

NDE State Stakeholder Sessions

On February 19th and 20th, 2014, the Double Line team met with 39 staff members of the Nebraska Department of Education. The staff members represented departments including the special education department, school accreditation, early childhood, assessment, curriculum, career education, adult programs, post-secondary readiness, the SRS system, federal programs, finance, and the help desk. The two key objectives of the meeting were to receive input on the dashboard project as a whole while increasing awareness and understanding, and for state stakeholders to validate the dashboard customizations planned for Nebraska.

The session format was fluid to meet the needs of each group, depending on awareness level, area of expertise, and the time ultimately needed to answer questions about the project. In each session Double Line presented a project overview and showed the attendees a core dashboard set. Stakeholders gave feedback on the dashboard pages most relevant to their current responsibilities. For example, the federal programs department provided in-depth review of the student information page. Despite the varied format of each session, at the conclusion of each most stakeholders verbally reported feeling as though the time spent was valuable, answered their questions, and deepened their understanding of the project.

The team addressed the concerns of the attendees as they arose. Some of those concerns included whether the dashboard would be mandated, the long-term sustainability of the project (and cost to districts) and how data ingestion would serve the larger operational needs of districts. The team also clarified that the feedback gathered from state stakeholders would be incorporated into feedback provided by the districts. After compiling this data and a new round of validation with the districts, Double Line will provide recommendations on development that will provide the highest value to Nebraskan educators.

These sessions were crucial for Double Line's understanding of the education landscape in Nebraska. Stakeholders emphasized the independence of Nebraska districts; the state dictates very little in practice, curriculum, and reporting. The state assessment was adopted four years ago and subject areas have been phased in over time. While the state has adopted standards for Nebraska, they are not required (nor are standards-aligned assessments).

The sections below will detail the sessions individually. The Key Findings characterize the important lesson Double Line learned from that group. Customizations are those changes considered routine in any dashboard implementation. Feature Requests are components requested by the stakeholders that will require new development. We only listed the customizations and feature requests once, and did not repeat if the group's feedback was redundant to a prior group. Lastly, each group's focus on their particular area led to great ideas about what the dashboard could eventually make possible for their students. While we made clear that the first phase of work would prioritize development of the highest value to the largest populations, we have captured these ideas for NDE to consider for future development.

Session 1: Title I, Special Ed, Homeless Program Coordinators

Page Focus: Student information Page, Graduation Requirements

Key Findings:

- Students in Nebraska have both a district ID and a state ID
- The state has mandated a minimum for courses in core subjects in order to graduate; but many districts go above this
- The state does not have a standard number of credits required to graduate, and all districts use different values for credits (for example, one course may count as 1,3,4,5 credits depending on the district)
- The state's definition of At-Risk will not be universally meaningful and is redundant to other program participation

Customizations:

- Remove Economically Disadvantaged from Teacher Page
- Change Title I Participation to Title I Support
- English Language Learners instead of English as a Second Language
- Remove Over-Age
- Remove At-Risk
- Include Repeater
- Change Expected Graduation Year to Cohort Year – this should first appear in 9th grade
- Remove Graduation Plan
- Remove check-boxes in "Special Services" box
- Add student ID number to the header

- Change Gifted and Talented to High Ability Learner (will come through system that way)
- Single Parent/Pregnant Teen and Parent in Military will probably not be available
- Know whether a student is new to the district

Feature Requests:

- An indicator for Highly Mobile Students
- Add indicator for whether the student attended an early childhood program
- Progress reports at 4.5 Weeks in the quarter
- Include if the student is new to the school from a non-structural school change
- Metrics for missing assignments
- Include whether the student is a ward of the state (not protected)

Long-term vision:

- Include student surveys of social and emotional well-being on the dashboard
- Include a parent portal
- Use this as an early warning system for students who need an intervention
- Ensure that students in alternate programs like juvenile justice or state health facilities are included in the program

Session 2: Curriculum and Career Education

Page Focus: College and Career Readiness

Key Findings:

- Students in Nebraska are well-served by a strong career education program
- Almost all students take a career education class at some point; the average across the state is 4.5 classes
- One third of seniors in Nebraska are “concentrators”, meaning they choose and complete a specific program
- This program is rigorous and purposeful. 25% of Nebraska students overall take AP classes; 36% of concentrators take AP classes
- This is an advantage of the low-stakes for NeSA. Nebraska emphasizes courses outside of the four core subject areas, including fine arts and career education.
- There are many programs of study across Nebraska’s districts. However most students do not declare a program of study until 12th grade. It is usually determined by the courses the student has already completed.

Customizations:

- None that apply to the core dashboard at this time

Feature Requests:

- ASPIRE
- Cooter
- ASVAB

- Work Interest Surveys
- Other career aptitude tests
- Career Cruising
- Naveance
- Progress toward industry certifications like OSHA
- Add a school climate survey that can help educators identify what engages students in school

Long Term Vision:

- The strength of career education in Nebraska demands a robust picture of “career readiness”, much more than an afterthought of “college readiness”. Eventually, this team would like to see a separate page for career readiness with clear indicators of a career path for a student and progress toward required credentials.
- A key use for the dashboard will be to connect career education to the school counseling team, helping counselors make data-driven decisions about students’ options.
- There is a new teacher evaluation initiative in Nebraska that would be a good fit into the dashboard. At this point, teachers are working with their principals to determine an appropriate student learning outcome(s) on which they will be evaluated at the end of the year.

Session 3: Teacher Certification, Post-Secondary Readiness, Adult Education, and School Accreditation

Page Focus: Operational Dashboard, College and Career Readiness, Grades and Credits

Key Findings:

- Teacher certification is standard in Nebraska. Teachers can have the following endorsements:
 - EL K-8 Self-Contained
 - MS 4-9
 - HS Subject endorsements
 - Special Education – specific to population served
- These should be house in each district's SIS, having already been cleared against the course codes the teacher is teaching.
- There is no requirement to provide enriched services for high-ability learners.
- Finding that lower-grades are moving toward standards-based reporting but there is push back from parents. PowerSchool having difficulty converting to standards-based reporting.
- Districts were trained as part of the STARS program that preceded NeSA to develop their own standards, learning objectives, and assessments.
- Other pilots in the state are giving SAT.

Customizations:

- Show state course code on the transcript page

Feature Requests:

- Connect to PBIS systems that districts are using
- Compass
- Show dual credit earned on the college readiness page
- Progress reports at 4.5 weeks

Long-Term Vision:

- Create a learning objective repository to help teachers personalize instruction.
- Track students through their post-secondary education to determine college persistence.
- Target principals for training and dashboard adoption. Make sure that they are able to support the system as instructional leaders.
- There is interest in how this system will serve state agency stakeholders who are invested in the data. The state would like to become users of this system or other applications built on top of the data.
- See high value in using this as a tool for district accountability submission

Session 4: Special Education and Early Childhood Education

Page Focus: Student Information Page

Key Findings:

- There are other systems in the state that house special education data.
- The NDE does not interpret details of special education status as more protected than other types of student information. Everyone with educational responsibility for a student should have access to his/her special education details.
- Nebraska has a “birth mandate”, meaning that children with special needs are entitled to services from birth, even before they enter school.
- These children are associated with the district they will eventually attend; they may be pulled in to the dashboard but will not be associated with a building (only a district).
- With this mandate there are instances of cessation of services; a child may be designated early but move outside of that. There is interest in a history of this exit for students.

Customizations:

- Change “Special Services” to “Special Education Services”
- Change “Primary Instructional Setting” to “Least Restrictive Environment”
 - Categories will come from the SIS
- Include Monitored Year 1 and 2 for Limited English Proficiency

Feature Requests:

- Capture exit date for special education
- Designate whether student attended a public pre-school

Long-Term Vision:

- Enrich the data set for each student so that there is rich information available upon his/her entering school. Capture the milestones of a student before they become school-age.
- Connect SRS information to the dashboard if possible; particularly if that information is not in a second-tier of protection.

Session 5: Assessment (with follow-up meeting with Jeremy Heneger on 2/26/2014 via phone call)

Page Focus: State Assessments, preliminary mockups of alternate assessments

Key Findings:

- The NeSA was developed 4 years ago. Each subject has been phased in over time, except for writing, which pre-dated the other subject areas.
- Students are not required to demonstrate proficiency to be promoted to the next grade or graduate.
- Students are not required to take the exam and there are not make-up tests.
- There are many duplicate test results from the vendor, DRC. If Double Line pulls records from the state these should be cleaned up.
- Districts do not report NeSA exam results by standard to the state. However, detailed results (in accordance with the Table of Specifications for each subject area) are housed with the vendor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC).
- The NeSA scale score is 0-200 for all subject area tests except for writing.
- The cut scores are the same:
 - Below: 0-84
 - Meets: 85-134
 - Exceeds 135 and above
- Except for writing, where the cut score for advanced differs in each grade level.
- Students may take an Alternate exam, but it does not have to be in all subject areas. There is no Alternate for writing.

- If the writing test is written in a different language, it will not be scored.
- Students may take the general exam in a different language.
- Many districts are meeting their needs for progress assessment with national vendors of norm-referenced tests (NRT).
 - ITBS
 - TeraNova
 - iTED
 - Explore, Aspire, ACT
 - California Achievement Test
- The C4L is an interim assessment used by 180 out of 249 districts. Teachers use an “Item Bank” to create custom interim assessments. The indicators within the item bank correspond to the Table of Specifications, so this assessment could help teachers understand which specific indicators they need to work on with a student. This data is also managed by DRC. NDE recognizes that some teachers do not want all C4L assessments to populate the dashboard and a filtering system needs to be created.

Customizations:

- The drill down for historical test results should be on the scale of 0-200.

Feature Requests:

- Add a drill down at the container level that shows the current year subject area scores in one view.

Note: Double Line needs to get feedback on the other assessments from the districts as soon as possible.

Conclusion:

Double Line will assist NDE project leadership in sifting through and prioritizing the feedback provided by the state in comparison with the districts. Most of the feedback we received validated the districts' feedback. Some of the dashboard components presented to the state were not included in the version the districts saw (the special services box, the NeSA exam, and preliminary mockups of the norm-referenced tests). These should be validated with the districts before development begins. NDE should balance the occasionally competing needs of providing the pilot districts with a comprehensive data set and the need to have a representative dashboard that can scale to all of Nebraska. Similarly, it is important for NDE to manage the expectations of state stakeholders for dashboard development in the initial phase.

Next Steps:

- NDE should circulate and validate the findings presented in this document.
- Double Line will share the spreadsheet that captures all feedback on wireframes from both district and state stakeholders
- DLP will engage the pilot districts in a discussion about additional customizations and feature requests recommended by the NDE staff.
- NDE will schedule an initial meeting with DRC to gauge their level of interest in building NeSA and C4L connectors to the dashboard.
- Double Line will revise wireframes for the NeSA based on feedback from the NDE assessment team and will allow the pilot districts to review and approve.
- Double Line will present the mock-ups created for ELDA, ITBS, NWEA/MAP, DIBELS to the pilot districts for review and approval.
- Double Line will consolidate feedback from the districts and state staff and present the findings to the districts at the Data Conference in April.