Update: Standards, Assessment, and Accountability (SAA-17)

Wrapping Up the 2015-2016 School Year – April 2016

Volume 17

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I.   Standards

A. Key Dates

1. [The NeSA Timeline](#)-**For Full Assessment Calendar**

2. **Upcoming Important Dates**

   Mar 21 – May 6   NeSA-RMS Window

   Apr 14   **District Access to Preliminary NeSA-W Results**

   Apr 18 – 27   **Districts Submit NeSA Score Verification Requests-All submissions must be received in the assessment office by May 1**

   Jul 13   **District Access to Preliminary NeSA-RMS Results**

   Jul 13 – Aug 3   **Districts Review NeSA-RMS and W Data and Submit Corrections**

   Aug 24   **District Access to Final NeSA-RMS and NeSA-W Reports and Results**

   Sep 16   **Districts Receive Printed NeSA and NeSA-AA Individual Student Reports**

   Oct/Nov   **State of the Schools Report (SOSR) Released**

3. **Statewide Testing Windows**

The last week of the window is designed to give districts opportunity to complete make-up tests.

March 21 – May 6, 2016
NeSA-Reading/ELA	Grades 3-8, 11
NeSA-AA Reading/ELA (alternate)	Grades 3-8, 11
NeSA-Mathematics	Grades 3-8, 11
NeSA-AA Mathematics (alternate)	Grades 3-8, 11
NeSA-Science	Grades 5, 8, 11
NeSA-AAS-Science (alternate)	Grades 5, 8, 11

2016 – 2017 Testing Windows-**Pending**, dependent on spring 2016 Assessment Decisions

Proposal
January 16 - February 3, 2017
NeSA- Writing	Grades 4, 8, 11
February 6 - March 17, 2017	
ELPA21	Grades K-12
March 27- May 5, 2017	
NeSA-English Language Arts	Grades 3-8, 11
NeSA-AA English Language Arts (alternate)	Grades 3-8, 11

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NeSA-Mathematics   Grades 3-8, 11
NeSA-AA Mathematics (alternate)   Grades 3-8, 11
NeSA-Science   Grades 5, 8, 11
NeSA-AAS-Science (alternate)   Grades 5, 8, 11

B. Academic Standards

1. College and Career Ready Standards

With approval from Commissioner Blomstedt, the "Curriculum and Instruction Team" has been renamed the "Teaching and Learning Team." The change is a reflection of a purposeful conversation around the team's work and identity. The Teaching and Learning Team's Purpose is "to provide leadership, service, and support to help all learners become contributing and fulfilled members of society." The essential functions of the team include:

- Providing leadership, content expertise, and technical assistance related to teaching and learning;
- Coordinating processes to develop and implement content-specific standards for grades K-12;
- Designing, developing, and facilitating learning experiences for students and educators;
- Establishing and fostering strategic partnerships among state agencies, nonprofit organizations, postsecondary education institutions, and/or business and industry partners;
- Collaborating with and advising other NDE teams and the Nebraska State Board of Education on matters related to teaching and learning.

In addition to the team name change, the Teaching and Learning Team has an updated website (Teaching and Learning Team Webpage) as well as links on Facebook and Twitter.

Additionally, the Teaching and Learning Team has developed a Standards Revision Timeline that includes a tentative timeline for the review and revision of all content area standards. The timeline includes the following assumptions:

- The review and revision of content standards will be completed by the end of the seven-year cycle.
- The review and revision process may take up to 1.5 years to complete.
- Most review and revision processes will begin in the spring and are expected to be completed by the following fall.
- Pursuant to 79-7601.01, school districts will have one year to adopt the state-approved content standards or adopt standards deemed as equal to or more rigorous than the state-approved content standards in the subject areas of reading and writing (English Language Arts), mathematics, science, and social studies
- School districts are encouraged to adopt the state-approved standards in other content areas (Fine Arts, Physical Education, Health Education, and World Languages) within one year of being adopted by the State Board of Education.
- Career and Technical Education course-based standards and Programs of Study will be reviewed and revised on a five-year cycle in order to remain current with occupational demands/standards.

The Standards Revision Timeline and information regarding standards for all content areas is located on the Content Area Standards Webpage.

Notably, the State Board of Education adopted "Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards for Mathematics" on September 4, 2015. School districts will have one year to adopt the state-approved standards or adopt standards deemed as equal to or more rigorous than the state-approved standards. In addition, standards revision processes have begun for Physical Education and several Career Education areas, and the

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revision of the Nebraska Science Standards will begin this fall (2016) with anticipated approval by the State Board in September 2017.

<div align="center">For more information, contact Dr. Cory Epler, Director of Teaching and Learning

Email: Cory.Epler@nebraska.gov</div>

2. The Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Framework and Evaluation Models

The Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Framework, adopted in November 2011, identifies a set of effective practices to improve teaching, learning, and leadership characterizing Nebraska's best teachers and principals.
https://www.education.ne.gov/documents/TeacherPrincipalPerformanceFramework11-11.pdf Seventeen pilot sites from across Nebraska representing various sizes of school districts designed and implemented evaluation models for teachers and principals built directly from the effective practices. At the core of the development process was the belief that teacher and principal evaluation focusing on improving instruction and leadership can serve as the foundation for increasing student achievement. The evaluation process must utilize both formative and summative data, which is collected multiple times, through multiple measures. The models developed for Nebraska teachers and principals gauge performance on the effective practices, measure student or school progress, and define on-going professional learning based on identified needs. Evaluation of the effective practices can be used in conjunction with nationally recognized instructional and leadership models such as Robert Marzano and Charlotte Danielson.

For the past 5 months a study committee comprised of four State Board of Education representatives and department staff met monthly to study at all facets of teacher and principal evaluation. They examined the Nebraska Effective Practices, the use of student learning objectives to measure student progress, action plans to monitor school progress, and the importance of professional learning to promote growth. The committee considered the current evaluation requirements in Nebraska, discussed the significance of quality teacher preparation programs, visited with representatives of the pilot sites, and monitored the federal waiver process.

Simultaneously, the Board and NDE developed the Evidence Based Analysis (EBA) Tool as a part of the new accountability system which asked districts to rate themselves on the following: 1) The school/school district utilizes a research-based instructional framework aligned to the Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Framework (NTPPF); 2) The school/school district utilizes a formal staff evaluation process aligned to the Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Framework (NTPPF); 3) The school develops an annual professional learning plan that supports continuous improvement. The initial data analysis of the EBA returns indicates that a significant number of districts want assistance in these areas.

Based on months of study, discussion, and consideration of the initial results of the EBA, the State Board Study Committee on Teacher and Principal Evaluation issued the following recommendations on March 4, 2016:

1) The State Board adopts the *Teacher and Principal Performance Framework* as the minimum requirements for effective practices for teachers and principals.
2) The State Board directs NDE to develop effective practices for all other certificated employees.
3) The State Board recognizes that the effective practices and models, developed through the pilot process, are aligned with existing NDE Rules.
4) The State Board believes that a quality evaluation model includes the following components:

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evaluation of effective practices, measures of student and school progress, plans for ongoing professional learning, and other locally determined components.

5) The State Board directs that the evaluation models and supporting information developed through the pilot schools become open source for all school districts by June 1, 2016.

6) The State Board charges NDE to transition to a support and resource system for continued review and revision of the effective practices, evaluation models, and subsequent materials for school districts.

A series of trainings will be offered regionally this summer to districts that are interested in updating their evaluation models.

For questions about the material covered in this section or for summer opportunities please contact: Donlynn Rice, Director of Educator Effectiveness, 402.471.5024
E-mail: donlynn.rice@nebraska.gov

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II. Assessment

A. Graduation Requirements

Requirements were approved by the Attorney General and signed by the Governor in January of 2010. They went into effect for the students who graduated in 2015, the students who were 9th graders in the 2011-12 year. Districts will note that although specific courses are not named, the intent of the requirements is that each district's courses include content reflecting the highest level of rigor of the newly revised state standards.

1. Revisions to Rule 10 Graduation Requirements

003.05 Graduation Requirements. Each high school shall require from grades nine through twelve at least 200 credit hours for graduation, for which at least 80 percent shall be from the core curriculum. The number of credit hours given for a course may be less than the number of instructional units and may be increased up to 25 percent above the number of instructional units.

003.05A By the 2014-15 school year, districts will adopt and implement graduation requirements that meet the highest level of rigor of the standards as specified in the state standards set forth in the appendices of this Chapter, including, but not limited to the following:

003.05A1 Language Arts. Forty credit hours of Language Arts with course content that includes composition, verbal communication, literature, research skills, and technical reading and writing.

003.05A2 Mathematics. Thirty credit hours of mathematics with course content that includes algebraic, geometric, data analysis, and probability concepts.

003.5A3 Science. Thirty credit hours of science with course content that includes biological, earth/space, and physical science concepts with corresponding science inquiry skills and laboratory experience.

003.05A4 Social Studies/History. Thirty credit hours of social studies/history with course content that includes civics/government, geography, United States and world history, and economic concepts.

003.05A B School systems may adopt a policy allowing high school credit to be awarded to students enrolled in a middle grades course if the course content and requirements are equivalent to a course offered in the high school.

003.05B C As required in 92 NAC 18, school systems accept the academic credit earned at Interim Program Schools and issue diplomas to students transferring from Interim Program Schools who have met the requirements for graduation from their own accredited high school.

One of the federal Title I regulations is the assignment of a four-year graduation rate. Each cohort of students, beginning with the 9th graders of 2007-08 were assigned a graduation year. For purposes of AYP calculations, students will be expected to graduate in that assigned year. Because the assigned graduation year expects that students will graduate within four years, students falling behind in earning credits may impact a district's graduation rate.

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Districts will want to be sure to follow the graduation year assigned to each cohort of students. Districts will also want to be sure to keep documentation for students who have moved out. If documentation is not available for students who move, they are considered non-graduates in the four year rate.

1. **Graduation Lookup Tool**

The NDE has built tools to assist school districts in verifying the graduation dates for students. The four-year graduation cohort rate begins with the student's first day of 9th grade in a Nebraska school district based upon the information in the student template.

Students will be expected to be assessed in their third year of high school, one year before the assigned graduation date. To verify the testing year, districts can use the Graduation Year Lookup Tool and subtract one year from the graduation date. The expected year of assessment will be the graduation year minus one.

Example: If the graduation year is 2017, the expected year of assessment will be in 2016. To access the Graduation Year Lookup Tool, you may take the following steps:

Graduation Year Lookup Tool – Directions

> Go to the NDE Portal
> Enter the Username and Password
> Go to the NSSRS Tab
> Select the NSSRS Validation Link Click on Lookups by ID
> Select Expected Graduation Year Enter the NDE Student ID
> The year listed is the expected cohort graduation rate, so to determine the expected assessment year, subtract one year.

2. **Graduation Cohort Analysis Tool G-Cat**

The Graduation Cohort Analysis Tool helps school districts review their Graduation Cohort data. Available through the portal, the data are displayed by Graduation Cohort Year.

Graduation Year Lookup Tool – Directions

> Go to the NDE Portal
> Enter the Username and Password Go to the NSSRS Tab
> Select to the NSSRS Validation Link Click on System Lookups
> Select Graduation Cohort Analysis Tool Enter the Graduation Cohort Year

To ensure the data are correct, districts need to verify students in the current graduation cohort to ascertain whether transfer in and transfer out students are counted correctly. If corrections are necessary, please contact the NDE Helpdesk (888.285.0556).

B.   District Assessment Contacts

NDE has many details to communicate to districts, and districts have many decisions to communicate to NDE. For that reason the NDE assessment and accountability office asked each district

superintendent to assign a District Assessment Contact (DAC). It is the responsibility of the DAC to respond to the necessary communication from NDE, assign appropriate access to their local district personnel, and to communicate important assessment information to other administrators and teachers in their local districts.

Periodic emails are sent from the NDE assessment and accountability office to the DAC with important and updated information. It will be up to the DAC to either act upon the information or communicate appropriately within the district. NDE very much appreciates district efforts in building the communication network.

Only one DAC may be named for each district. Changes of DACs that take place during the school year should be communicated to the Assessment and Accountability office by the district superintendent. Changes for the upcoming year should be communicated by the superintendent as soon as the information is available. NDE requests changes be submitted by August 1, 2016, using the [new DAC form](#).

C. N-TAC Information

NDE has many details to communicate to districts regarding NeSA technology. For that reason the NDE Assessment and Accountability office asked each district superintendent to assign a NeSA-Technology Assessment Contact.

Periodic emails are sent from the NDE assessment office to the N-TAC with important and updated information. It will be up to the N-TAC to either act upon the information or communicate appropriately within the district. NDE very much appreciates district efforts in building the communication network.

Only one N-TAC may be named for each district. Changes of N-TAC that take place during the school year should be communicated to the Assessment and Accountability office by the district superintendent. Changes for the upcoming year should be communicated by the district superintendent as soon as the information is available. NDE requests changes be submitted by August 1, 2016, via email to nde.stateassessment@nebraska.gov

D. 2015-2016 Testing Vendor

Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) has been Nebraska's primary testing vendor since 2008. During that time NDE has added several facets of NeSA testing to the DRC contract: writing, Spanish translation, and the Check 4 Learning (C4L) system.

E. Testing Students – 2016

As a result of comparability studies of online testing and paper/pencil testing, the State Board of Education in January of 2012 approved a policy position stating that beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, students will be tested in the online mode, except for the following students:

1. Students whose Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) or 504 Plans specify the need for paper/pencil tests.
2. Students who are administered the alternate assessment (less than 1%).
3. Students who are contracted to other institutions where online access is not allowed.
4. Students responding in a language other than English or Spanish.

The administration of NeSA assessments is required for students in their third year of high school. Testing will occur in the year prior to their expected graduation year rather than their assigned grade level. A student's expected graduation year or cohort graduation year is determined by adding four years to the school year in which the student enters grade nine for the first time. The assessment year is one year less than the cohort graduation year. For example, a student with a Cohort Year of 2017 will take his/her assessment tests in 2016.

As technology use has developed with many more devices being purchased by schools, DRC has continually updated its software for use on as many devices as possible, while maintaining the necessity for test security.

A Technology Trial was conducted in Nebraska for NeSA testing to determine the operability of various devices for NeSA testing. The Technology Trial was available to all Nebraska schools and districts.

Overall the trial indicates that students prefer to use technology to take NeSA tests and found limited variation in their experiences among the devices used: iPads, Chromebooks, non-Chromebook laptops or desktops.

Some points from the overview of the Qualitative Findings provided on pages 7, 8, and 9:

1. Students preferred using their devices over taking a test using the paper/pencil format.
2. Students showed a preference for using iPads over Chromebooks and non-Chromebook desktops/laptops.
3. Students felt that the device they used was adequate to complete basic actions and to use the test engine (INSIGHT) as it was intended. Screen size was not an important factor for students using any of the devices, although non-Chromebook desktop and laptop issuers were slightly more likely to find their screen size to not be an issue.
4. Only 2-4% of participants attributed being unable to respond to a test question to their test devices.
5. Only 2-9% of students found the tools difficult to use on their testing devices. Students were slightly more likely to find the tools more difficult to use on Chromebooks compared to iPads or non-Chromebook desktops/laptops.
6. iPad users were more likely to perceive that questions loaded more quickly compared to Chromebook users, and slightly more likely to perceive that questions loaded more quickly compared to non-Chromebook desktop/laptop users.
7. Students were satisfied with using iPads and Chromebook to take the test questions presented, with iPads receiving slightly more positive survey results than Chromebooks. However, students were almost as satisfied with using non-Chromebook desktops/laptops.

1. Scheduling for the NeSA-RMS Tests

Scheduling is left to each district, but planning ahead must be done to ensure that each student has an appropriate testing experience within the testing window. Specifically, districts are asked to

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- Schedule two 90 minute sessions for NeSA-Reading/English Language Arts at grades 3 and 4.
- Schedule three sessions for NeSA-Reading/ English Language Arts at grades 5-8 and 11, with the third session, which includes the NeSA- ELA field test with a Text-Dependent Analysis being the longest, 60 minutes minimum.
- Schedule two 90 minute sessions for NeSA-Math, and NeSA-Science.

Note that NeSA tests in Reading/ELA, Math, and Science are not timed tests.

The scheduling for reading, mathematics, and science may be handled in the following ways:
1. Two consecutive days
2. Two days within the same week, preferably not Monday.
3. Two sessions within the same day with a break in between.
4. Other schedules as specified in the student's IEP.

Districts are asked to read and review the following scheduling considerations and to review, "Suggestions for a Smooth Testing Process."

Scheduling considerations:

1. All students participating online must finish each test session on the same day that it is started.
2. Districts should not wait to test until the end of the testing window. The final week of the window is designed to complete make-up tests. Mondays are not the best testing days.
3. The 90 minute scheduling guidance is not required for everyone. **Students who finish early should have other work or reading to do just as they would in norm-referenced test settings.**
4. Regardless of the schedule used, the test administration must be consistent and the scripted directions must be followed.
5. Student benefit should be considered first with regard to scheduling, not adult convenience or logistical issues.
6. Younger students will be more likely than older students to need the two-day schedule, one session each day.
7. Make-up sessions for operational testing will be required within the testing window as students will be scored on the items completed and will receive no credit for blank, incomplete, or missing items.
8. Planning ahead and coordinating within the district and building are critical for successful testing.
9. The final week of testing is designed to give districts time to complete make-up tests. Regular test sessions should not be scheduled in the final week of testing.

2. NeSA Protocols, Practices, and Security

Districts are reminded to review all NeSA protocols, practices, and security documents and to train all

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personnel in those protocols, particularly those who are involved in test administration. Specifically, care should be taken in test scheduling, test ethics, and testing security. Documents outlining and supporting NeSA protocols and practices may be found in the test administration manuals and on the assessment website.

A PowerPoint entitled "Administration Training Orientation" has been placed on our website for training purposes.

3. NeSA Security

In a centralized testing process, it is critical that equity of opportunity, standardization of procedures, and fairness to students is maintained. Therefore, the Nebraska Department of Education is asking that all school districts review the NeSA Security Procedures available on the assessment website. It is critical that all administrators and teachers read the procedures, especially those who are administering the assessment. These procedures apply to all NeSA testing: reading, writing, mathematics, ELPA21, science, and alternate tests.

Breaches in security are taken very seriously. They must be quickly identified and reported to the Nebraska Department of Education's Statewide Assessment Office. From there the determination is made as to whether or not a professional practices complaint will be filed. Districts reporting a security breach should complete the form entitled Report of Security Breach.

Principals sign a single security agreement for each testing session in his or her building(s). Principals need to understand that signing this security agreement means they will oversee the appropriate testing procedures and training for all teachers administering the tests in the building(s). Security agreements were due in the fall for the current school year.

Additionally, a confidentiality agreement is required from each District Assessment Contact. The DACs are responsible for overall oversight of the testing process in the district.

Security Forms are under the direction of

> Kim Snyder, Statewide Assessment & Accountability Office
> P.O. Box 94987 Lincoln, NE 68509-4987
> Phone: 402.471.2959 Fax: 402.742.8302
> Email: Kim.Snyder@nebraska.gov

Districts should maintain a set of district policies that includes a reference to Nebraska's NeSA Security Procedures.

4. Testing Ethics and Appropriate Practice

It is important to note that all principals and teachers need to be familiar with appropriate testing ethics and security practices related to testing. Professionalism, common sense, and practical procedures will provide the right framework for testing ethics. It is also important to note that school districts are bound to hold all certificated staff members in school districts accountable for following the Regulations and *Standards for Professional Practice Criteria* as outlined in Rule 27. The NeSA Testing Security Procedures are intended to

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outline clear practice for appropriate security.

5. Online Test Tools

Districts are able to access several online tools to provide opportunity for students to be prepared for NeSA-Reading, Math, and Science assessments:

- Video Tutorials-English
- Video Tutorials-Spanish
- Online Tools Training-English
- Online Tools Training- Spanish
- Practice Tests- English
- Practice Tests- Spanish
- Guided Practice Tests

The online tools can be accessed through the INSIGHT software or through the Chrome web browser: https://wbte.drcedirect.com/NE/portals/ne. The tools do not require tickets to use and the system provides a standard username and password on the screen for students to use.

Video Tutorials are short videos intended to familiarize student with the functionality of the online test. The tutorials are not interactive and can be shown to groups of students.

The Online Tools Training (OTT) introduces the online testing software tools available during testing and allows students the opportunity to become familiar with the tools before testing. The OTTs are interactive and are designed for individual students.

Practice Tests for NeSA-Reading, Mathematics, and Science are designed to provide an introductory experience in preparation for taking the NeSA tests. The purpose of a Practice Test is for the student to sample NeSA test items and try out features of the testing software prior to the "real" administration. The online Practice Tests exemplify the format and content of the operational NeSA-Reading, Mathematics, and Science Tests. School Test Coordinators, Test Administrators, and students are strongly advised to experience the Practice Tests for all subjects before the testing window. Students who have experience using online Check4Learning tests may not need to participate in the Practice Tests. The Practice Tests are interactive and designed for individual students. Paper/Pencil versions of the Practice Tests are available on the reading, math, and science content pages on the assessment website.

Guided Practice Tests (GPTs) are available for the NeSA-Reading, Mathematics, and Science. Much like the Practice Tests, the purpose of a GPT is for students to respond to sample NeSA test items and try out features of the testing software prior to the "real" administration. The online GPTs also exemplify the format and content of the NeSA-Reading, Mathematics, and Science and NeSA-English Language Arts Tests. However, after a student responds to a GPT item, he or she may select the Enlarge button to view the answer key and a brief annotation explaining the correct answer. The standard alignment for the item is also presented.

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The following NeSA-English Language Arts online tools are available and are designed with the same functionality described previously.

- Online Tools Training-English
- Practice Tests- English
- Guided Practice Tests

Please note: In order to provide student scores for the NeSA-ELA Practice Tests and access to student responses to new open-ended items, the NeSA-ELA Practice Tests have been configured in a similar manner to the NeSA-Writing Practice Tests. Student Test Tickets are required, and the procedures for accessing secure NeSA test content must be followed. These procedures can be accessed in the 2015-2016 NeSA-RMS Online Test Administration Manual and ELA Practice Tests. Paper/Pencil versions of the Practice Tests are available on the ELA Transition web page.

F. NeSA Tables of Specification and NeSA Test Content

The Tables of Specification (TOS) are essentially the test blueprints. Nebraska students are to experience a broad base of curriculum and need to have opportunities to experience all of the Nebraska standards. The NeSA test has been built on a test blueprint designed to represent comprehensive coverage of the Nebraska standards.

The NeSA Reading, Mathematics, and Science TOS for tested grades are on the assessment website for each content page. The TOS will not change unless the tests themselves undergo a content change.

New English Language Arts TOS are available on the ELA Transition web page. These TOS represent content that will be tested in 2016-17.

The important point for districts to emphasize is comprehensive instruction on all standards so that students will be prepared for the NeSA tested indicators.

G. NeSA Test Administration and Online Unlocks

Testing Enrolled Students Outside of the Building: Districts maintain the responsibility for assessing and reporting student results for students who are in Rule 18 schools or an agency under contract with school districts. Districts must have a plan for the assessment of and the reporting of those students' results. Options include:

Paper/pencil tests – districts are responsible for ordering test booklets for students outside their buildings through eDirect in October, for the monitoring of the security of the test administration, and for the return of the test booklets to the vendor.

Online test administration – access to online test administration tickets is available only to public school districts. Therefore, if districts choose to have students outside their buildings take the tests online, districts will be responsible for seeing that the software on computers is properly downloaded, for obtaining and distributing the student tickets, and for the security and monitoring of the test taking process.

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With either option, districts need to communicate their plan to the Rule 18 school or agency and work with them and the academic liaisons (required in Rule 18 schools) to facilitate a smooth testing process.

1. **NeSA Online Guidelines for Unlocking**

   - Once the test session has begun, the session must be completed in the same day.

   - If the session is discontinued within 15 minutes of login (pause/inactivity), the student will have to log back in using the student test ticket (same day only).

   - If a test session was not completed on the day of the initial login, the student's test session will lock overnight. If a student has ended the test through the End Test screen, it will become locked. If a DAC believes circumstances merit a test session being unlocked, the DAC must obtain approval from NDE.

If for some reason a student needs second day unlocking, it should be requested from NDE by phone at 402.471.2495 or by e-mail at nde.stateassessment@nebraska.gov. If NDE has questions about the circumstances of the unlocking, the district will be contacted.

   - Request by phone: Please provide the student name, student state ID number, name of the school district and building name, grade level, subject area, session 1 or 2, and the reason for unlocking the ticket.

   - Request by email: Please include student state ID number, name of district, name of building, grade level, subject area, session 1 or 2, and the reason for unlocking the ticket. However, for security purposes, please do not include the student's name in the email. Emailed requests will receive a return e-mail indicating when the unlocking is complete.

If the student is not finished with the items in a session, the following are appropriate reasons to unlock tickets:

   - Technical difficulties
   - Power failure / loss of connectivity
   - Student logged out incorrectly
   - Illness
   - Emergencies
   - Log in using incorrect student ticket type (Spanish, visually impaired, etc.)

Unlocking student tickets would not be appropriate for the following reasons:

   - Students rushing through the tests
   - Students not answering all of the questions
   - Students misbehaving
   - Schools not scheduling adequate test time

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All materials must be picked up for shipment to DRC no later than May 11, 2016. See complete list of documents and required actions on the [NeSA Information and Responsibilities](#) chart.

H.   NeSA Scoring and Reporting

2. NeSA Scoring

The [scoring rules](#) that are applied to all tests in the Nebraska State Accountability System are available on the assessment website. The scoring rules were applied first in 2009-2010 and will continue until assessments are revised to assess the revised standards.

3. State of the Schools Report - Business Rules and Not Tested Codes

Complete sets of business rules are found on the NDE Website. Districts will find calculation rules for NeSA that will provide guidance for the State of the Schools Report (SOSR). Business rules for the Classification Component of AQuESTT will be posted as soon as they are finalized. Districts are responsible for testing all students enrolled at the beginning of the testing window. Assessment participation is satisfied when the student attempts one item or prompt. Districts are able to add new students through the online system or by completing a new answer sheet during the assessment window. The receiving district is responsible for determining whether or not the new student has been tested in the preceding district. Districts provide a not tested code for any student not assessed either on the student answer sheet or in the online system. The not tested codes are explained in the table below.

Code	Description	Explanation of Use
EMW	Emergency Medical Waiver	Student was not tested because of an Emergency Medical Waiver. (excluded from reporting)
NLE	No Longer Enrolled	Student was not tested because of relocation from district/school after data submission but prior to NeSA testing. (excluded from reporting)
PAR	Parent Refusal	Student was not tested because of a written request from parent or guardian. (included in reporting as scale score zero and performance level of 1)
RAL	Recently Arrived LEP	Student was not tested because student met the requirements for recently arrived classification. (excluded from reporting for reading only)

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SAE	Student Absent for the Entire Testing Window	Student was not tested because student was absent from school from the beginning of testing till the end of testing. (included in reporting as scale score zero and performance level of 1)

4. Score Invalidation and Waivers

In general, the following rules were applied:

Emergency Medical Waivers (EMW) are granted if the situation was an emergency medical waiver and a student's medical situation prevented testing. The EMW needs to be approved by the Statewide Assessment & Accountability Office. During the testing window, Emergency Medical Waivers are not granted for pregnancy or for situations where the school could have tested the student. A physician's statement is required before approval is granted. Scores for students approved under EMW are waived.

Score Invalidations are applied in situations where the construct of the NeSA test has been violated. An example of invalidation occurred when the reading test was read to a student or where cheating was documented. Students receiving score invalidations received zero scores. Participation may or may not have been affected, depending upon circumstances of the invalidation.

Expelled Students provided with education in Rule 17 schools (alternative programs with certified teachers) are required to be tested. Therefore, if students in Rule 17 schools were not tested, but were enrolled during the testing window, they received zero scores.

No Longer Enrolled (NLE) Students who were no longer enrolled in their school districts were coded NLE. Districts needed to "de-enroll" students when they left. If students left before February 1, the NSSRS should have been updated. If students left after February 1, they were to be coded NLE in the online system or on the student answer sheets. NLE codes are applied in circumstances where a student only took the first half of the test and then left the district. NLE codes resulted in waived scores.

Other – Student was not assessed for reasons not covered by other descriptions. Students receiving a designation of 'other' are excluded from reporting.

Business Rules for Students Who Move During the Testing Window:

- First, check to see if the student who moved in has been tested.
- If he/she has been tested, do not add or test the student.
- If he/she has not been tested, add and test the student.

5. Conversion Tables

NeSA-RMS Conversion Tables will be posted each year after testing is completed and post equating is conducted. Conversion tables for NeSA-W do not change. All conversion tables are available on the NDE Assessment & Accountability website.

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6. NeSA-Reading, Math, & Science Cut Scores

The cut scores for the NeSA-Reading, Math, and Science and NeSA-Alternate Assessment-Reading, Math, and Science were set consecutively in 2010, 2011, and 2012.

The Nebraska State Board of Education considered a range of "cut scores" for each grade level in each content area and made final decisions about the exact scores that determined the percentages of students who score in one of three performance levels on the tests:

- Below the Standards
- Meets the Standards
- Exceeds the Standards

The scale score ranges for NeSA-Reading, Math, and Science were set as follows:

Scale Score Ranges	Performance Levels
135-200	Exceeds the Standards
85-134	Meets the Standards
0-84	Below the Standards

As NeSA assessments transition to measure college and career readiness, standard setting will take place in June/July of the first operational year of each subject: English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science.

7. Statewide Analytic Scoring

Since 2012 students in grades 8 and 11 and since 2013 students in grade 4 have received scores based on the analytic rubrics. Analytic scoring provides five scores for each student: a score for
- Content
- Organization
- Word Choice and Voice
- Sentence Fluency and Conventions (punctuation, grammar, spelling)
- Total overall Composite Score

The four domains of writing to be used in analytic scoring are weighted as follows:

- Content and Ideas   35%
- Organization   25%
- Word choice and Voice   20%
- Conventions (grammar, punctuation, spelling)   20%

During scoring, each student's paper is read by two independent scorers. Each domain score from both raters is summed and multiplied by its weighting (0.35, 0.25, 0.20, and 0.20). The domain scores are summed to create a composite score total. The composite score is converted to a scale score between 0-70.

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In cases where the two readers disagree by more than one score point on the domain score, the paper is re-read and the domain that is not in agreement is scored a third time. The rules of the third score reads were applied as follows:

- If the third score is an exact match to one of the originals, the two matching scores are used.

- If the third score is adjacent to one of the originals, but not the other, the third score and the adjacent score are used.

- If the third score is adjacent to both scores (e.g. A=2, B=4, and C=3), the third score is used twice.

The rules for third reads are NOT influenced by the weighting of the domains. The final scaled score accurately reflects the performance of the student on the writing assessment.

The cut scores for NeSA-Writing were set as follows:

Proficiency Levels	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 11
Exceeds the Standards	57-70	55-70	53-70
Meets the Standards	40-56	40-54	40-52
Below the Standards	0-39	0-39	0-39

8. **Accessing NeSA-W Student Responses**

Both the online practice test student responses and the operational test student responses may be printed. The directions for the printing may be found on the writing page of the assessment website.

NDE advises that districts make copies of all paper/pencil writing papers. Do not take paper/pencil booklets apart when copying.

Copies of all student essays are currently available in eDIRECT.

Copies are necessary for local scoring and the appeals process if the district finds it necessary.

9. **Statewide Writing Verification Process – Grades 4, 8, 11**

Writing Verifications are due April 27, 2016.

Although the Statewide Assessment & Accountability Office reviews each writing assessment question related to students' scores brought to our attention during the review of the preliminary results, a formalized verification process is available.

This verification process is appropriate only for very specific, not general, scoring issues in all grades. **Only the total score can be submitted for verification**. Sub scores in the analytic scoring process may not be submitted for verification. The verification process is designed for student scores that fall below the state cut

score. Districts will need to complete the [score verification form](#). In addition, districts must provide a written explanation indicating the reason for the verification request and a copy of each paper in question. Papers submitted for verification will be examined by a panel of trained Nebraska educators in May 2016.

Score verification forms and documentation must be received by April 27, 2016 by one of the following methods; NDE will confirm receipt by email within 24 hours of receiving verification documents. (No faxes please.)
- Mail to: Statewide Assessment, Nebraska Department of Education P O Box 94987, Lincoln, NE 68509-4987 Must be received by April 27th, 2016
- Scan/email to: nde.stateassessment@nebraska.gov

Please indicate in your message how many individual student verifications you are submitting.

10. Release of Results 2016

All NeSA results will be released through DRC's eDirect system. In addition, after all corrections are made and before Individual Student Reports are printed and delivered to districts, all data will be corrected in DRC's eDirect system. 2015 was the first year of the corrected data exchange to take place between NDE and DRC. Henceforth, the data in NDE's portal verification site and in DRC's eDirect should be the same.

11. Embargoed Data

Data are considered "embargoed" when they are not to be shared. Established processes determine the extent to which state data can be shared and with whom.

For Embargoed Data:

a. Do not share scores publically.
b. Individual scores for each student can be shared with the student and with the student's parents. However, classroom, school, district—or any other form of aggregate scores cannot be shared outside the school or with students.
c. NeSA-Writing essays can be returned to individual students (and parents if a district wishes) with the students' scores on them, including domain scores.
d. Aggregate scores can be shared with school/district staff, but do remind recipients that scores are embargoed.
e. No public recognition of individuals can be given if scores are revealed (A perfect 8 on the NeSA-Writing, for example).

Raw scores are converted to scale scores, and even though the scale scores do not change (0-200) for reading, mathematics, and science, because the tests are different from year to year, the conversion tables for each test vary slightly. Therefore, it is best to be very cautious when sharing data internally and is important to be public with the information only when it is formally released by the NDE.

12. NeSA Reports

Information regarding score releases and reports can be found on the assessment website.

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NeSA preliminary reports are available to districts through the eDirect System for writing and for reading, mathematics, and science. The District Assessment Contacts (DAC) will receive email notification when the results are ready, and can access the reports for distribution to district personnel. The reports include building, district, and state level information about the NeSA results. Districts will have time to review the data before score information is made public. Sample reports can be found on the NeSA reporting page of the assessment website. Included in the various reports are the following:

- Raw scores
- Scale scores
- Proficiency levels ("Below the Standards," "Meets the Standards," and "Exceeds the Standards")
- Indicators with the highest performance
- Indicators with the lowest performance
- Disaggregated student results

Additionally, DRC sends two hard copies of the ISRs to the DACs in fall of each school year. The districts should retain a copy of the ISR in the student's file. It is the district's responsibility to send the ISR report to parents in a timely manner. The ISR will also be available electronically through eDirect.

13. NeSA Reports Interpretive Guide

The NeSA reports include terms and vocabulary that may be unfamiliar to educators and parents. It is critical that district personnel use resources available on the A-Z list on the NeSA Reporting page. The Guide provides an explanation of the terms on the report and should help prepare district personnel for explaining reports to parents and the community. The Guide will be available in Spanish for reading, mathematics and science.

The Guide includes information on following terms:

Raw Score: The number of correct items on the NeSA tests out of the total possible.

Scale Score: The conversion of a raw score into an easily recognizable scale score allows year to year comparison in the same subject area. The raw scores for NeSA tests in reading, mathematics, and science are converted to a scale score between 0 and 200. Scores for the NeSA writing test are converted to a scale score between 0 and 70.

The NeSA score proficiency levels will not change from year to year unless standards are reset due to changes in the Tables of Specifications

Exceeds the Standards	135-200
Meets the Standards	85-134
Below the Standards	84 and Below

The Conversion Table for Raw Score/Scale Score will be different each year because although the test items are comparable in the various test forms, they are different. The conversion table for each new test is based on

an annual equating process to the baseline year test. Each subject's conversion tables that convert raw scores to scale scores will be posted for the tested grades as soon as they are available.

Similarly, the NeSA score proficiency levels will not change in writing.

	4th Grade	8th Grade	11th Grade
Exceeds the Standards	57-70	55-70	53-70
Meets the Standards	40-56	40-54	40-52
Below the Standards	39 and Below	39 and Below	39 and Below

The Raw Score/Scale Conversion tables remain consistent in writing because the rubric does not change. Conversion tables can be found on the assessment and accountability writing web page.

Percentile Rank: The position of a student's score in comparison with other students in the state who took the same test. A percentile rank of 84 means the student scored better than 84% of the other students who took the test.

The NeSA scale score proficiency levels will not change in reading, mathematics, or science from year to year.

Standards will be reset when assessments transition to measure Nebraska college and career ready standards.

I.   Check for Learning

1. 2016-17 Check4Learning Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

NDE is determined to grow and improve the C4L system. Decisions about the requirements for the 2016-17 C4L MOU are still being made. Once determined, these requirements will be outlined in the 2016-17 MOU. When completed, the 2016-2017 MOU will be emailed to DACs and will be accessible online.

J.   Information for State of the Schools Report

1. The Nebraska Student and Staff Record System (NSSRS)

The Nebraska Student and Staff Record System, the NSSRS, has been operating fully as the state's record system for several years. As the 2015-16 school year continues, districts should remember several important reporting considerations.

National assessment data may be submitted throughout the year beginning in January, but data can NOT be accepted after June 30, 2016. National assessment (NRT) data are not required for non-public students.

Business rules for assessment data have been posted on the NDE website.

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Districts need to access the NSSRS Validations and Student Verification Reports from the NDE Portal website to determine the accuracy of the assessment data. Directions for accessing reports are provided on the NSSRS Validations website.

2. Reporting Students Who Move

Most students will be assessed in the district and reported by the district where they are enrolled. This is true whether students move between or within districts. During the assessment window, districts record students who move before testing as "No Longer Enrolled" on the answer booklet or in the online eDirect system. Districts need to add a new student by adding the student online in the eDirect system or by completing a paper/pencil assessment. Please call the previous district to check whether the student has been tested. Test those subjects not tested. If the student has completed one session of an assessment but not completed the second session, then the student will need to complete the entire assessment in the new school.

3. Contracted Students

The NSSRS System requires clarifications regarding the reporting of contracted public school students. There are two categories for the reporting of assessment results for contracted public school students.

Category One: Students contracted from one public district to another public district. In these situations, the receiving district needs to do the following:

- Enroll the student, verify the NDE Student ID number.
- Report attendance, demographics and all NSSRS requirements.
- Administer NeSA assessments to the student.
- Report the assessment results.

Essentially, students contracted from one public school to another public school become students in the receiving district.

Category Two: Students contracted from a public district to any education agency that is not a public district. Some examples of education agencies that are not considered to be a public district include but are not limited to the following: Interim program schools (Rule 18), approved special education service providers, court-appointed placements, ESU programs, and temporary out-of-school placements.

In these situations, the public district needs to do the following:

- Keep the student enrolled.
- Continue to report attendance, demographics, and all NSSRS requirements.
- Make arrangements with the other education agency to administer assessment.
- Report the assessment results obtained from the education agency.

Note: Assessment results for students attending non-public schools are not required to be reported to NDE unless the non-public school student is enrolled in the public school for at least .51 of the time. If a non-

public school is also an approved service provider for special education, Category Two (above) applies.

4. Home-Schooled Students

Districts are responsible for reporting home schooled students only if they are enrolled in the district at least .51 of the time.

5. Ward of the Court Students

If a student is a ward of the court, or a ward of the state, the student remains a resident of the district where he or she became a ward, and that district is responsible for assessment and reporting (Section 79-215) (9)).

However, based on a change in state legislation in 2010, if the ward is placed in a foster home, the ward will be deemed a resident of the district in which the ward resided at the time that the ward became a foster child.

There may be circumstances where an official or the court responsible for the ward may make a different decision to assign the ward to a district. If the official or court makes a decision about where the ward will attend school, it would then be the assigned district who would assume the responsibility for the assessment and reporting.

6. Reporting Individual Scores on National Assessment Instruments using Assessment Fact template

The Assessment Fact template captures student national assessment results. National Assessment Instrument is language used in Neb. Rev. Stat. 79-760.05 and replaces previous terms such as standardized tests and norm-referenced tests (NRT). Districts are required to report national assessment results at one grade level each in elementary, middle school and high school. The state board of education has recommended the following tests.

- ACT Aspire
- ACT
- ACT Compass
- California Achievement Test (CAT)
- Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)
- Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED)
- Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) (Northwest Evaluation Assessment)

See the Assessment Fact template instructions for additional information on reporting student national assessment results.

K. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

During the 2015-2016 school year, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) sampled student performance in schools identified by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). Superintendents of selected schools were notified in June 2015 if their schools had been selected. Emails were sent to principals and District Assessment Contacts in selected schools as well as superintendents. The emails identified the date

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chosen for the assessment, administration information, and specific information about the school's responsibilities. Once principals identified the NAEP school coordinators in their buildings, those school coordinators received just-in-time emails that provided guidance for each step of the NAEP process. Schools were also provided support by NAEP field staff prior to and during the assessment window.

For 2015-2016, 13 buildings were selected to administer NAEP assessments in reading, mathematics, and writing at the 4th and 8th grades. The NAEP testing window ran from January 25th to March 4th. All 12th grade NAEP assessments were cancelled throughout the nation due to budget constraints.

Thank you to all schools and students who take part in NAEP. Without your support, the NAEP process in Nebraska would be unachievable.

Please visit the NAEP-website for complete information about NAEP, including previous NAEP results, and other NAEP publications. If you have specific questions about NAEP, please contact the Statewide Assessment and Accountability Office:

> Kim Snyder, Nebraska NAEP Coordinator
> Phone: 402.471.2959   E-mail: kim.snyder@nebraska.gov

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III. Accountability

A. Students with Disabilities and Scoring Rules

All students with disabilities are expected to participate in the Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) System. No student, including students with disabilities, may be excluded from the state assessment and accountability system. All students are required to have access to grade-level content, instruction, and assessment.

Students with disabilities may be included in state assessment and accountability in one of three ways:

- Students may be tested at grade level on the NeSA tests without accommodations.
- Students may be tested at grade level on the NeSA tests with accommodations specified in the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). Accommodations appropriate for the NeSA are found in the Nebraska State Accountability [Approved Accommodations document](). Accommodations provided to students must be specified in the student's IEP and used during instruction throughout the year.
- Use of accommodations that are NOT approved may invalidate the student's score. Non-approved accommodations used in state testing result in both a zero score and no participation credit.

For example, if a student's IEP indicates that reading passages may be read to the students on NeSA-R, the state reading test, and that accommodation is administered, the district is obligated to report to the Assessment & Accountability Office the student's name and ID number before the testing window is over. The student's score will be a "zero" and the student will not be considered a participant. Violations of this procedure are considered a breach in ethics.

Please note: Districts must be aware of the differences between accommodations and modifications.

Accommodations provide adjustments and adaptations to the testing process that do not change the expectation, the grade level, the construct, or content being measured. Accommodations for students with disabilities should only be used if appropriate for the student, indicated in the student's current IEP, and used during instruction throughout the year.

Modifications are adjustments in the test that change test expectations, the grade level, or the construct of content being measured. **Modifications are not acceptable in the state testing process.** Examples: Students cannot be tested out of grade level, nor can certain sections of the test be eliminated or shortened.

Students who qualify may be tested using an alternate assessment, the NeSA-AA. The NeSA-AA has been designed for students with severe cognitive disabilities or multi-handicapping conditions (generally less than 1% of the overall student population.) This is a separate, paper/pencil test that appropriately measures skills tied to the academic content standards as required by NCLB. Further discussion of the NeSA-AA is found later in this section.

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Guidelines for determining which students are to take the alternate assessment must be followed by the IEP team. The guidelines are found in a document entitled: "The IEP Team Decision Making Guidelines" along with the "Alternate Assessment Criteria/Checklist" found on the special education website.

If the IEP team determines that a student is to take the NeSA-AA, a statement of why the student cannot participate in the regular NeSA (based on the IEP Team Decision Making Guidelines document) and the rationale for selecting the NeSA-AA shall be included in the IEP (Rule 51 007.07A6).

1. **Guidelines for Participation in the Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) Alternate Assessments**

The U.S. Department of Education and the State of Nebraska do not currently define "significantly cognitively disabled students." This determination will continue to be made at the local level. It is expected that the local IEP team will carefully consider each of the following guidelines before determining participation in an alternate assessment:

The student...
- Accesses curriculum and instruction closely aligned to Nebraska standards with extended indicators.
- Possesses significant limitations, both in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills.
- Requires extensive, pervasive, and frequent supports in order to acquire, maintain, and demonstrate performance of knowledge and skills.
- Demonstrates cognitive ability and adaptive behavior that prevents completion of general academic curriculum, even with extensive modifications and accommodations.
- May have an accompanying communication, motor, sensory, or other disability.

2. **Nebraska Rule 51: Title 92, Nebraska Administrative Code, Chapter 51**

Nebraska Rule 51 regulations state:

007.07A – "The IEP shall include:

007.07A3 – For children with disabilities who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards, a description of benchmarks or short-term objectives;

007.07A7 – A statement of any individually appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the child on state and district-wide assessments; and if the IEP team determines that the child must take an alternate assessment instead of a particular regular state of district- wide assessment of student achievement, a statement

of why;

007.07A7a – The child cannot participate in the regular assessment; and

007.07A7b – The particular alternate assessment selected as appropriate for the child...”

3. 1% Rule on the NeSA Alternate Tests

If a district's percentage of students who are proficient on the NeSA-AA tests exceeds 1% of the total number of students enrolled in the tested grades 3-8 and HS of the district population, the district will be contacted in the summer by letter and given instructions for applying for an "exception." The "exception" application provides the opportunity for districts to explain their circumstances. The USDE's intent of the 1% cap is to assure that students are appropriately assessed with the alternate assessment and that students who should be taking the general education test have that opportunity.

Further information on the 1% rule for alternate assessments may be found on the special education website or by contacting Sharon Heater at   402.595.1140 or by email at sharon.heater@nebraska.gov

4. Instructional Guides for Alternate Assessments

Instructional examples and clarifications for reading, math, and science extended standards are now available for teachers working with students taking the NeSA alternate assessments. The "Reading Standards with Extended Indicators and Instructional Clarifications," the "Math Standards with Extended Indicators and Instructional Clarifications," and the "Science Standards with Extended Indicators and   Instructional Clarifications" are available on the Special Education website.

B. The Alternate Assessments: Nebraska State Accountability Alternate for Reading, Math, and Science (NeSA-AAR, NeSA- AAM, and NeSA-AAS)

In order to be consistent with the NeSA-R, NeSA-M, and NeSA-S tests for general education students and to meet federal requirements, new alternate assessments for reading, mathematics, and science (NeSA-AAR, NeSA-AAM, and NeSA-AAS) were developed in conjunction with the tests for general education. These tests have been designed for students with severe cognitive disabilities or multi-handicapping conditions, generally less than 1% of the overall student population.

The NeSA-AAR, NeSA-AAM, and NeSA-AAS are tests of appropriate tasks, summative in nature, that provide a single snapshot of performance. The tests have gone through
the same processes as the NeSA tests for general education. Students with severe cognitive disabilities or multi-handicapping conditions are required to participate in statewide testing. The alternate assessment can be administered as specified in a student's IEP.

Districts may access the NeSA-AA Practice Tests, Tables of Specification and Performance Level

Descriptors on the [assessment & accountability website](#).

C. Students Learning the English Language

1. Who are English Language Learners?

English Language Learners (ELL) are those students who have a native language other than English, **OR** who come from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on their level of English proficiency, **AND** whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual (i) the ability to meet the state's proficient level of achievement on state assessments, (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English, or, (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society.

Each district with ELL students should have a plan for identifying and serving these students that meets the requirements of the Office for Civil Rights, Title III, and Rule 15.

The requirements can be found in the [The Nebraska ELL Program Guide, Guide for Administrators](#).

Note: Foreign exchange students are NOT considered as ELL students and should be included in the state assessment process.

2. Including ELL Students in the Nebraska State Accountability [NeSA] Process

Both state and federal laws require the inclusion of all students in the state testing process. ELL students must be tested in NeSA. Districts should review the following guidelines:

- Appropriate testing accommodations for all ELL students.
- In determining appropriate accommodations for students in the NeSA system, districts should use the current Nebraska State Accountability [Approved Accommodations Document.](#)

Districts must be aware of the difference between accommodations and modifications.

For students learning the English language, accommodations are changes to testing procedures, testing materials, or the testing situation that allow the student meaningful participation in the assessment. Effective accommodations for ELLs address the unique linguistic and socio-cultural needs of the student. Accommodations for ELL students may be determined appropriate without prior use during instruction throughout the year. For a detailed discussion of accommodations for ELL students on state content assessments, please refer to ["Guide for Including and Accommodating English Language Learners (ELLs) in the Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) Tests."](#)

Modifications are adjustments or changes in the test or testing process that change the test expectation, the grade level, or the construct or content being measured. Modifications are not allowable in NeSA.

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Spanish Translations:

NeSA-Writing – Spanish translations are available in grades 4, 8, and 11. Students who write NeSA-W in Spanish or any other language other than English need to use a paper/pencil booklet that is ordered in October through eDIRECT.

NeSA-Reading – is available online and paper/pencil. Districts are asked to specify their request for Spanish paper/pencil translations through eDIRECT. To accompany paper/pencil tests, the translations of directions and items are available in written and audio format and are sent from DRC. Reading passages remain in English, and should not be translated. Translating reading passages will invalidate the student score.

Students have the option of using the audio and/or written translation of the directions and items in place of or alongside the NeSA-R paper/pencil test.

Student responses are entered on a regular student answer document.

The translated audio CD directions and items may be copied to iPods or audio tapes but not to any networked device. The original Spanish CD will need to be returned to DRC after testing and all other copies destroyed. Only one copy of the written and audio modes will be provided to each district per grade level.

NeSA-English Language Arts field test 2015-2016 – must be given in the same mode, paper/pencil or online, as the NeSA-Reading assessment in 2015-2016. Neither reading passages nor items may be translated into another language. All directions may be translated.

Students have the option of using the audio and/or written translation of the directions in place of or alongside the NeSA-ELA field test paper/pencil test.

Student paper/pencil responses are entered on a regular student answer document.

The translated audio CD directions may be copied to iPods or audio tapes but not to any networked device. The original Spanish CD will need to be returned to DRC after testing and all other copies securely destroyed locally. Only one copy of the written and audio modes will be provided to each district per grade level.

NeSA-Mathematics and NeSA-Science – The NeSA-Mathematics and NeSA-Science tests in their entirety will be available in Spanish – both paper/pencil versions and online. If a student requires side-by-side tests, the NeSA paper/pencil tests may be used. Student responses are entered on a student answer document.

Translations for NeSA in languages other than Spanish will need to be provided by local districts.

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Reading passages cannot be translated.

Guidance for Recently Arrived Limited English Proficient Students

Recently Arrived Limited English Proficient Students are defined by the U.S. Department of Education as a student with limited English proficiency who has attended schools in the United States for less than twelve months. The phrase "schools in the United States" includes only schools in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The term "schools in the United States" does NOT include Puerto Rico.

The district may exempt a recently arrived limited English proficient student from the **NeSA- Reading test** (only) for **12 months or one reporting period**. A district **must** assess the writing, mathematics, and science achievement (NeSA-W, NeSA-M, and NeSA-S) of a recently arrived limited English proficient student using appropriate accommodations.

For Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) purposes, recently arrived limited English proficient students are counted as having participated in the state's assessments for purposes of meeting the participation requirement if they take either the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA21) OR the reading test (NeSA-R) **AND** both the mathematics and science assessment (NeSA-M and NeSA-S).

ELLs with Disabilities

Students who are ELL and also have an IEP are allowed accommodations as appropriate for both designations. These students may benefit from linguistic support accommodations in addition to Special Education accommodations. The IEP team should include members familiar with both the student's cognitive and linguistic needs in order to determine appropriate accommodations.

Language Acquisition Testing

As required by ESEA and Rule 15, districts must annually assess the English language proficiency of all limited-English proficient students. Beginning in SY 2015-2016, the test provided by the Nebraska Department of Education to test English language proficiency will be the English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21.) This test replaces the ELDA.

All students designated as Limited English Proficient (LEP) on NSSRS, must participate in ELPA21 testing. Developed by a consortium of states, the test is given in the spring, and is administered through the services of Questar Assessment, Inc. All students designated as Limited English Proficient (LEP) on NSSRS, must participate in ELPA21 testing. The ELPA21 2016 testing window is **February 8-March 18, 2016.**

It is important to note that the purpose of this test is to determine English language proficiency, not proficiency on reading standards.

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Students eligible for alternate assessments for NeSA (NeSA-AAR, AAM, AAS, and local Writing) should attempt to take the sections of ELPA21 that are deemed appropriate.

AMAOs (Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives)

AMAOs will not be calculated for the 2015-16 school year. The English Language Proficiency testing requirement remains the same, however. NDE will begin developing a new Title I ELL accountability system in accordance with the provisions of ESSA.

Questions about any of the information in this section may be directed to:
> Terri Schuster 402.471.4694
> E-mail: terri.schuster@nebraska.gov

> Brooke David 402.471.2451
> Email: brooke.david@nebraska.gov

D. State and Federal Reporting and Accountability

1. State Accountability

a. AQuESTT

AQuESTT is Accountability for a Quality Education System Today and Tomorrow, Nebraska's accountability system for public schools and districts.

AQuESTT Tenets

With a vision to improve teaching and learning and student success and access in all Nebraska public schools and districts, AQuESTT is built on the following tenets: College & Career Readiness; Assessment; Educator Effectiveness; Positive Partnerships, Relationships & Student Success; Educator Effectiveness; Transitions; and Educational Opportunities & Access. These tenets represent key investments all stakeholders – schools and districts, communities, and policymakers – must make to ensure a quality education for every student every day.

b. AQuESTT Performance Classification of Schools and Districts

Included in the requirements for accountability is the performance classification of public schools and districts. The 2015 classification of schools and districts was based on the following indicators: graduation rate and status, improvement, growth, participation, and increase/decrease of non-proficient students on NeSA reading, mathematics, science and writing assessments. Performance on these indicators produced a raw classification rating for each school and district.

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Additional indicators of tenet-related policies, practices, and procedures were measured by school and district responses to the AQuESTT Evidence-based Analysis (EBA), producing an EBA score for each school and district.

Based on the raw classification rating and the EBA score, each school received one of the following final classification ratings: Excellent, Great, Good, and Needs Improvement. In 2015 EBA scores were not factored into the final classification ratings for districts. A complete explanation of the business rules used to calculate the final classification ratings can be accessed at
http://aquestt.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/AQuESTTFinalClassificationBusinessRulesSB2015.pdf

Purpose and Content of the AQuESTT Evidence-Based Analysis (EBA)

The purpose of the EBA is to obtain information about measures of the six tenets to support statutory requirements of school and district classification and the designation of priority schools. Additionally, the EBA is designed to obtain information to inform the strategic development and prioritization of statewide systems of support for schools and districts.

The 2015 EBA included two questionnaires - one for public *schools* and one for public school *districts*. Each questionnaire includes a section for each of the AQuESTT tenets with items that ask for the level of implementation of tenet-related policies, practices, and procedures and corresponding items that allow schools and districts to request various types of support. The school and district EBA and the EBA Documentation Report may be accessed at
http://aquestt.com/resources/ under Information for Schools, Districts, and Partners.

Designation of Priority Schools

In 2015 three schools were designated from the lowest performance classification level (Needs Improvement) as Priority Schools. Priority Schools are defined as those in most need of assistance to improve. Criteria for designating Priority schools are based on indicators and relevant data already reported to the Nebraska Department of Education by all public schools and districts and as required in Rule 10.

Intervention Teams and Support for Priority Schools

Intervention teams for each Priority School have been assigned to assist the district in which the Priority School is located to:
- Diagnose issues that negatively affect student achievement in the Priority School.
- Develop measureable indicators of progress.
- Design and implement strategies to address issues that negatively affect student achievement in the Priority School.
- Develop a Progress Plan for approval by the State Board of Education that outlines

the measureable indicators of progress, actions, and strategies the school and district will implement in order to improve student achievement.

- Develop the criteria by which the school will exit the priority status.
- Monitor the progress of the school in meeting the indicators of progress.

Timeline for AQuESTT Implementation

2015
December   Announcement of 2015 Classification of Public Schools and Districts

Commissioner's recommendation to the State Board for the designation of Priority Schools

2016
January-July   Intervention Teams assist Priority Schools in developing Progress Plans

April   AQuESTT: Every Student Every Day – *Continuing to Improve with Data* Conference – Kearney, NE

August   Priority Schools submit Progress Plans to State Board for approval

2. Federal Accountability

a. NDE will NOT be calculating AYP based on data from the 2015-16 school year. Ratings for 2015-16, based on 2014-15 data, will be frozen for the 2016-17 school year. NDE is working on a transition plan for the 2016-17 school year that will exclude the requirements of providing new Public School Choice, Supplemental Educational Services, and parent notification for Districts having schools identified as needing improvement. Details will be made available when finalized.

E.   ESEA Flexibility

Nebraska's request had been aligned to the current work of AQuESTT (Accountability for a Quality Education System Today and Tomorrow) and its six tenets, classification process, and focus on support for continuous improvement. Although the waiver is no longer applicable (even if it had been accepted) developing a Request for ESEA Flexibility provided Nebraska an opportunity to highlight its current work and outline a vision for the State's education system moving forward. A copy of Nebraska's Request for ESEA Flexibility is available on the Nebraska Department of Education website.

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F.   The Continuous Improvement Process

The Continuous Improvement Process, focused on student learning, is an important framework for every Nebraska school district. "School Improvement" is not limited to a data collection and an external visitation every five years. Continuous Improvement is ongoing, systematic and systemic, and should involve everyone in the district.

Standards and assessment are essential to continuous improvement. Student performance data generated from assessment that is aligned with content standards informs the continuous improvement process. As data is analyzed, it should inform the school improvement committees where priorities and target goals must be established. The resulting CIP plan establishes both building and district goals that are focused on improvement of student learning.

Continuous improvement means that adults need to be learners, data consumers and have opportunities to collaborate on curriculum, instruction and assessment. Many of the professional development opportunities offered by NDE are focused on these topics.

G.   School Improvement Workshops

The School Improvement Workshops have been collaboratively developed and sponsored by NCSA, AdvancED, the Nebraska Educational Service Units, and NDE. Dates to be announced.

1. External Review Training is available for:

- AdvancED schools who have reviews in 2016-2017
- People interested in becoming External Review Team Chairs
- Those interested in AdvancED/North Central Accreditation

For additional information regarding External Review Training or School Improvement, contact:

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