



## **Update: Standards, Assessment, and Accountability (SAA-19)**

**Wrapping Up the 2016-2017 School Year - April 2017**

Volume 19



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# I. Standards

## A. Key Dates

1. [Statewide Assessment Timeline](#) - For Full Assessment Calendar
2. Upcoming Important Dates

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Mar 20 – May 5 | <b>NeSA-ELA/M/S Window</b><br>The last week of the window is designed to give districts opportunity to complete make-up tests.  |
| Apr 19         | <b>ACT- Paper/Pencil Test Date</b>  |
| Apr 19 – May 3 | <b>ACT- Online &amp; Accommodation Test Window</b>  |
| May 3          | <b>ACT- Paper/Pencil Make-up Test Date</b>  |
| May 10         | <b>NeSA- All materials must be picked up for shipment to DRC.</b> See complete list of documents and required actions on the <a href="#">NeSA Information and Responsibilities</a> chart. |
| Jul 17         | <b>NeSA- District Access to Preliminary ELA/M/S Results</b>   |
| Jul 17 – Aug 4 | <b>NeSA- Districts Review ELA/M/S Results and Submit Corrections</b>  |
| Aug 28         | <b>NeSA- District Access to Final ELA/M/S Reports and Results</b>   |
| Sep 18         | <b>NeSA- Districts Receive Printed Individual Student Reports(ISR)</b>  |
|                |   |
|                |   |

### 3. Statewide Tested Grades

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| NeSA- ELA  | Grades 3-8      |
| NeSA-AA ELA (alternate)                                | Grades 3-8, 11  |
| NeSA-Mathematics                                       | Grades 3-8      |
| NeSA-AA Mathematics (alternate)                        | Grades 3-8, 11  |
| NeSA-Science   | Grades 5, 8     |
| NeSA-AAS-Science (alternate)                           | Grades 5, 8, 11 |
| ACT- English, Reading, Mathematics, Science, & Writing | Grade 11        |

## B. Academic Standards

### 1. College and Career Ready Standards

The State Board of Education adopted [Nebraska's Physical Education Standards](#) on October 7, 2016. These standards provide a framework for quality physical education in Nebraska schools and, when mastered, would ensure physical literacy for all students. While not required by law, school districts are encouraged to adopt the state-approved Physical Education Standards within one year of being approved by the State Board of Education.

Additionally, the State Board of Education adopted content area standards for three Career & Technical Education Career Fields on November 4, 2016. The career fields with revised content area standards and Programs of Study include:

- [Communication and Information Systems](#)
- Education & Training
- [Human Services/Family and Consumer Sciences](#)

The content area standards revision process is underway for the Nebraska Science Standards. The anticipated State Board of Education approval of "Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards for Science" is September 2017. Also, the revision process has begun for two Career & Technical Education Career Fields - Agriculture, Food, & Natural Resources and Skilled & Technical Sciences. For more information about content area standards, please visit the Teaching and Learning Team website ([Teaching and Learning Team Webpage](#)) as well as links on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). The most current versions of all content area standards are located on the [Content Area Standards Website](#).

For more information, contact Dr. Cory Epler, Chief Academic Officer  
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### 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 are

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 ongoing 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.

The Study Committee on Teacher and Principal Evaluation was formed as a part of the exploratory process associated with the development of the Nebraska Model System of evaluation. This committee, consisting of four State Board of Education representatives and department staff, conducted a study of 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. The EBA asked districts to rate themselves on the following items: 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. In 2016, [updates to the EBA instrument](#) added clarity around the EBA items relating to systems of evaluation, and data are currently being analyzed to inform development of efforts to support districts and buildings according to identified needs.

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: 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.

In December, [2016, the Nebraska State Board of Education and Nebraska Department of Education adopted the 2017-2026 Strategic Vision and Direction](#). This document contains the following goal that relates directly to systems of evaluation in Nebraska: By 2020, 100% of all Nebraska schools will utilize performance standards and a research-based evaluation system for all certificated staff as aligned to Rule 10. As such, efforts are ongoing to build systems of support for schools and districts to pursue fulfillment of this goal.

Solar and wind energy funds have supported ongoing efforts to further develop and expand current district- and building-level systems of evaluation. In 2016, 32 districts across the state of Nebraska were provided with small grants and ongoing support as they worked to further develop and expand their district- and building- level systems of evaluation. A second grant competition will be extended in 2017, again with an emphasis of supporting schools and districts in developing, refining, and expanding systems of evaluation and support.

For questions about the material covered in this section or for summer opportunities please contact:  
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# II. Assessment

## A. Graduation Requirements for Nebraska Students

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. 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 9<sup>th</sup> graders of 2007-08 were assigned a graduation year. For federal accountability 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.

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.

## 2. 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.

## 3. 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 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 office to the DACs with important and updated information. It will be up to each 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 NDE assessment 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, 2017, using the [new DAC form](#)

## **C. N-TAC Information**

NDE has many details to communicate to districts regarding NeSA and ACT technology. For that reason the NDE assessment office asked each district superintendent to assign a NeSA/ACT-Technology Assessment Contact (N-TAC).

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 Statewide Assessment 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, 2017, via email to [nde.stateassessment@nebraska.gov](mailto:nde.stateassessment@nebraska.gov)

## D. 2016-2017 Testing Vendors

Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) has been Nebraska's primary testing vendor since 2008. ACT was added for high school assessment in 2017.

## E. Testing Students - 2017

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 for NeSA assessments 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 statewide assessments is required for students in their third year of high school. Testing will occur in the year prior to their expected/cohort 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 2018 will participate in statewide assessments in 2017.

### 1. Scheduling for the NeSA-ELA/M/S 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 schedule two 90 minute sessions for NeSA-English Language Arts, NeSA-Mathematics, and NeSA-Science. Please note that NeSA tests in ELA, Math, and Science are not timed.

The scheduling for NeSA-English Language Arts, NeSA-Mathematics, and NeSA-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 general education students participating online must finish each test session on the same day that it is started. Students with accommodations may be given a second day to complete a session online. Please refer to information about unlocking for additional guidance about this change.
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 a book to read 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 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: English language arts, mathematics, science, and alternate tests. These procedures also apply to the ELPA21 test.

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 responsibility of statewide assessment 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

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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 outline clear practice for appropriate security.



## 5. Online Test Supports

Districts are able to access several online supports to provide opportunity for students to be prepared for NeSA-ELA, Math, and Science assessments. The online supports can be accessed through the INSIGHT software or through the Chrome web browser:

<https://wbte.drctdirect.com/NE/portals/ne>:

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

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. The OTTs do not require tickets to use and the system provides a standard username and password on the screen for students to use.

Practice Tests for NeSA-English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science are designed to provide an introductory experience to the online technology 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 operational administration. The online Practice Tests exemplify the format and content of the operational NeSA-English Language Arts, 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. The Practice Tests are interactive and designed for individual students. Paper/Pencil versions of the Practice Tests are available on the English language arts, math, and science content pages on the [assessment website](#).

New NeSA College and Career Ready Mathematics Practice Tests are also available. Instructions for accessing the online version are available in an [Appendix-Administering the 2016-2017 NeSA CCR Mathematics Practice Test](#). Paper/pencil versions are available on the [CCR Math Transition](#) page.

Please note: In order to provide student scores for the NeSA Practice Tests and access to student responses to new open-ended items, student test tickets are now required, and the procedures for accessing secure NeSA test content must be followed. These procedures can be accessed in the [2016-2017 NeSA Practice Tests Online Administration Manual](#).

Guided Practice Tests (GPTs) are available for the NeSA-English Language Arts, 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 operational administration. The online GPTs also exemplify the format and content of the NeSA-English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science. 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.

Check for Learning will also familiarize students with online technology.

## **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. NeSA test have been built on test blueprints designed to represent comprehensive coverage of the Nebraska standards.

The NeSA English Language Arts, 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 CCR Mathematics TOS are available on the [CCR Math Transition](#) page. These TOS represent content that will be anticipated to be tested in 2017-18.

The important point for districts to emphasize is comprehensive instruction on all standards.

## **G. NeSA Online Unlocks**

The primary responsibility for unlocking assessments for the 2016-17 NeSA administration has shifted from NDE to districts. District Assessment Contacts (DAC) received permissions to unlock student sessions in the eDIRECT test management system. DACs will be able to grant these permissions to personnel within their districts. Each district is responsible for establishing processes that are followed during the testing window to manage and track unlocks. Access to unlocking permission should be limited to only staff who require access.

The reason for this shift in responsibility is the result of a change in allowable accommodations. Students with documented need can have online test sessions unlocked for an additional day of testing. A student needing more than two days per session will require a paper/pencil test. Districts are encouraged to contact NDE with questions about unlocks during the testing window. Unlocking questions should be directed to the NDE Statewide Assessment office by calling 402.471.2495 or e-mailing [nde.stateassessment@nebraska.gov](mailto:nde.stateassessment@nebraska.gov). Do not hesitate to contact NDE with questions.

## 1. Guidelines for unlocking:

- Once the test session has begun, the session must be completed in the same day. Students with documented need (IEPs, 504, or ELL students) may have a second day per session.
- If the session is interrupted (power outage, unplanned fire drill) or discontinued (pause, inactivity), the student may log back in using the same student test ticket (same day only).
- If a test session was not submitted 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 circumstances meet the appropriate criteria for unlocking, the DAC or a designee may unlock a test session.
- Districts must document all unlocks and be able to share this information with the NDE Assessment office upon request. NDE will be monitoring unlocks and will make requests for district reports throughout the window, both to follow up on issues and to serve as a sampling.
  - Documentation must minimally include:
    - district
    - school
    - NSSRS ID
    - subject
    - session #
    - date
    - reason for the unlock
  - Districts may develop their own method for tracking this information or may use DRC's Daily Student Resets Report to track this information. The Daily Student Resets Report would require an additional column of information to be added by the district in order to document the reason for the unlock. Directions for using the Daily Student Resets Report are included at the end of this document.

## 2. Appropriate & Inappropriate Reasons for Unlocks

The following are **appropriate reasons** to unlock tickets:

- Documented need for a second day of testing (IEP, 504, or ELL)
- Technical difficulties
- Power failure / loss of connectivity
- Student logged out incorrectly
- Illness
- Emergencies

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
- Student was not provided documented allowable accommodation for IEP, 504, or ELL status and partially or fully completed a session

Unlocking a test for an unauthorized reason may result in an invalidated score for the student. Districts must make every effort to ensure the security of the test. Situations that are not defined above or additional unlocking questions should be directed to the NDE Statewide Assessment office by calling 402.471.2495 or e-mailing [nde.stateassessment@nebraska.gov](mailto:nde.stateassessment@nebraska.gov). In rare cases, NDE may need to investigate and use online telemetry to help verify the circumstances that may merit an unlock. Investigations are completed as quickly as possible, but in rare cases may take several days to complete.

Additional guidance including information on a possible tracking method can be accessed in the [2016-2017 NeSA Online Unlocking Guidance](#) document.

## H. NeSA Scoring and Reporting

### 1. 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.

### 2. State Reporting - Business Rules and Not Tested Codes

Complete sets of past business rules are found on the NDE Website. Districts will find past [calculation rules for NeSA](#) that provided guidance for the State Reports. Updated calculation rules for NeSA will be available summer 2017.

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. 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 in the online system or on the student answer sheet. The not tested codes are explained in the table below.

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Description</b>                           | <b>Explanation of Use</b>   |
|-------------|--|---|
| EMW         | Emergency Medical Waiver                     | Student was not tested because of an approved 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 ELA only)   |
| 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) |

### 3. Score Invalidation and Waivers

In general, the following rules were applied:

Emergency Medical Waivers (EMW) is granted if the situation is a medical emergency and a student’s medical situation prevents testing. The EMW needs to be approved by the Statewide Assessment 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 ELA test passages were 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 January 25<sup>th</sup>, the NSSRS should have been updated. If students left after January 25<sup>th</sup>, 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.

#### **4. Conversion Tables**

NeSA-ELA/M/S Conversion Tables will be posted each year after testing is completed and post equating is conducted. All conversion tables are available on the [NDE Statewide Assessment website](#).

#### **5. 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. New cut scores for NeSA-ELA will be set in summer 2017.

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- Math and Science were set as follows and apply for 2016-2017.

| <b>Scale Score Ranges</b> | <b>Performance Levels</b> |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 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. New cut scores for NeSA-ELA will be set in summer 2017.

## **6. Release of Results 2017**

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.

## **7. 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. Aggregate scores can be shared with school/district staff, but do remind recipients that scores are embargoed.
- d. No public recognition of individuals can be given if scores are revealed.

Raw scores are converted to scale scores, and even though the scale scores do not change (0-200) for 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. Raw and scale score determination for NeSA-ELA will be determined in summer 2017. Previous NeSA reading raw to scale score conversion should not be used to interpret NeSA-ELA scores.



## 8. NeSA Reports

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

NeSA preliminary reports are available to districts through the eDIRECT System for ELA, 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 will be made available on the NeSA reporting page of the assessment website. Included in the various reports are the following:

- Raw scores
- Scale scores
- Proficiency levels
- 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.

## 9. 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 ELA, 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 mathematics and science are converted to a scale score between 0 and 200. Scale score determinations for NeSA-ELA will be made in summer 2017.



The NeSA score proficiency levels for math and science are below:

|                       |              |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| 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.

**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.

Standards will be reset when assessments transition to measure Nebraska College and Career Ready Standards in 2017 for ELA and the following years for math and science.

## **I. ACT**

### **1. ACT Update**

The Nebraska State Statute 79-760 was updated by passage of LB 930 in spring 2016 to require that state accountability testing at the high school level be completed through the administration of a college entrance exam. ACT has been selected as the exam to be administered in spring 2017 to all public school third-year cohort students, except those identified as needing alternate assessment.

Students will participate in ACT Reading, English, Math, Science and Writing in spring 2017. Although ACT writing is optional for Saturday administrations, the ACT writing test is required for state testing for all students.

All students, including special education students and English Language Learners who are in their third-year cohort of high school must participate in the ACT.

### **2. ACT Participation for English Language Learners**

In spring 2017 ACT allows no accommodations for ELL students that result in a college-reportable score. ELL students are allowed state accommodations as explained in the Nebraska ACT [Accommodations Crosswalk](#).

Use of these accommodations result in non-college reportable scores unless the accommodations are approved through the ACT Test Accessibility and Accommodation site. Parents and students should be involved in the decision of taking the ACT with no accommodations and receiving college reportable scores or having accommodations that result in non-college reportable scores.

ACT will allow supports for ELL students, starting in spring 2018.

**3. ACT participation for students with IEPs and 504 Plans, who are not identified as needing alternate assessment.**

Special Education students may have accommodations for college-reportable scores only through an ACT approval process through the ACT Test Accessibility and Accommodation site (TAA). Parents, students, staff, and students’ IEPs should guide decisions for special education students.

**4. Rule 18 and Special Program Schools**

Students enrolled in Special Program or Rule 18 schools must participate in the ACT at those sites. The special program and Rule 18 schools have designated ACT test coordinators for each site. Students should be added by the test coordinators in Rule 18 and special programs in PA Next so tests will arrive for those students. Rule 18 and special program schools are required to follow all the same testing procedures and security procedures as the Nebraska public high schools. [Rule 18/special program schools and test coordinators](#) for approved ACT testing sites.

**5. Spring 2017 Test Dates and Contact Information**

a. 2017 ACT Test Window

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Paper Testing Date</b>         | <b>Online and Accommodations Testing Window</b> |
| April 19, 2017                    | April 19-May 3, 2017                            |
| <b>Paper Testing Make-Up Date</b> |   |
| May 3, 2017                       |   |

b. Help Contacts

Assessment at Nebraska Department of Education

Nebraska Department of Education  
 Statewide Assessment and Accountability  
 Phone: 402-471-2495  
 Fax: 402-742-2319  
 Email: [NDE.stateassessment@nebraska.gov](mailto:NDE.stateassessment@nebraska.gov)



## ACT Contacts

### General Inquiries

Phone: 800.553.6244, ext. 2800

Website: Contact Us

ACT hosted webpage: [www.act.org/stateanddistrict/nebraska](http://www.act.org/stateanddistrict/nebraska)

### Accommodations Questions

Phone: 800.553.6244, ext. 1788

Email: ACTStateAccoms@act.org

Customer service hours (excluding ACT holidays):

Monday – Friday: 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Central Time

### ACT Online Prep

Phone: 319-337-1429

Email: actonlineprep@act.org

## [Additional ACT resources on the NDE Assessment site](#)

Included on the site are:

- ACT accommodations-ACT and English Learners FAQ 2017 Spring Administration
- Nebraska ACT Accommodations Crosswalk
- Nebraska ACT Standards Alignment Report by ACT
- ACT Accommodations Documentation Sample
- Non-district ACT Test Sites (Rule 18/Interim Program/ESU Alt)

## **6. ACT Test Coordinators**

Each public high school building, program school, and Rule 18 school is an ACT test site for the state administration of the ACT. Each has a test coordinator as the main source of contact with ACT. District Assessment Contacts receive ACT DAC Updates throughout the year and should share that information with building test coordinators. Superintendents can change the District Assessment Contacts for their districts by contacting NDE. DACs can change ACT test coordinators by contacting NDE.

## **7. ACT and NeSA Alternate Assessment Administration**

Starting in spring 2017, the ACT will be administered as the Nebraska State Accountability assessment at the high school level. All third-year cohort students are required to participate unless identified as Alternate Assessment students. Students identified as having the most severe cognitive disabilities will participate in the NeSA Alternate Assessments. All students in third year cohort must participate in the ACT or the NeSA Alternate Assessment. Regardless of how many credits a student has earned, students must participate in state testing in their third year of high school.

## 8. ACT Testing mode

Each school site determined the mode of ACT administration, either paper/pencil or online for the current year. The majority of students will be assessed paper/pencil in spring 2017. However, many school sites have elected to complete make-up tests online as more days are available for testing.

## 9. ACT Make-Up

### Paper/Pencil Make-up tests

Students who need to make up their ACT tests due to absence can do so paper/pencil on May 3. Tests need to be ordered for these students by April 21, 2017. Additional tests can also be ordered for students who move into the district by April 21, 2017. Students can be added to PA Next until April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017. After that date, students who move in cannot be administered the ACT.

### Online Make-Up tests

Schools that have not been approved to administer the ACT online can complete the process for online ACT approval if a student is absent on April 19<sup>th</sup> in order to allow individual students to participate online as make-up testing opportunity. The change to online including precaching test content must be done at least one day prior to testing. Use the link below to view directions for the process.

[Technical Readiness for the ACT® Test Taken Online](#) (Video)

(This video series includes information on downloading Installable TestNav, running system and app checks, installing and setting up ProctorCache, and precaching test content.)

The student will also need to be changed to online from paper/pencil in PANext.

### Instructions on changing the test format to paper/pencil

Step 1: Log into PANext

Step 2: Under Testing select Student Test

Step 3: You will find a list of your students, select the student you want to change the test format.

Step 4: Click the drop down arrow for select task

Step 5: Select Edit Student Test

Step 6: Select start

This is where the list of students will show up and you will be able to select a student

Step 7: Under Delivery Format you are able to change from paper to online  
 Step 8: Select Save

## 10. Requirements of ACT Administration and Security Procedures

District Assessment Contacts and School Site principals signed security agreements for all NeSA and ACT testing in fall 2016. The requirements of the agreement must be strictly followed.

Test sites must follow all requirements for the security and administration of the ACT. Test site coordinators are also responsible for the security of the ACT materials. A test site coordinator may not be a direct relation to a student participating in Nebraska school day testing for spring 2017 in any school. ACT room test administrators or proctors cannot be direct relatives of student(s) being tested in their rooms.

The test manuals shipped by ACT to school sites contain specific details about procedures for test administration. Training for test administration is located on the ACT website at

Test Administration Training

[Test Administration Training](#) (Videos)

## 11. Test Manuals

Test Coordinator Manuals, Test Manuals, and any requested paper/pencil ACT tests have been shipped to the test sites. Included are:

- Test Coordinator Information
- Online Testing Manual
- Standard Time Paper Testing Manual
- Paper Testing with Accommodations Manual-includes separate sections for the various timing codes allowed with accommodations
- Non-college Reportable Accommodation Testing Manual

For ACT college and non-college reportable testing accommodations, use the Nebraska ACT Accommodations Crosswalk and also see information from ACT at [Accommodations on the ACT® Test](#) (PDF)

Assure that students and parents know that have accommodations not approved by ACT will result in non-college reportable scores.

## 12. ACT Non-cognitive Survey

Prior to participating in the ACT, students will be asked to complete the non-cognitive survey.

All questions in the non-cognitive section are in the *Taking the [ACT Test booklet](#)* which is provided to each student.

It is required that parents and students have access to the survey to preview it if they want. Students are not required to complete the survey.

If a student who is scheduled to participate in the ACT paper/pencil is absent and is changed to online mode, the student's non-cognitive paper/pencil survey must be transferred to an online form of the survey. Changing the student to online in PANext will give the school access to a ticket for the student to complete the survey online. Students who completed the survey paper/pencil but are changed to online administration have four days after their administration of the ACT to transfer their answers from the paper/pencil survey into the online survey. Do note that all paper/pencil materials must be returned to ACT by April 20, 2017.

Students who complete the survey have the advantages of:

- It is through the non-cognitive portion of the assessment that students can tell ACT what 4 colleges they would like their scores sent to. If not completed during the pretest session, there is a cost for sending scores to colleges.
- The information provided also helps to inform the student level report detailing college and career planning and interest major fit. If students don't complete this portion, that information will be left blank on their reports.
- If the student elects to be a part of Educational Opportunities Service, then ACT will also provide their information to approved colleges/financial aid opportunities that they would fit the criteria for.
- Some of the data collected will also be used to inform the Profile reports, so with missing data, your reports will not be as complete.

### 13. Not Tested Codes for ACT

Districts provide a not tested code for any student not assessed either in the online system or on the student answer sheet. 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 approved 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 ELA only)   |
| 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) |

The state use questions in PANext are to be used to explain why a student has not tested. See last item in screen shot below- *State Use Questions*



**DETAILS**

**New Student**

**Organization\***

**Student Code\***

**First Name\***

**Gender**

**State Student ID\***

**Middle Initial**

**Date of Birth\***

**Local Student ID**

**Last Name\***

**Actual Grade of Student\***

**Reporting High School Code - Online Only**

*Complete this field only if the examinee's score report should be sent to a school other than your own (see administration manual for instructions).*

**High School Code**

**State Use Questions**

If this student did not test, please select the reason below:

**Note: Creating student does not register student.**

\* Required

## 14. ACT Online Prep (AOP)

AOP is available to every student in the third-year cohort. Schools received the information in December 2016 and are responsible for sharing access to AOP and information on its use. Two complete practice tests are available in AOP with two ACT writing opportunities. The ACT Writing tests are computer scored through the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The ACT Writing administration is, however, scored by human readers. AOP is not only available to students during the school day, but they may access it at anytime with their User Name and Password. AOP will remain available to third-year cohort students until December 2017. Students may individually choose to use AOP if they want to prepare to retake the ACT in their senior year.

Information on ACT Online Prep is available on the ACT website at

<http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/state-and-district-solutions/nebraska.html>

Click the gray title bar titled-

THE ACT: NEBRASKA - ONLINE PREP

## 15. ACT Reporting

The User Handbook for Educators contains information about ACT score reports, as well as samples of the reports. This can be found online at:

<http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/ACT-UserHandbook.pdf>

Score reporting starts on page 36.

Schools will begin receiving reports from ACT for their students two-eight weeks after testing. Sample reports can be found here:

[Student Report Sample](#)

[High School Report Sample](#)

Schools that emphasize to students the format and meaning of the report and the information included may advantage their students as they make college choices, consider majors, and decide whether to retake the ACT as seniors.

- District data files include a student level data file & school and district profile reports. These will be available July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017

## 16. Standard Setting

Nebraska Department of Education must report statewide summative scores in at least three levels for state accountability and on the Nebraska Education Profile (NEP). In the past NeSA scores have been reported at Below, Meets, and Exceeds. Meets and Exceeds combined to provide a percentage of students who were proficient.

NDE has engaged with an ACT Standard Setting Advisory Committee in moving forward with planning for producing state scores on the ACT.

NDE plans to bring standard setting to the State Board of Education in August 2017, and hopes to have reports available to schools in late September.

ACT will also replace the eleventh grade NeSA scores in the Raw Classification for the AQuESTT system. A task force will give input into the process for this change.

Schools can plan on receiving data about their students' scores for accountability in fall 2017 after the standards have been set. Individual student reports will be provide to the schools.

## **J. Check for Learning**

### **1. 2017-18 Check4Learning Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

NDE is determined to grow and improve its interim system. Decisions about the requirements for the 2017-18 C4L MOU are still being made. Once determined, these requirements will be outlined in the 2017-18 MOU. When completed, the 2017-2018 MOU will be emailed to DACs and will be accessible online.

## **K. Information for Nebraska Education Profile (NEP)**

### **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 2016-17 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, 2017. National assessment (NRT) data are not required for non-public students.

[Business rules for assessment data](#) have been posted on the NDE website.

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 gridding the information on a paper/pencil answer document. 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.

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 returning 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.

- 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.

#### **4. Home-Schooled Students**

Districts are responsible for testing and 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 and high school in June of each year. The state board of education has recommended the following tests.

- ACT
- ACT Aspire
- 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.

The 2016-17 school year is the final year for which NRT results must be reported to NDE for high school. Districts may use ACT results from the statewide administration for this purpose in June 2017.

## **L. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)**

During the 2016-2017 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 2016 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 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 2016-2017, 283 buildings were selected to administer the national NAEP assessments in reading, mathematics, and writing at the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. The NAEP testing window ran from January 30<sup>th</sup> to March 9<sup>th</sup>. Nebraska did not participate in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade NAEP assessments.

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 Office:

Valorie Foy, Director Statewide Assessment

Phone: 402.471.2495    E-mail: [nde.stateassessment@nebraska.gov](mailto:nde.stateassessment@nebraska.gov)

# 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-ELA, and that accommodation is administered, the district is obligated to file a Security Breach Form with the Assessment Office 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 the most significant 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. Further discussion of the NeSA-AA is found later in this section.

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 impairments, both in intellectual and adaptive functioning, expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive domains.
- 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 intensive 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 or 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.

In 2017-2018 students must be identified as qualifying for alternate assessment in all subjects in order to be assessed with NeSA-AA. Students will no longer be able to qualify by content area. In addition, the federal requirement counts all students who participate in AA assessment in the 1%, not only students who are proficient on the AA assessments.

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](mailto:sharon.heater@nebraska.gov)

#### 4. Instructional Guides for Alternate Assessments

Instructional examples and clarifications for math and science extended standards are now available for teachers working with students taking the NeSA alternate assessments. The “ELA Standards with Extended Indicators,” 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 ELA, Math, and Science (NeSA-AAELA, NeSA-AAM, and NeSA-AAS)

In order to be consistent with the NeSA-ELA, NeSA-M, and NeSA-S tests for general education students and to meet federal requirements, new alternate assessments for ELA, mathematics, and science (NeSA-AAELA, 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-AAELA, 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 Learners (ELs) 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.

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. EL students must be tested on NeSA tests. The only exemption is Recently Arrived students may be eligible for a one-time exemption from NeSA-ELA. Districts should review the following guidelines:

- Appropriate testing accommodations for all EL 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 on NeSA tests.

### **Spanish Translations:**

**NeSA-English Language Arts** – 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. 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 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-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.

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.

**Other Language Translations:**

Translations for NeSA in languages other than Spanish will need to be provided by local districts. English Language Arts passages and items cannot be translated.

**Guidance for Recently Arrived Limited English Proficient Students**

A Recently Arrived English Learner (EL) is 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-English Language Arts test** (only) for **12 months or one reporting period**. A district **must** assess the mathematics and science achievement (NeSA-M and NeSA-S) of a recently arrived English Learner using appropriate accommodations.

For Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) purposes, recently arrived English Learners 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 NeSA-ELA **AND** both NeSA-M and NeSA-S.

### **ELs with Disabilities**

Students who are EL 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 English Learners. The test provided by the Nebraska Department of Education to test English language proficiency is the English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (ELPA21.)

All students designated as an English Learner 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 American Institute for Research (AIR). All students designated as EL on NSSRS, must participate in ELPA21 testing. The ELPA21 2016 testing window was **February 6-March 17, 2017.**

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

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

Questions about any of the information in this section may be directed to:

Terri Schuster 402.471.4694  
E-mail: [terri.schuster@nebraska.gov](mailto:terri.schuster@nebraska.gov)

Brooke David 402.471.2451  
Email: [brooke.david@nebraska.gov](mailto: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.

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 2016-2017 EBA includes 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, new EBA rubrics, an EBA Technical Assistance Guide and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) document 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.



## 2. Federal Accountability

NDE will NOT be calculating AYP based on data from the 2016-17 school year. Ratings for 2015-16, based on 2014-15 data, will continue to be frozen for the 2017-18 school year.

For the 2017-18 school year, any school that was identified for Needs Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring will NOT be required to send notices to parents.

Nebraska will NOT be requiring districts/schools to offer *new* Public School Choice based on Needs Improvement, Corrective, or Restructuring designation. The districts/schools must allow students who previously transferred to another public school under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) to remain in that school until the child has completed the highest grade in that school. The District must continue providing or paying for the provision of transportation to and from the school of choice.

Nebraska will NOT require districts/schools to provide Supplemental Educational Services (SES) to students eligible for these services; however there will be questions in the ESEA/ESSA Consolidated application regarding how the district will meet the needs of students who would be eligible for SES.

Though SES will not be required for the 2017-18 school year, districts may choose to continue offering these services to eligible students.

Previously, Districts having one or more schools identified for Needs Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring were required to set aside an amount equal to 20% of the District's Title I allocation for PSC and/or SES. This will no longer be a required set-aside, however NDE encourages a set aside which is adequate to cover transportation costs for students remaining in a PSC building until they complete the highest grade in that school. See PSC information above.

## E. ESSA Consolidated State Plan

Nebraska continues work on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated State Plan with the intent to submit in September, 2017. Through the month of March, 2017, stakeholder engagement forums were held at various locations across the state. The intent of the forums was to build common understanding of ESSA, create opportunities for ongoing, authentic engagement, build a professional learning network, and fulfill stakeholder engagement requirements of ESSA. The forums focused on three main areas: Continuous School Improvement through accountability and support, effective educators, and well-rounded

education for students. The results of the stakeholder engagement events will be shared at the AQuESTT Conference on April 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> and inform the development of Nebraska’s ESSA Draft. The initial public draft will be presented to the Nebraska Board of Education and available online for public comment in June. For more information please visit the Nebraska Department of Education ESSA website found here: <https://www.education.ne.gov/ESSA/index.html>

## 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 are analyzed, the information 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

School Improvement Workshops have been collaboratively developed and sponsored by NCSA, AdvancED, the Nebraska Educational Service Units, and NDE. The workshop schedule for the 2017-18 school year follows. Schools are encouraged to place the appropriate dates on your calendars. Registration will open in August with specific logistics and agendas.

### Continuous Improvement Workshop – 2017-18 Schedule

Gering Civic Center  
Gering, NE  
September 18-19, 2017

York Holthus Center  
York, NE  
September 25-16, 2017

NECC-Lifelong Learning Center  
Norfolk, NE  
October 9-10, 2017

Educational Service Unit 10  
Kearney, NE  
October 19-20, 2017

Educational Service Unit 3  
Omaha, NE  
October 24-25, 2017

#### 1. External Review Training is available for:

- AdvancED schools who have reviews in 2017-2018
- 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:

Freida Lange, Senior Administrator  
Nebraska Department of Education, Accreditation and School Improvement  
Phone: 402.471.2444  
E-mail: [freida.lange@nebraska.gov](mailto:freida.lange@nebraska.gov)