

**Providing  
Equitable Opportunities  
For An Essential Education  
  
For All Students  
In Nebraska  
Public School Districts**

**A Policy Document of the  
State Board of Education**

**December 10, 2004**

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## Recommendations for Schools

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## A. PURPOSE AND USE

**Purpose.** This document establishes the policy of the State Board of Education for assuring that all Nebraska public schools provide equitable opportunities for all students to receive an essential education. An essential education is defined by the Board as an education enabling students to be proficient in meeting the State's academic content standards and essential learnings; successful at each educational level and in transitioning between those levels from early childhood through postsecondary education and/or career entry; and effective in functioning in and contributing to our culturally diverse democratic society.

**Development of this Document.** The Essential Education Recommendations were developed over a two-year period through the work of the Commissioner's Advisory Committee on Essential Education and input from numerous other educators, patrons and board members across the State of Nebraska in meetings, conferences, policy partner forums, surveys and focus groups. The State Board of Education has also been extensively involved in the discussion of essential education and development of the proposed recommendations throughout the development process.

**Format.** As you read this paper, please note that each section includes:

- Recommendations for each area, program, or topic (Curriculum, Staffing, Support Services, or Facilities and Environment)
- Applicable current laws or rules supporting each topic
- Some items contain regulation numbers. Those items represent regulations already in place in the Nebraska school accreditation requirements

**Next Steps.** This policy should guide immediate and long-range planning for implementation of recommendations at the state and local levels. This may consist of amending existing rules and regulations as needed; building capacity through staff development, resource materials, and other support; and the continued discussion to design and provide needed support for equitable educational opportunities for all Nebraska public school students.

## **B. BOARD POLICY**

### **POLICY ON ESSENTIAL EDUCATION** **Approved by the State Board of Education** **August 8, 2003**

The State Board of Education believes that all students in Nebraska public schools should have equitable opportunities for an essential education. An essential education is one that enables students to reach the following outcomes.

Students will be:

- Proficient in meeting the State's academic content standards and essential learnings
- Successful at each educational level and in transitioning between those levels from early childhood through postsecondary education and/or career entry
- Effective in functioning in and contributing to our culturally diverse democratic society

The Board further believes that all districts should provide the following components of essential education:

- Qualified and competent administrative, teaching, paraprofessional, and operational staff
- Integrated, planned curriculum that prepares students to achieve state standards and to reach the outcomes identified above.
- Comprehensive support programs and services that meet the diverse needs of students
- Safe, clean, and supportive facilities and learning environments

Therefore, it is the intent of the State Board to communicate to local districts and to State policy makers the components of essential education and to participate in the discussion of steps necessary to insure that all students have equitable access to that education. The Board further intends to initiate any needed regulations and to provide staff development and other appropriate resources necessary for the implementation of this policy.

## C. ESSENTIAL CURRICULUM

**Curriculum Policy Statement.** The essential curriculum serves as the foundation of student learning. It guides the content of instruction and leads to acquisition of an essential education. The essential curriculum combines the standards and the essential learnings into an educational experience that integrates content and skill mastery as well as analytical thinking, problem solving, and creativity. All public schools in Nebraska should offer their students access to an essential curriculum that meets the following:

- Is based on state standards in reading, writing, speaking, listening, mathematics, science and social studies/history and essential learnings in visual and performing arts, world languages, technology, health and physical education, and career and technical education
- Is appropriate for the developmental level of the students
- Addresses diverse learning needs
- Instills a passion for learning and the importance of life-long learning
- Develops problem solving and critical thinking skills, decision making skills, data gathering, and critical use of information
- Develops expected work ethics, as well as group participation and leadership skills
- Incorporates character education and multicultural education, including respect for diversity
- Provides for application of technology in all learning areas
- Provides access to advanced courses
- Is organized in a schedule that is functional and meets student needs in all curriculum areas

**Contents of this Section.** This section of the paper provides recommendations to assure that all Nebraska public school districts provide essential learning opportunities in the curriculum areas listed below.

General K-12 Curriculum and Instruction  
Language Arts (Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening)  
Mathematics  
Science  
Social Studies/History  
Visual and Performing Arts  
World Languages  
Technology Literacy  
Health and Physical Education  
Career and Technical Education

The recommendations are intended to guide needed revisions in rules, regulations, and/or statute.

## CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**The elementary, secondary and/or K-12 curriculum provides the following:**

- A curriculum for language arts (reading, writing, speaking, listening), mathematics, science, and social studies/history based upon state standards or Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) approved local standards. Other curriculum areas are based upon locally developed curriculum.
- Differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students.

**The school also provides the following as currently required in Rule 10 (*Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Schools*):**

(Note: Descriptions of the subjects to be provided for students are included in the curriculum sections of this paper)

Elementary:

004.02A The Elementary Instructional Program. The elementary school has a representative weekly schedule for each classroom teacher encompassing experiences in the following subject areas:

Reading and Language Arts	Health
Mathematics	Physical Education
Social Studies	Visual Arts
Science	Music

Middle Grades:

004.03A Middle Grades Instructional Program. The program in the middle grades includes instruction for each grade each year in the following subject areas. Instruction may be provided through separate courses, integrated blocks of time, and/or through exploratory programs.

Reading	Health
Language Arts	Art
Mathematics	Music
Social Studies	Physical Education
Science	World Languages (proposed addition to Rule 10)

004.03B Career education is included in the middle grades program.

### **Curriculum and Instruction continued:**

#### High School:

004.04A Required High School Program. The high school program consists of courses totaling at least 400 instructional units. (Subject requirements are listed with each curriculum area of this paper.)

Note: One instructional unit equals 15 clock hours. Therefore, a course that meets for 50 minutes for 180 days generates 10 instructional units. (Instructional units may be generated through any configuration of days and minutes.)

#### K-12:

004.01A The instructional program of the school system is based on written purposes or standards and is approved by the local board of education or governing body.

004.01B By July 1, 2003, each school district either adopts measurable quality academic content standards for reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies/history that are the same as those found in Appendices A through D of this Chapter or adopts local content standards approved by the Commissioner as equal to or exceeding in rigor the standards in Appendices A through D of this Chapter.

004.01D The school system has written guides, frameworks, or standards for all other areas of the curriculum.

004.01G The instructional program in public schools incorporates multicultural education in all curriculum areas at all grades. Multicultural education includes, but is not limited to, studies relative to the culture, history, and contributions of African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans and European Americans with special emphasis on human relations and sensitivity toward all races.

## **LANGUAGE ARTS (READING, WRITING, SPEAKING, LISTENING)**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **The school provides the following opportunities for all students:**

- A balanced, comprehensive, standards-based curriculum, K-12, that allows all students to acquire the skills necessary to be successful readers, writers, speakers, and listeners and that provides:
  - On-going, meaningful practice and application in all curriculum areas
  - The opportunity to build on students' individual interests
  - The opportunity to study topics in depth using reading, writing with proper spelling and legible penmanship, speaking, and listening
  - The chance for students to interact with and comprehend a variety of texts
- A K-12 language arts curriculum in a locally designed sequence based on state or NDE-approved standards for reading, writing, speaking, and listening.
  - The elementary curriculum includes development and practice of skills and understanding in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. It helps children develop appreciation of literature, creativity, and expression.
  - The middle grades reading curriculum includes experiences designed to help students expand, develop and apply reading skills introduced in the elementary grades. It includes reading for both information and enjoyment.
  - The middle grades language arts curriculum includes activities that engage students in using language for a variety of reading, writing, speaking, and listening purposes.
  - High schools offer at least 50 instructional units in language arts of which 40 are a continuous four-year locally determined sequence of instruction. The curriculum includes written composition, critical reading, interpretation of fiction and non-fiction, oral presentation, and application of listening skills.
- High school students have opportunity to participate in courses that offer an enriched, extended language arts curriculum such as honors, accelerated, differentiated, Advanced Placement, or dual credit between secondary and postsecondary schools.



## **MATHEMATICS**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The school provides the following opportunities for all students:**

- A standards-based K-12 mathematics program available to all students beginning in elementary and continued through middle school and high school.
- A K-12 mathematics curriculum in a locally designed sequence based on state standards or NDE-approved local mathematics standards.
- An elementary and a middle school mathematics program that includes arithmetic skills and the foundations of numbers, algebra, data analysis, and geometry.
  - The elementary curriculum includes development, practice, and application of numeration, computation, estimation, problem solving, geometry/spatial concepts, measurement, and related topics.
  - The middle grades curriculum includes practice in numeration, computation, estimation, problem solving, geometry/spatial concepts, and measurement. It introduces algebraic and statistical concepts and provides opportunities for students to develop understanding of the structure of mathematics.
- High schools offer at least 40 instructional units in mathematics that include a four-year locally designed sequence of instruction beginning no later than ninth grade with algebra or pre-algebra. Course content includes communicating, reasoning, problem solving, numeration, computation, estimation, measurement, geometry, data analysis, probability and statistical concepts, and algebraic concepts.
- High school students have opportunity to participate in courses that offer an enriched, extended mathematics curriculum such as honors, accelerated, differentiated, Advanced Placement, or dual credit between secondary and postsecondary schools.

## SCIENCE

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**The school provides the following opportunities for all students:**

- A standards-based K-12 science program available to all students beginning in elementary and continued through middle school and high school.
- A K-12 science curriculum in a locally designed sequence based on the state standards or NDE-approved local science standards.
- An elementary science curriculum that helps children develop an understanding of science concepts and processes and includes science as inquiry. It includes experiences drawn from physical science, life science, earth and space science, science and technology, and history and nature of science.
- A middle grades science curriculum that includes elements of life, physical, earth and space sciences, science as technology, and history of science. Learning activities emphasize science as inquiry and scientific processes and concepts.
- High schools offer at least 40 instructional units that include science concepts and processes, science as inquiry, physical science including chemistry and physics, life science including biology, earth and space science, science and technology, and history and nature of science. The curriculum may include a two-year natural science course sequence that provides students the opportunity to learn content of the science standards.
- High school students have the opportunity to participate in an enriched, extended science curriculum such as honors, accelerated, differentiated, Advanced Placement, or dual credit between secondary and postsecondary.

## **SOCIAL STUDIES/HISTORY**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The school provides the following opportunities for all students:**

- A standards-based K-12 social studies program available to all students from elementary through middle school and high school.
- A K-12 social studies/history curriculum in a locally designed sequence based on state standards or NDE-approved local social studies/history standards.
  - The elementary curriculum helps children to develop an understanding of the world and its people. It includes experiences drawn from geography, history, economics, government, citizenship, career awareness, human relations, current affairs, and cultural studies. This includes instruction in American history and stories about the exploits and deeds of American heroes, singing patriotic songs, memorizing the Star-Spangled Banner and America, and reverence for the flag and proper conduct for its presentation as referenced in Section 79-724 R.R.S.
  - The middle grades curriculum includes content and experiences drawn from geography, history, economics, citizenship, government, cultural studies, and current events. This includes instruction in American history that makes the course interesting and attractive and instills a love of country as provided in Section 79-724 R.R.S. All history courses stress contributions of all ethnic groups in the development and growth of America.
  - High schools offer at least 40 instructional units that include content drawn from American and world history, geography, economics, civics, government and citizenship and may also include content from other social science areas such as sociology, psychology, and anthropology. This includes instruction in the U.S. and Nebraska Constitutions, the benefits and advantages of our government, the dangers of Nazism, Communism, and similar ideologies, the duties of citizenship, and the appropriate patriotic exercises to include Lincoln's birthday, Washington's birthday, Flag Day, Memorial Day, and Veterans Day as referenced in Section 79-724 R.R.S. All history courses stress contributions of all ethnic groups in the development and growth of America.
- High school students have the opportunity to participate in courses that offer an enriched, extended social studies curriculum such as honors, accelerated, differentiated, Advanced Placement, or dual credit between secondary and postsecondary schools.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS (ART, MUSIC, THEATER, DANCE)**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **The school provides the following opportunities for all students:**

- A K-12 visual and performing arts program based on a locally developed curriculum.
- High schools offer at least 40 instructional units each year that include at least:
  - Vocal music – 10 instructional units (or one year of daily classes or the equivalent)
  - Instrumental music – 10 instructional units (or one year of daily classes or the equivalent)
  - Visual arts – 10 instructional units (or one year of daily classes or the equivalent)

#### **The school also provides the following as currently required in Rule 10 (*Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Schools*):**

##### Elementary:

004.02A7 Visual Arts. The curriculum helps children understand and apply a variety of media, techniques, and processes within a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas. The curriculum includes reflection upon and assessment of art and study of art in relation to history, culture, and other curricular areas.

004.02A8 Music. The curriculum helps children to sing and play a variety of music, read and notate music, listen to and describe music, and evaluate music. The curriculum includes music in relation to history, culture, and other curricular areas.

##### Middle Grades:

004.03A7 Art. The curriculum includes activities and experiences designed to develop skills in working with a variety of artistic techniques, processes, and media. The curriculum relates art to history and culture and to other curricular areas.

004.03A8 Music. The curriculum includes experiences that involve students in singing and playing musical instruments and provides opportunities for students to pursue individual musical interests and to develop individual talents. It includes the study of a varied repertoire of music and its relation to history and culture.

**Visual and Performing Arts (Art, Music, Theater, Dance) continued:**

High School:

004.04B8 Visual and Performing Arts — 40 instructional units which include each year instruction in vocal music, instrumental music, and visual arts. It may also include dance and theater. The visual and performing arts curriculum includes performance, interpretation, and evaluation.

004.04B8a Music. The curriculum includes singing and playing a varied repertoire of music, improvising melodies and accompaniments, reading and notating music, listening to and describing music, evaluating music and music performances, recognizing relationships between music and the other disciplines, and the study of music in relation to history and culture.

004.04B8b Visual Arts. The curriculum includes media, techniques, and processes; choice and evaluation of a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas; assessment of characteristics and merits of student work and the work of others; and the visual arts in relation to other disciplines.

## WORLD LANGUAGES

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**The school provides the following opportunities for all students:**

- A K-12 world languages program based on a locally developed curriculum and available to all K-12 students to:
  - Develop communication skills in languages other than English
  - Gain knowledge and understanding of cultures
  - Develop insight into the nature of language and culture
  - Apply language skills and cultural knowledge
- Elementary - Introductory experiences in world languages. This may include international themes connected to or integrated with other content such as reading, social studies, art, and music. The use of school, community, and international resources is encouraged.
- Middle Grades – Instruction in world languages. The curriculum includes reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills for communicating in one or more languages other than English; knowledge and understanding of other cultures; and developing insight into the nature of language and culture.
- High schools offer at least 30 instructional units or three years of daily classes that include at least a three-year sequence of instruction in one language. The curriculum includes reading/literature, writing, speaking, and listening skills for communicating in one or more languages other than English, knowledge and understanding of other cultures, and developing insight into the nature of language and culture.

## **TECHNOLOGY LITERACY**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The school provides the following opportunities for all students:**

- A K-12 technology literacy program based on a locally developed curriculum to enable students to function effectively in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- The technology literacy program is incorporated in the instructional program at the elementary, middle, and secondary levels. Instruction includes:
  - Basic operations and concepts
  - Using technology to communicate, collect information, process data, solve problems, and report results
  - Ethical and societal issues related to technology
- High schools offer at least 20 instructional units in areas of technology including courses such as digital media, graphic design, programming, networking, or operational maintenance. (As appropriate, this may also be counted toward a career and technical education field.)

## HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**The school provides the following opportunities for all students:**

- A K-12 health and physical education program based on a locally developed curriculum.
- A sequential health and physical education program is provided for all students K-12.
  - The elementary health curriculum helps children develop an understanding of the body systems, nutrition, wellness (including physical activity), and healthy living habits, including injury prevention, disease prevention, and environmental health.
  - The middle grades health curriculum includes the study of body systems, tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use prevention, growth and development, nutrition and dietary behavior, consumer and environmental health, and those factors that affect health, including natural and man-made hazards and individual health choices to reduce health-related risk factors.
  - The elementary physical education curriculum helps children develop and maintain physical coordination, large and small muscle control, motor skills and movement patterns, physical fitness, leisure activities, and healthy behaviors.
  - The middle grades physical education curriculum includes motor skills development and active involvement in health-related physical fitness activities designed to develop cardiorespiratory endurance, muscular strength and endurance, and flexibility. It encourages students to develop habits of physical exercise through individual and team activities emphasizing involvement rather than competition. Practice for and participation in interscholastic activities cannot substitute for any part of physical education.
  - High schools offer at least 20 instructional units or two years of daily classes in personal health and physical education. The curriculum includes content to emphasize life-long wellness habits. The health curriculum emphasizes non-participation in high risk behavior, and includes health promotion, disease prevention and risk reduction. The physical education curriculum includes an active program of health-related physical fitness, including cardiorespiratory endurance, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and body composition. Practice for and participation in interscholastic athletic activities are not accepted as a substitute for any part of the personal health and physical education requirement.



## **CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The school provides the following opportunities for all students:**

- Career and technical education including a career planning system for all students.
- Career and technical education based on the following Career Fields\*:
  - Arts, Communication, and Information Systems
  - Business, Marketing, and Management
  - Environmental and Agricultural Systems
  - Health Sciences
  - Human Resources and Services
  - Industrial, Manufacturing, and Engineering Systems
- Career and technical education that provides:
  - Opportunity to participate in work-based learning including both school-site and work-site experiences
  - Opportunity to participate in personal growth and leadership development opportunities
- Career and technical education provided at the following levels:
  - Elementary – Career awareness instruction incorporated into the curriculum to provide students the opportunity to explore careers and expand their awareness of career choices
  - Middle School – Career education provides an exploration of the Career Fields
  - High School – 80 instructional units in career and technical education to include:
    - A local sequence of at least 15 instructional units in each of three of the six Career Fields
    - At least 5 instructional units in each of the three remaining Career Fields
  - High school students have the opportunity to participate in courses that offer an enriched, extended career and technical education curriculum such as honors, accelerated, differentiated and/or Advanced Placement, or dual credit between secondary and postsecondary schools.

\*Note: These Career Fields incorporate the content from: Agricultural Education, Business Education, Family and Consumer Sciences, Health Sciences, Industrial Technology Education, Marketing Education, Trade and Industrial Education, and Work-Based Learning, and may also include Technology Literacy.

## **D. ESSENTIAL STAFFING**

**Staffing Policy Statement.** It is imperative that all Nebraska students have equitable opportunities to acquire an essential education. This includes access to competent and qualified staff who meet state qualification requirements and provide all students with high quality instructional programs that guide them in achieving challenging standards and sustaining high achievement over time.

**Contents of this Section.** This section of the paper provides recommendations to assure that all Nebraska public school districts have quality staff to provide essential learning opportunities for Nebraska students. The staffing categories include those listed below:

- Administrative Staff
- Teaching Staff
- Paraprofessional and Operational Staff

The recommendations are intended to guide needed revisions in rules, regulations, and/or statute.

## ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Each K-12 and each secondary district has the full-time services of one or more members of an administrative team to:
  - Provide leadership for learning
  - Organize and manage resources for learning
  - Provide a safe and structured environment for learning
  - Engage families and community in supporting learning
- Each administrator participates annually in continuing education and/or staff development that emphasizes curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

**The administrators hold qualifications and are assigned as currently required in Rule 10 (*Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Schools*) as follows:**

Elementary:

008.02A Each elementary school has a principal assigned who holds a Nebraska Administrative and Supervisory Certificate with an endorsement appropriate for serving as an elementary principal or for superintendent. When the number of full-time equivalency teachers supervised by a principal in one or more school systems reaches 10, the principal is assigned at least one-half time for administration and supervision. The principal is assigned full-time when the number of full-time equivalency teachers reaches 20 or more.

008.02B An elementary principal who is the head administrator of a school system meets with the board of education or governing body at least four times each year to provide leadership in the development of school goals, policies, budgets, instructional programs, staff evaluation, and other administrative and instructional matters.

Middle Grades:

008.03A Each middle grades school has a principal who holds a Nebraska Administrative and Supervisory Certificate with an endorsement for middle grades principal, elementary principal, secondary principal or for superintendent.

**Administrative Staff continued:**

008.03A1 Middle grades schools having only grades four through six have a principal holding an endorsement for elementary principal, middle grades principal, or superintendent.

008.03A2 Middle grades schools having only grades seven through nine have a principal holding an endorsement for middle grades principal, secondary principal, or superintendent.

008.03B When the number of full-time equivalency teachers supervised by the principal reaches 10, the principal is assigned at least one-half time for administration and supervision. The principal is assigned full-time when the number of full-time equivalency teachers reaches 20 or more.

**High School:**

008.04A Each secondary school has a principal assigned who holds a Nebraska Administrative and Supervisory Certificate with an endorsement for serving as a secondary principal or for superintendent. When the number of full-time equivalency teachers reaches 10 or more, the principal is assigned at least one-half time for administration and supervision. The principal is assigned full-time for administration and supervision when the number of full-time equivalency teachers reaches 20 or more.

**K-12 and Secondary Districts:**

008.05A Each K-12 and each secondary school system having grades ten through twelve has a head administrator who holds a Nebraska Administrative and Supervisory Certificate with an endorsement for serving as a superintendent. Nonpublic systems may share an area or diocesan head administrator.

## TEACHING STAFF

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers not holding the appropriate endorsement acquire three credit hours per year toward the endorsement.
- Each teacher participates annually in professional development that is part of the district or building staff development plan aligned with the school improvement plan.
- All administrators, teachers, early childhood educators, related service providers, and paraeducators have a thorough understanding of special education requirements and best practices.
- All teachers are provided sufficient time, but not less than 250 minutes, each week for daily instructional planning, including implementation of standards and assessments. This includes some time during the student day and may include time before and after the student day. Each school district schedules sufficient time, but not less than three days, of the contract year for planning for curriculum development, implementation of standards and assessments, and school improvement.
- Minimum school level requirements and provisions for appropriate endorsement (same as current requirements shown below):
  - Elementary – 95%
  - Middle Grades - 90%
  - Secondary – 80%

**Teaching staff hold the qualifications and are assigned as currently required in Rule 10  
(Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Schools):**

Elementary:

007.01A Computed on a full-time equivalency basis, a minimum of 95 percent of the teachers in the elementary grades are assigned to areas for which they hold certificates having appropriate endorsements pursuant to 92 NAC 24.

007.01B Pre-kindergarten programs operated by public schools are coordinated by a staff member who holds a Nebraska Teaching Certificate with at least 9 college credit hours in early childhood education.

## **Teaching Staff continued:**

### Middle Grades:

007.02A Computed on a full-time equivalency, at least 90 percent of the teachers in middle grades hold one of the following endorsements or meet the provisions of Sections 007.02A1a or 007.02A4:

007.02A1 In grades seven and eight, any middle grades endorsement or an appropriate secondary endorsement.

007.02A1a Teachers holding an elementary endorsement may teach in grades seven and eight if they acquire six credit hours per year toward the middle grades endorsement or participate in staff development in accordance with a local mission and plan for education of middle grade students.

007.02A2 In grades four through six, an elementary endorsement or any middle grades endorsement.

007.02A3 In grade nine, an appropriate secondary endorsement or any middle grades endorsement.

007.02A4 Teachers not holding an appropriate endorsement may be assigned to the middle grades if they acquire six credit hours per year toward a middle grades endorsement.

007.02A5 Secondary teachers assigned to integrated courses or curriculum in grades seven through nine are considered appropriately endorsed if they hold an endorsement for any of the subjects or fields included in the course.

### High School:

007.03A At least 80 percent of the instructional units offered in secondary grades during the regular school term are assigned to teachers who hold certificates having appropriate endorsements issued pursuant to 92 NAC 24. If 92 NAC 24 does not provide an endorsement designated for a particular course or subject area, any teacher holding a regular certificate may instruct such course without penalty to the school system. Teachers holding a subject endorsement are considered appropriately endorsed for any other subject within the broad field if they annually acquire, prior to the opening of school, six credit hours toward the subject endorsement or the broad field endorsement.

007.03A1 Teachers assigned to integrated courses or curriculum in accordance with Sections 002.09 and 004.04C1 are considered appropriately endorsed if they hold an endorsement for any of the subjects or fields included in the course.

007.03B Secondary schools including grades seven and eight may assign the teachers as provided in Section 007.02A.

## **PARAPROFESSIONAL AND OPERATIONAL STAFF**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

All paraprofessional and operational staff meet requirements of state and/or federal legislation and also have a mandatory background check.

This includes:

Section 79-802 (01) R.R.S. states, in part, a teacher aide may be assigned duties which are non-teaching in nature if the employing school has assured itself that the aide has been specifically prepared for such duties including the handling of emergency situations which might arise in the course of his or her work.

The No Child Left Behind Act requires that Title I paraprofessionals have at least a high school diploma or GED and completion of two years of college, or an associate degree or have demonstrated appropriate knowledge through an approved test.

## **E. ESSENTIAL SUPPORT SERVICES**

**Support Services Policy Statement.** The support programs and services provide the staffing and resources critical to meet the unique needs of various populations of learners and to assist all students in acquiring the essential curriculum.

**Content of this Section.** This section provides recommendations to assure that all Nebraska public school districts provide essential support services in areas listed below:

- School Counseling Program
- Library/Media
- Technology Support
- Special Education
- High Ability Learning
- English Language Learning
- Early Childhood Education
- Health and Nutrition Services

The recommendations are intended to guide needed revisions in rules, regulations, and/or statute.



## SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**The school provides the following program and services for all students:**

- A comprehensive K-12 school counseling program based on locally developed guidelines or curriculum that assists students in academic, career, and personal/social development. The program includes:
  - K-12 school counseling curriculum
  - Individual student planning for career guidance to assist every student in grades 7-12 in developing a career and education plan
  - Responsive services for immediate needs of individuals, small groups, and crisis situations
- The same requirements as shown below in current rule except that ratios in middle and high school grades are lowered from one-half time counselor for each 300 students to one-half time counselor for each 250 students with corresponding ratios for each additional 250 students.

**The school meets the following current requirements of Rule 10 (*Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Schools*) with a revised counselor-student ratio as indicated above:**

K-12:

007.05A Each K-12 and each secondary school system assigns at least a one-half time equivalency person to conduct a guidance and counseling program. The level of assignment is determined by the local school system and the person assigned holds a guidance and counseling endorsement appropriate for the level(s) assigned. When enrollment in a school system exceeds 400, the system assigns at least one full-time equivalency appropriately endorsed person.

004.01D . . . The school system also has a written description of the library media and guidance programs.

Middle Grades and High School:

**School Counseling Program continued:**

007.05B School systems having a total of 300 or more students in the middle grades, secondary grades, or high school grades assign at least a one-half time appropriately endorsed person to

provide guidance and counseling for the level. When the total enrollment in any of those levels reaches 450, one full-time equivalent appropriately endorsed person is assigned. Thereafter, an additional one-half time appropriately endorsed person is assigned for each 225 students at any of those levels.

007.05D Until September 1, 2006, a person holding a Nebraska Teaching Certificate with no endorsement appropriate for guidance and counseling may be assigned to fulfill the requirements of Sections 007.05A and 007.05B if such person acquires at least six credit hours each year toward an endorsement appropriate for guidance and counseling pursuant to 92 NAC 24. . . .

Elementary:

007.05C School districts having 300 or more students in the elementary grades have guidance programs or services available for the elementary students. The procedures and time allotment are determined by the local school district.

## **LIBRARY MEDIA**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The school provides the following program and services for all students:**

- The school has a library media program that provides print and non-print materials that complement, supplement, and enrich curriculum and instruction. The program is based on a locally developed plan for selection and use of the media and materials.
- The library media program provides for:
  - Research
  - Personal interest reading
  - Study of current events
  - Use of technology
  - Development of skills for accessing, evaluating, and using resources

**The school provides a library media program that meets the following current requirements of Rule 10 (*Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Schools*):**

Resources:

006.01A Each school has a library media area(s) which is available to students during the entire school day. All library media resources are properly cataloged, marked, and shelved according to a standard classification system. Each school has at least one set of encyclopedia available in either print or electronic format with copyright dates in the past five years.

006.01B Each elementary school acquires a minimum of 25 new library media resources in print format, exclusive of textbooks and encyclopedia, of different titles, per teacher per year, up to 150 titles during one year. The minimum number of new titles in print format is 75 if library media resources are also available through electronic format. Each middle and high school acquires a minimum of 150 titles each year in either print or in full text electronic format.

006.01C Each middle level school subscribes to at least ten periodicals either in print or in full text electronic format.

006.01D Each secondary school subscribes to at least 25 periodicals in print or in full text electronic format.

**Library Media continued:**

Staff:

007.04A Each K-12 school system and each secondary school system has a person holding a Nebraska Teaching Certificate with an endorsement appropriate for library science or educational media specialist, or meeting Section 007.04B, assigned on at least a one-half time basis to provide library media services to the school system.

007.04A1 Each school building having an enrollment of from 70 to 249 students has a person holding a valid Nebraska Teaching Certificate with an appropriate endorsement for library science or educational media specialist assigned on at least a one-fifth time basis or has a library media paraprofessional assigned on at least a one-half time basis under the supervision of a certificated staff member.

007.04A2 Each school building having an enrollment of at least 250 students has a person holding a Nebraska Teaching Certificate with an appropriate endorsement for library science or educational media specialist assigned on at least a one-half time basis, or has such person assigned on a one-fourth time basis and a full-time library media paraprofessional also assigned. Buildings with 500 or more students have at least a full-time educational media specialist or a one-half time educational media specialist and a full-time library media paraprofessional. Buildings with 750 or more students have a full-time educational media specialist.

007.04B Until September 1, 2006, a school system may assign a person holding a Nebraska Teaching Certificate with no endorsement appropriate for library science or educational media specialist to fulfill the requirements for Sections 007.04A, 007.04A1, and 007.04A2 if such person acquires at least six credit hours each year toward an appropriate endorsement pursuant to 92 NAC 24. . . .

## **TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The school provides technology support to help insure that all students have access to high quality educational opportunities.**

- The K-12 technology program supports teaching and learning through hardware and software that:
  - Transmit and access information and data
  - Integrate digital technologies into the teaching and learning process
  - Provide access to multiple technology platforms
- Physical facilities adequately accommodate the school's technology systems including distance learning
- Technicians and/or other support personnel are available to support educators

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The school provides the following appropriate special education program and services for all students with disabilities:**

- Special Education linked to general education, the Nebraska standards and assessment system, and the school improvement process
- On-going parental involvement in program and school improvement activities
- Disaggregation, analysis, and public reporting of special education data by age, gender, ethnicity, disability category, educational placement, and other relevant factors
- Effective general supervision practices, including coordinated state and local special education programs
- Practices in the regular classroom are inclusive for students with disabilities

**The school meets current requirements of Rule 51 (*Regulations and Standards for Special Education Programs*) and state and federal statutes:**

- 34 Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 300 and 303
- U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Monitoring Clusters
- For children birth to three years, appropriate Early Intervention Services in Natural Environments including the development and implementation of an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).
- For children three years to 21, a Free Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment, including the development and implementation of an Individual Education Program (IEP).
- All identified children with disabilities, regardless of age, gender, or ethnicity shall participate in the general education curriculum, with any needed accommodations or modifications, and be educated with children who are not disabled to the maximum extent appropriate.
- Highly qualified special education administrators, teachers, early childhood educators, related service providers, and paraeducators.

## **HIGH ABILITY LEARNING**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The school has a program that provides learning experiences and support services that develop the unique talents and skills of high ability learners.**

The school plan for high ability learners includes:

- An identification of learners with high ability using:
  - Multiple measures, both standardized and non-standardized
  - Instruments that measure diverse abilities, talents, and strengths
  - Identification profiles for appropriate instruction
- A continuum of learning experiences that develop talents and skills of high ability learners including procedures such as:
  - A continuum of instruction within the school day
  - Flexible groups for differentiated instruction
  - Regular classroom curriculum modified, adapted, or replaced
  - Flexible instructional pace for acceleration
- An individual learning plan based upon the needs and interests of the high ability student

**The school fulfills the current provisions of Rule 3 (*Regulations Governing High Ability Learners*)**

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**The school provides the following program and services for English Language Learners (ELL):**

- The school district assists students for whom English is not the primary language to become proficient in the use of English. This includes:
- Identification and Assessment – The district has procedures for identifying ELL students and assessing their language proficiency so that all ELL students who are unable to participate effectively in the regular instructional program receive services. Such procedures ensure a district identifies all language minority students who are unable to speak, read, write, or understand the English language.
- Staffing – The district has staff to properly implement its chosen ELL program.
- Exit Criteria – The district establishes criteria to determine when an ELL student qualifies for exiting an alternative language program. If the program has the effect of interrupting opportunities for normal academic progress, the district seeks to remedy the resulting academic deficits.
- Program Evaluation – Districts monitor the programs to ensure that they effectively meet the needs of ELL students.

**The ELL procedures are developed to fulfill the intent of the following federal law or court findings:**

Civil Rights Act of 1964 – Prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin in programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance.

Lau v. Nichols – In 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court stated that if the inability to speak and understand the English language excludes national origin minority group children from effective participation in the educational program offered by a school district, the district must take affirmative steps to rectify the language deficiency in order to open its instructional program to these students.

Castaneda v. Pickard (1981) – In Castaneda, the court delineated a three-pronged standard for determining whether English language learners have equal and meaningful access to a district's program. Under this compliance standard, a program for ELL students is acceptable if:



**English Language Learning continued:**

- The district is pursuing a program informed by an educational theory recognized as sound by experts in the field, or, at least, deemed a legitimate experimental strategy;
- The programs and practices actually used by the district are reasonably calculated to implement effectively the educational theory adopted by the districts; and
- The district has taken action if the program, after a legitimate trial, fails to produce results indicating that the language barriers confronting students are actually being overcome.

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **The early childhood education program provides:**

- A foundation for learning and development in the areas of language, literacy, mathematical and scientific thinking, social-emotional and physical-motor development, and creative arts.

#### The school district:

- Provides every day full-day kindergarten for all age-eligible children
- Communicates with families and with community prekindergarten programs to support young children in transitions across prekindergarten, kindergarten and primary level programs and services
- Provides information to families about supporting the development and learning of young children from birth through kindergarten
- Provides programs for young children in natural and least restrictive environments, beginning at the time a child's disability is verified
- Establishes and maintains parent-school-community partnerships to support equity of access to early learning experiences and high-quality early childhood programs for all children in the community

#### **The school meets the following current requirements of rule or statute:**

- Rule 10-004.02B Admission to public school kindergarten is on an unqualified basis to all resident children who will reach age 5 by October 15 of the current school year. If allowed by local board policy, children who will reach age 5 between October 16 and February 1 of the current school year may be admitted if the parent or guardian requests such admission and presents an affidavit as provided in Section 79-214(2) R.R.S. Testing prior to school entrance, if any, is conducted only to identify children with disabilities under Rule 51 (*Regulations and Standards for Special Education Programs*) or to meet requirements of Section 79-214(2) R.R.S.

### **Early Childhood Education continued:**

- Section 79-214 R.R.S. Provides, in part, that the school board of any district shall not admit a child to kindergarten unless the child reaches age five by October 15. The board may admit a child who reaches age five between October 16 and February 1 of the current year if:
  - a) child attended kindergarten in another jurisdiction in the current year;
  - b) the family anticipates relocation to another jurisdiction that would allow admission in the current year,
  - c) the child has demonstrated through recognized assessment procedures approved by the board that he or she is capable of carrying out the work of kindergarten.
- Section 79-201 R.R.S. Compulsory Attendance – Children must be enrolled in school by age seven.
- Section 79-212 R.R.S. Minimum Hours for Kindergarten – Requires that the school district provide a kindergarten program of at least 400 clock hours.
- Rule 11-001.03 Intent. The intent of this Chapter is to encourage schools and community-based organizations to work together to provide high-quality early childhood education programs for infants and young children, which include family involvement. The purposes are also to provide state assistance to selected school districts, cooperatives of school districts, and educational service units for early childhood education, to encourage coordination between public and private service providers of early childhood education and child care programs, to provide state support for efforts to improve training opportunities for staff in such programs, and to provide an approval process for prekindergarten programs established by school boards or educational service units.
- Section 79-1007.01 R.R.S. School Finance – Kindergarten is weighted as .5 if the school has a half-day kindergarten and as 1.0 if the school has a full-day kindergarten (so the full-day kindergarten increases the need calculation).
- Nebraska Constitution, Article VII, Section 1. The Legislature shall provide for the free instruction in the common schools of this State of all persons between the age of five and twenty-one years.
- Rule 51 (*Regulations and Standards for Special Education Programs*)

## **HEALTH AND NUTRITION SERVICES**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Districts provide access to:**

- On-site availability to basic health services to identify and address health issues that prevent or inhibit learning
- Food and nutrition services

#### **Current Rules and Statutes:**

- Rule 59 (*Regulations for School Health and Safety*) – Pertains to emergency response to life threatening asthma or systemic allergic reactions.
- Section 79-248 R.R.S. Requires the school district to cause every child to be inspected, with certain exceptions, to determine if suffering from defective sight or hearing, dental defects, or other conditions prescribed by the Department of Health and Human Services.

## **F. ESSENTIAL ENVIRONMENT**

**Environment Policy Statement.** The facilities and environment influence learning opportunities and student achievement. Physical aspects, as well as the climate and culture of the school, impact student motivation, interpersonal interactions, discipline, and academic performance. Therefore, the facilities and environment should be designed, organized, and used to assure equity and support quality learning.

**Contents of this Section.** This section provides recommendations to assure that all Nebraska public school districts provide facilities and an environment that supports equitable learning opportunities for all students. This includes the following:

- Supportive Facilities
- Supportive Learning Environment

The recommendations are intended to guide needed revisions in rules, regulations, and/or statute.

## **SUPPORTIVE FACILITIES**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **The school facilities support teaching and learning by providing:**

- Physically safe buildings, equipment, and grounds
- Physically healthful practices (i.e., asbestos-control, smoke-free, lead-free, etc.)
- Well-maintained schools and grounds
- Equal access for all by eliminating physical and environmental barriers
- Supportive learning conditions, including adequate lighting, space, and furnishings, and plans or provisions for climate controlled buildings

#### **The district meets the following current requirements of Rule 10 (*Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Schools*):**

011.01A Each school system maintains safe, healthful, and sanitary conditions within the school building(s) and on the school grounds and meets fire, safety, and health codes.

011.01B Each school system has a safety and security plan for the schools in the system. The plan addressed the safety and security of students, staff, and visitors. The plan is approved by the local governing body.

011.01C Each school system has a school safety and security committee which includes representatives of faculty, parents, and the community. The committee meets at least annually to prepare and/or review safety and security plans and procedures, including emergency plans and procedures.

011.01D The school systems safety and security plan(s) are reviewed annually by one or more persons not on the local school system safety committee and not an employee of the school system. This review will include a visit to school buildings to analyze plans, policies, procedures, and practices and provide recommendations. Any recommendations made as a result of the analysis are forwarded to the head administrator and to the school safety and security committee to be considered in making revisions to the plan.

**Supportive Facilities continued:**

**The facilities meet the following state and federal rules and laws:**

- Section 504, federal regulations related to handicapped accessibility
- Boiler inspection state law and regulations
- Asbestos removal, state and federal regulations
- Nebraska Fire Safety Codes (Fire Marshal Inspections)
- Facilities construction laws and regulations (architectural requirements)
- Nebraska statute and regulations related to bidding requirements
- Security requirements of federal and state laws and regulations

## **SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

### **INTENT STATEMENTS**

- The school should provide a welcoming and inviting environment that is emotionally safe, nurturing, supportive, and disciplined; promotes respect, trust, integrity, and regard for self and others; and honors diversity.
- The school should establish learning as the central purpose with learners engaged in meaningful, relevant, and productive learning experiences.
- Policies and practices should result in an orderly environment with emphasis on consistent school-wide positive behavior.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **The district provides:**

- Policies and strategies that emphasize positive behaviors that promote a safe, secure, and welcoming learning environment for all students and staff.
- Opportunities for parents and community members to participate and contribute to the educational process. These may include practices such as involvement in school or classroom activities and sharing information with parents and community.

#### **The district meets the following current requirements of Rule 10 (*Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Schools*):**

009.01A . . . the school improvement process includes. . .

009.01A2 Collection and analysis of data about . . . learning climate. . . .



## **G. SUGGESTED STRATEGIES**

The following strategies are appropriate for all schools and may be especially beneficial to “Necessarily Small/Remote Schools” and/or other schools with unique demographics. These are based on the following strategies already available to schools in Rule 10 (*Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Schools*).

### **I. Local options for providing high school courses:**

- Integrated courses wherein the school has a local description of the curriculum or course with goals, explanation and rationale for equivalent instructional units.
- Simultaneous courses – two courses in a subject field taught simultaneously if coursework is primarily individualized independent projects.
- Performance based curriculum – Curriculum or courses which include goals, representative instructional experiences, expected student performance, and rationale for instructional units.

### **II. Multi-site and Distance Learning Options:**

- Teacher sharing between two or more districts
- Interactive audiovisual options
- University of Nebraska Independent High School programs
- Other distance learning technology approved by the local school district with descriptions of courses, supervision and monitoring of instruction, rationale for instructional units, etc.

### **III. Statutory Provisions:**

- Biennial courses authorized in §79-704, R.R.S. Nebraska, not to exceed one course in each of four subject fields.

Board Action History

- Based on a document approved by State Board 12/5/2003
- Policy document adopted 12/10/2004
- State Board adopted Statement of Affirmation 1/6/2006

Cross-References

- 92 NAC 10