



NEWS RELEASE

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NEARLY THREE OF EVERY FOUR NEBRASKA STUDENTS MEET STATE STANDARDS

The first of three reports on Nebraska public schools, students released today.

While the preliminary test scores released today are good news, showing that nearly three of every four Nebraska public school students met state standards in 2015, Education Commissioner Matt Blomstedt encouraged parents and the public to look at test results over time to evaluate the performance of individual students and schools — not a single test score from one year.

“Overall this year, more Nebraska students met our state standards in reading, writing, math and science,” Blomstedt said, noting a 3 percent increase in student reading scores this year compared to 2014, and an 11 percent increase since 2010.

“Moving the needle from year-to-year is not easy. It takes hard work on the part of our students and Nebraska teachers,” Blomstedt said. Nebraska educators administered about 451,000 tests statewide in 2015.

Trend data showed state test scores have improved incrementally since testing began six years ago on reading standards, with testing in other subjects phased in yearly. Over 5 years, the percentage of students proficient on mathematics standards improved by 9 percent, science by 5 percent in four years and writing proficiency increased 4 percent over three years.

“Generally, we are seeing not only an increase in the percentage of students proficient on standards but also an increase in the percentage of students exceeding the standards,” Blomstedt said. “That means, Nebraska teachers are successfully increasing their students learning and knowledge of the standards, in general, at all grade levels.”

Even though the percentage of Nebraska students meeting state standards has improved, overall, Blomstedt said Nebraska can do better. “Going forward, we know we must focus on equity of educational opportunity and work to close the educational achievement gap among groups of students.” Historically, higher percentages of white students have met state standards when compared to groups of students by race and ethnicity as well as English Language Learners and students with special needs. The test results for groups of students will be released later.

NeSA TEST SCORES 2010-2015

Nebraska State Accountability: NeSA Scores
 Percent Proficient: Meets/Exceeds Combined
 Combined Results for All Grades Tested

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Reading	69%	72%	74%	77%	77%	80%
Mathematics		63%	67%	69%	71%	72%
Science			67%	70%	72%	72%
Writing				68%^	—^^	72%

^In 2013, students at grades 8 and 11 experienced formatting issues with the NeSA-Writing online test administration. Scores should be interpreted with caution.

^^ In 2014, students in grades 8 and 11 experienced technology issues with the online NeSA-Writing test. Valid results are not available.

Parents will receive a report on their child’s scores from their local school district this fall. Detailed results for schools and districts are available on the Nebraska Department of Education’s homepage at www.education.ne.gov.

STATE OF THE SCHOOLS REPORT

In October, state test results for groups of students will be available in the State of the Schools Report. Federal accountability results will be available at that time as well.

NEW: AQuESTT RESULTS

“Focusing on every student every day is key to student success and school improvement,” Blomstedt said. “At the state level, a big part of our job is to build and support educational systems for continuous school improvement.”

In December, the first-ever state accountability results for AQuESTT — Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow — will be available. Under AQuESTT, Nebraska public schools and districts will be classified in four levels and also recognized for having programs and initiatives that support student learning in specific areas.

“AQuESTT is an accountability system that builds on the student test scores released today and other data to create a broader, bolder and better system to support schools and students,” Blomstedt said.

Under AQuESTT, schools and districts will be surveyed for evidence of programs and initiatives that: 1) support student success through positive school partnerships and relationships 2) help students successfully transition between grades, schools, programs 3) provide student access to comprehensive instructional opportunities 4) help students prepare for college and their careers 5) use multiple assessments to measure student learning, and/or 6) support educator effectiveness. Those six AQuESTT tenets are at the core of a survey and follow-up analysis that could improve the classification of a school and district and encourage further improvement.

“AQuESTT is a system focused on school improvement — not test scores from a single year,” Blomstedt said. “It’s the next generation of an accountability system that will be more fully developed over time to ensure student success.”