz joined Commissioner Blomstedt at the press conference to highlight the need to work together as a state to find solutions and strategies to support schools and students moving forward.

“I appreciate the support from Senators Linehan and Walz,” said Blomstedt. “Their commitment to improving Nebraska's schools will be a vital part of the work to come. We must collectively own where we are and commit to the next steps as a state. All Nebraskans need to continue to support schools, educators, and students through positive engagement and partnership like tutoring, mentoring, volunteering, or other support.”

More information on assessment and accountability results can be found on the Nebraska Education Profile, nep.education.ne.gov.

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