



April 2016

Highlights of the State Board of Education meeting

State Board of Education

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AQuESTT: A MAP FOR THE FUTURE

Education Commissioner Matt Blomstedt presented a roadmap for the future of AQuESTT, defining a new era of opportunity that exists with recent changes in federal and state law.

The 2016-17 school year will be a transition year as the State Board of Education and NDE work to meet state and federal laws while ushering in significant changes in the roles assessment, accountability and accreditation play in continuous school improvement.

Commissioner Blomstedt recommended ending online NeSA-W writing as part of the transition year. The State Board is expected to consider this and other recommendations in May.

The Commissioner presented two options for testing at the high school level during the transition year. More details will be available in May.

During the transition year, the work will focus on developing a new balanced assessment system that would be in place in the 2017-18 school year and beyond. The plan calls for finalizing the assessment process that will be in place during the transition year in May and then developing detailed plans for the future implementation of AQuESTT and assessment between May and September while reaching out to stakeholders for their input during that time.

Commissioner Blomstedt also unveiled AQuESTT data from the Evidence-Based Analysis, summarizing school district requests for additional state support in the areas of professional development, technical assistance and other areas. More detailed information is available in the following attachment.

See [AQuESTT: Map](#)

UPDATE: ADMINISTRATION OF NeSA TESTS

The current administration of NeSA reading, mathematics and science tests is progressing and no major technical problems have occurred at this point. By the end of the current testing cycle on May 6, about 900,000 reading, mathematics and science tests will have been administered to Nebraska students statewide. As of 9 a.m. on April 7, about 290,000 of the testing sessions had been completed.

RULE 4: APRIL 12, 10 a.m., CDT, HEARING ON TEXTBOOK LOAN PROGRAM

A public hearing will be held on proposed revisions to Rule 4, *Regulations for Textbook Loans to Children Enrolled in Private Schools in Nebraska* on April 12, 10 a.m., CDT.

See: [Rule 4 Hearing](#)

RULE 81: GED TESTING SERVICE

The State Board of Education adopted a revision to Rule 81 that sets the minimum GED passing score to 145.

BACKGROUND: GED® Testing Service assessed adult learners' knowledge across the spectrum of a typical high school graduating class and determined that the minimum passing score for the 2014 test series should be changed to 145 to ensure that the High School Equivalency passing score reflects the current high school graduates' performance. This score change would allow about 150 Nebraskans to now receive their GED.

See: [Rationale](#)

See: [Rule 81 Summary](#)

See: [Draft Rule 81](#)

INNOVATION GRANT PROGRAM

Commissioner Blomstedt updated the State Board of Education on the Nebraska Department of Education Innovative Grant Fund and the Innovation Grant Program, which were created under LB 519, effective Aug. 30, 2015, providing that the State Board of Education establish the competitive Innovation Grant Program. Nebraska school districts and ESUs, or a combination of those entities, are eligible to participate.

See: [Innovation Grant Program Summary](#)

BELLEVUE UNIVERSITY RECEIVES PROVISIONAL APPROVAL FOR NEW TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM

The State Board of Education granted provisional approval to allow Bellevue University to establish a teacher preparation program. Rule 20 provides for a

three-year development period before temporary approval, which would allow the program to place student teachers and recommend candidates for certification.

See: [Rationale](#)

See: [Application](#)

See: [Final Report](#)

See: [Final Approval Letter](#)

See: [Confirmation Letter](#)

STATE BOARD APPROVES CHILD CARE DEVELOPMENT GRANT FUNDS

Federal *Child Care Development Grant Quality* funds provide child care subsidies for children of families at or near the federal poverty level while parents work or attend school. As required, DHHS and NDE collaborate to assist childcare providers improve the quality of care and for families of young children to access quality childcare. The NDE Office of Early Childhood provides quality activities with staff support through both the Early Childhood office in Lincoln and the Early Childhood Training Center at ESU3. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services sub-grants funds to NDE to carry out these activities.

See: [Rationale](#)

See: [Sub-grant](#)

EARLY CHILDHOOD SOFTWARE WILL AUTOMATE CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

The State Board of Education approved using the Branagh Information Group software for portable devices to automate scoring and note taking for observers assessing the quality of classroom programs for the Environment Rating Scales. The NDE Office of Early Childhood will pilot the software to determine its effectiveness and whether automation of all observations is warranted.

See [Rationale](#)

NEW, EXPANDED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM GRANTS

Grants will be provided to 13 public school districts to provide collaborative early childhood programs for at-risk prekindergarten children.

See: [Early Childhood Grants](#)

2016-2017 APPROVED NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS

This month, 111 nonpublic schools that are in compliance with Rule 14 regulations were approved to operate in 2016-17 as “approved” schools.

See: [Rationale](#)

See: [Rule 14 Listing](#)

PHYSICAL EDUCATION STANDARDS

The State Board of Education will tentatively consider approval of physical education standards in September 2016. At the April meeting, the Board was updated on the writing process.

See: [Timeline](#)

See: [April Update](#)

See: [Writing Team](#)

See: [Essential Learnings](#)

For detailed information about the work session or business meeting, visit <http://www.education.ne.gov/StateBoard/Agendas.html> . The State Board of Education will meet May 5-6, 2016.

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