

UPDATE: STANDARDS, ASSESSMENT, & ACCOUNTABILITY

2023-2024



Purpose of the Standards, Assessment, and Accountability (SAA)

SAA Updates are provided annually by the NDE Statewide Assessment Office in cooperation with other NDE Offices.

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I. Standards, Assessment, and Accountability: Standards

Content Area Standards & Instruction

Nebraska Revised Statute 79-760.01 requires the Nebraska State Board of Education to “adopt measurable academic content standards for at least the grade levels required for statewide assessment.” Those standards shall cover the subject areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies, and the State Board of Education shall develop a plan to review and update standards for those subject areas every seven years.

In addition to the content area standards required by statute, the Nebraska Department of Education has developed content area standards for fine arts, physical education, health education, and world languages, as well as course-based standards for Career and Technical Education. Although not required by law, these content area standards provide a framework for quality teaching and learning for all content areas.

The most current version of all content area standards, standards revision timeline, and the Content Area Standards Reference Guide are located on the [Content Area Standards Website](#). In addition, the [Content Area Standards Implementation Framework](#) provides suggested phases and steps to support standards implementation.

English Language Arts

The State Board of Education approved the Nebraska Standards for English Language Arts on September 2, 2021. Nebraska English Language Arts standards encompass a wide range of essential skills in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The standards, both individually and as an integrated whole, describe not only expectations for college, career, and civic readiness, but the 21st century literacies necessary for critical and innovative thinking and problem solving. The progression of skills within each strand are research and evidence-based and designed to prepare Nebraska's students for post-secondary and workforce demands. For implementation frameworks and supports, visit the [English Language Arts Webpage](#).

For more information, contact:

Becky Michael, English Language Arts Specialist
Email: becky.michael@nebraska.gov

Mathematics Standards

The State Board of Education approved the Nebraska Standards for Mathematics in 2022. The standards are designed to ensure all students have access to grade-level mathematics content centered on deep learning of concepts while actively building new knowledge from their experiences. The revised mathematics standards encompass a wide range of essential skills across the strands of Number, Algebra, Geometry, and Data. The standards, both individually and as an integrated whole, describe not only expectations for college and career readiness, but the 21st century mathematical literacies for critical and innovative thinking and problem solving. The progression of skills within each strand are research and evidence-based and designed to prepare Nebraska's students for postsecondary and workforce demands. For implementation frameworks and supports, visit the [Mathematics Education Webpage](#).

For more information, contact:

Dr. Bridgette Stevens, Math Specialist
Email: bridgette.stevens@nebraska.gov

Science Standards

The State Board of Education approved the Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards for Science (NCCRS-S) on September 8, 2017. The development of Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards for Science were guided by The National Research Council's [A Framework for K-12 Science Education](#). Science is a systematic sense-making process, aimed at figuring out the physical and natural world through observation and investigation. These 3-dimensional standards promote scientific literacy, by engaging students in gathering, analyzing and communicating information from multiple sources, engaging in authentic and relevant learning experiences, and making sense of phenomena. For implementation guidance and supports, visit the [Science Education Webpage](#) and the [NE Materials Matter](#) site for science.

For more information, contact:

Marissa Payzant, Assistant Administrator, Director of Content Area Standards
Email: marissa.payzant@nebraska.gov

Social Studies Standards

The State Board of Education approved the [Nebraska Social Studies Standards](#) on November 8, 2019. The standards provide a framework for teaching and learning for social studies education. For grades K-8, the social studies standards are written at grade level. The K-8 standards and indicators are organized within four disciplines: Civics, Economics, Geography, and History. Within those disciplines, standards and indicators are grouped by big ideas. Big ideas are concepts, themes, or issues that give meaning and connection to facts and skills (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005, p. 5). The high school standards and indicators are written within one grade band (HS = 9-12), and they are also organized by discipline and big ideas. Prior to each grade level and the high school grade band, a summary statement and theme are included. This provides a high-level overview of what students are expected to learn at that grade level.

For implementation frameworks and supports, visit the [Social Studies Education Webpage](#). Additional teaching resources are located in the [Social Studies Standards Instructional Tool](#) (SIT).

For more information, contact:

Bre Wilton, Social Studies Specialist

Email: bre.wilton@nebraska.gov

World Language Standards

The State Board of Education approved the Nebraska World Language Standards on September 6, 2019. The standards provide a framework for teaching and learning in second language acquisition. The standards do not determine vocabulary, grammar, cultural content, or other static concepts. Instead, the standards focus on what students do with the language. These are proficiency-based standards, meaning students will demonstrate the knowledge and skills they learn in the world language classroom. For implementation frameworks and supports, visit the [Nebraska World Language Standards Webpage](#).

For more information, contact:

Chrystal Liu, World Language Specialist

Email: chrystal.liu@nebraska.gov

Nebraska Instruction Material Collaborative

[The Nebraska Instructional Materials Collaborative website](#) highlights high-quality, standards-aligned instructional material and offers Nebraska-specific guidance documents to ensure materials meet the expectations of Nebraska's Content Area Standards.

The site includes:

- Independent reviews of instructional materials for English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science, as provided by EdReports.
- Suggested steps and sample timelines for navigating the instructional materials selection process.
- Documents that bridge EdReport reviews and Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards.
- A toolkit with resources, events, and research that supports instructional materials selection and implementation.

For more information about the Nebraska Instructional Materials collaborative, contact:

Marissa Payzant, Assistant Administrator, Director of Content Area Standards

Email: marissa.payzant@nebraska.gov



II. Standards, Assessment, and Accountability: NSCAS Information Applicable to ALL NSCAS Summative Assessments

Statewide assessment is required under both federal law, Every Student Succeeds Act, and Nebraska statute 79-760.03. Statewide Assessment is one part of the Balanced Assessment System. The Nebraska Department of Education statewide Assessment system is the **Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System (NSCAS)**.

The vision of the “system” is to support school districts at multiple levels of assessment: formative, interim, and summative. Several aspects of the work at the state level move toward this goal: providing NSCAS Growth testing that provides interim results three times per year, providing MAP Growth testing through the state contract for grades K-2, 9-11, providing professional development for 72 certified facilitators in assessment, providing coaching and professional development through the Formative Assessment Supports Network, and connecting NSCAS Growth assessment results to the use of the Achievement Level Explorer to inform instruction throughout the year.

Scoring rules, Accommodations, Security policies, and Ethics Codes

All protocols, practices, and procedures for state testing, including scoring rules, accommodations, security policies, and ethics codes, will apply to each test inside the Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System (NSCAS) Summative Program.

NSCAS Summative Assessment Administration for 2023-2024

Year	Subject	Grade Level
	NSCAS General Assessments	
	NSCAS GRW English Language Arts	3-8
	NSCAS GRW Mathematics	

2023-2024	NSCAS GEN Science	5 and 8
	NSCAS Alternate Assessments	3-8, & High School*
	NSCAS AA English Language Arts	
	NSCAS AA Mathematics	
	NSCAS AA Science	5, 8, & High School*
	ACT	High School*
	ELPA21	K-12 English Learners

***High School – Students in the third year cohort of high school are expected to participate in the college entrance exam, the ACT, or in the NSCAS Alternate Assessment if they qualify as determined by an IEP team using guidance provided by the Nebraska Department of Education. Students are to be tested one year before their expected graduation year, not according to accumulation of credit hours.**

Table 1: Key NSCAS Growth Information 1

Test	Grades	Tested Standards	Year of Transition to Assessment of CCR Standards	Time Testing	Online or Paper/Pencil Mode
NSCAS Growth Assessment					See NSCAS Summative Accessibility Manual for more information
NSCAS GRW ELA (English Language Arts)	3-8	Nebraska CCR Standards of English Language Arts	Spring 2017	Untimed	Online unless student has a documented need for paper/pencil
NSCAS GRW Mathematics	3-8	Nebraska CCR Standards of Mathematics	Spring 2018	Untimed	Online unless approved for accommodation of paper/pencil

NSCAS GEN Science	5 and 8	Nebraska CCR Standards of Science	Spring 2022	Untimed	Online unless approved for accommodation of paper/pencil
<u>NSCAS Alternate Assessments</u>					
NSCAS AA ELA	3-8 and third year cohort	Nebraska CCR Extended Standards of English Language Arts	Spring 2017	Untimed	Mode that is best for each student. Proctor enters student responses online regardless of mode of testing.
NSCAS AA Mathematics	3-8 and third year cohort	NE CCR Extended Standards of Mathematics	Spring 2018	Untimed	Mode that is best for each student. Proctor enters student responses online regardless of mode of testing.
NSCAS AA Science	5, 8 and third year cohort	NE CCR Extended Standards of Science	Spring 2022	Untimed	Mode that is best for each student. Proctor enters student responses online regardless of mode of testing.

Table 2: Key NSCAS Summative Information 2

Test	Test Dates	Make-up Test Dates	Test Management	Test Engine Information	Website
NSCAS Growth ELA, M, & GEN S	Aug 21-Sept 29 Dec 4 -Jan 26 Apr 1-May 10		Comprehensive Assessment Platform (CAP)	NWEA Technology Coordinators (Click on link for Technology Coordinators)	https://community.nwea.org/community/nebraska

NSCAS Alternate Assessment ELA, M, & S	Apr 1, 2024 - May 10, 2024		INSIGHT	NDE/NWEA Assessment Portal (Click on tab labeled "Technology Coordinators)	https://www.education.ne.gov/assessment/nscas-alternate-summative-assessment/
ACT	Test Window 1 March 26, 2024 (Paper) March 26-29 & April 1-5, 2024 Test Window 2 April 9, 2024 (Paper) April 9-12 & April 15-19, 2024	April 9, and April 23, 2024 (Paper) April 9-12 & April 15-19; April 23-26 & April 29-30, May 1-3 2024	PA Next	TestNav - See Technical Requirements for the ACT Test Taken Online	http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/state-and-district-solutions/nebraska.html
ACT Accommodations and EL Supports	Test Window 1 March 26-29 & April 1-5, 2024 (Paper and Online) Test Window 2 April 9-12 & April 15-19,2024 (Paper and Online)	April 9-12 & April 15-19; April 23-26 & April 29-30, May 1-3 2024 (Paper and Online)	TAA	TestNav - See Technical Requirements for the ACT Test Taken Online	http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/state-and-district-solutions/nebraska.html

NSCAS State Tests

As required in the amended Quality Education Accountability Act, 79-760, the Nebraska Department of Education has built NSCAS state tests for the purposes of comparative accountability with the help of its partners, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) and NWEA. The ACT will be the standard off-the-shelf ACT test.

District Communication

District Assessment Contacts (DACs)

District superintendents and ESU administrators have been asked to designate ONE District Assessment Contact (DAC).

- In some districts, the official assessment contact is the superintendent, and in other districts the superintendent has designated a different person. The DAC will be the contact for **all subject areas** and all assessment-related communication within NSCAS. All official assessment notification, passwords, and required assessment decisions will be sent to that one district contact. The official district contact will receive materials for English language arts, mathematics, science, and all other assessment-related materials for both the NSCAS General and NSCAS Alternate. ACT materials are sent to the high school or program test site.
- DACs will be assigned passwords in all the NSCAS test management systems, and he or she may designate as many users inside the district as needed. The Statewide Assessment office will maintain the list with one official contact. It is important that all users inside the district know who has been assigned the responsibility of being the DAC. The DAC has the responsibility for maintaining assessment communication within the district. The superintendent is responsible for communicating to the DAC the way assessment information is to be shared within the district.
- The contacts for the current school year are the same as those used in the previous school year unless the superintendent changed the assignment. Superintendents are responsible for updating DAC information. The [contact form](#) for making this change is available on the NDE-Assessment website or the superintendent may send an email directly to nde.stateassessment@nebraska.gov and request an update of information or a change in DAC designation.

NSCAS Technology Assessment Contact (NTAC)

Superintendents have also been asked to designate an NSCAS Technology Assessment Contact (NTAC), who will serve as the contact for information concerning technology used for the Nebraska State Accountability tests. DACs will also receive official information NTACs receive.

ACT Test Coordinators (TC)

Test Coordinators are determined for all ACT test sites. It is the DAC's responsibility to provide pertinent information in regards to the ACT State test. DACs are asked to update NDE with any changes in coordinator information.

ESU Contacts

The administrators of Educational Service Units (ESUs) were also asked to designate an official assessment contact. The designated ESU contact receives pertinent mailings except test booklets or materials that can only be sent to districts. If the ESU contact is to change, the administrator is responsible for notifying the assessment office.

NSCAS: Security, Ethics, and Training

In a centralized testing process, it is critical that equity of opportunity, standardization of procedures and fairness to students are maintained. Therefore, the Nebraska Department of Education asks all school districts to review the required security information available at [NSCAS Overview - Security](#). It is critical that all administrators and teachers read the procedures, especially those who are administering the assessment. These procedures apply to all NSCAS testing, which includes **NSCAS Growth ELA and Mathematics, and NSCAS General Science; NSCAS Alternate ELA, Mathematics, and Science; ACT and ELPA21.**

- 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. Anyone reporting a security breach should complete the form entitled [Report of Testing Irregularity Form](#).
- The [Building Principal Security Agreement](#) requires each principal to sign for each NSCAS summative test in his or her building(s) on an annual basis. Principals need to understand that signing this security agreement means they will oversee the appropriate testing procedures and training for all staff administering the tests in the building.
- A [DAC Confidentiality Agreement](#) is required from each DAC. The DAC has responsibility for the comprehensive oversight of the testing process in the district. Principals and DACs submit their security agreements directly to the NDE assessment office through Adobe Sign email on an annual basis due by mid-August, each year. Each principal and DAC will receive an annual email(s) and instructions for return of the security/confidentiality agreement.
- Districts should maintain a set of district policies that includes a reference to Nebraska's NSCAS Security procedures. The [Sample District Security Policy](#) was drafted by a local legal firm and is available to districts. Whether districts use this sample, the procedures offered by the State School Boards Association, or policies drafted by other law firms, local district policy should address the NSCAS Security document. The Department would encourage all districts with questions to contact their own local school attorneys for customization of such a policy.
- Security policies and ethics codes also apply to the English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21) and are under the purview of the Statewide Assessment Office.

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 NSCAS Testing Security Procedures are intended to outline clear practice for appropriate security.
- All school personnel who administer NSCAS tests must receive complete training in test administration and are responsible for appropriate test ethics and security practices.
- [A Nebraska State Accountability Security Manual](#) is provided to give an overview of the facets of test security in place in Nebraska, test security practices required in districts, and links to all forms needed for NSCAS test security (Forms are also included in this Update).

Training for Test Administration

DACs and principals share the responsibility for assuring that all teachers and school personnel administering NSCAS tests are trained in appropriate procedures, security and ethics. NDE provides information on the assessment website for test administration training. The Administration Orientation PowerPoint will be available at [NSCAS Overview - Administration](#) in August of each year of testing.

It is essential that all staff who are involved in the administration of NSCAS tests have reviewed and are familiar with the NSCAS Test Administration Manual as scripted directions must be followed verbatim.

The State Testing Environment and the Instructional Environment

Differences exist between an equitable, secure, standardized testing environment and the environment where daily instruction takes place. Students in all districts have a right to both environments. All districts have a responsibility to provide both. It is the responsibility of the state to assure appropriate testing and learning.

- On a day-to-day basis Nebraska school districts provide their students with multiple opportunities to learn their districts' curriculum in a variety of ways, including access to the skills and content required in the state standards. On testing day, however, the environment must be standardized according to the directions provided, as prescribed for all, and must be assured that all students have equitable opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the NSCAS tests.
 - The scripted directions in test assessment manuals, the security policies and procedures, and the "rules" of testing are designed to provide such equity. If districts apply their own adaptations of these procedures, the testing experience across the state is NOT equitable.

Such things as the following undermine the equity and standardization of the testing process:

- Providing word definitions, answers, suggestions, or edits in any way to students or to their test answers/responses
- Compromising the security of any testing materials
- Interrupting the administration of tests in a way that is not established in the test manuals or necessitated by an emergency
- Placing check lists of testing protocol on students' desks during testing

- Having students read NSCAS Growth ELA reading passages or any test items to adults
- Playing music during the testing
- Providing food, candy, or drinks during the tests (snacks and drinks can be provided prior to testing)
- Leaving items on the wall or within classrooms that provide hints or direction to test content
- Not reading the scripted directions verbatim
- Not controlling access to cell phones or other electronic devices in the testing setting
- Not following approved accommodations and practices given in the [Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System \(NSCAS\) Accessibility Manual](#). **(Note: ACT and ELPA21 have additional requirements for accommodations).**
 - Although some accommodations may be appropriate in an instructional environment, they are not included as part of the standardized testing process and are not appropriate. If districts take it upon themselves to “add” such features, they are not applying the scripted, prescribed nature of the standardized test, and they are disrupting the needed equity of administration across the state.
 - Each district should consider the necessary steps to differentiate between the state testing environment and the day-to-day instructional environments.

Secure Materials

- Duplicating any secure test material in any content area is a security violation. Taking pictures of said material constitutes duplication. This expectation is clear in

the administrative manuals and in all NSCAS testing materials. Districts are not to make copies of the tests - items, passages, or graphics. All booklets, all student tickets, and accompanying materials are to be kept secure.

- Examining the items, discussing the test content, or “taking” the test is a security violation.
- Every test booklet and every answer sheet, each translation document or digital copy must be accounted for. A district is held responsible for the return or destruction of all secure test materials. Each test administration manual detailed the expectations for secure test materials. Districts are not to keep secure materials. Failure to return secure test materials is a security breach.
- A list of all testing materials and protocols for their security are available in each NSCAS testing manual.
- NDE, along with ELPA 21, DRC, NWEA, or ACT, takes the security of testing materials very seriously. The vendors use vetted processes and sophisticated systems to track secure materials.

NSCAS Administration Observation Visits

In an attempt to improve processes, the Statewide Assessment team sends trained NDE staff to school districts to observe test sessions. The visits provide an opportunity to evaluate the testing process and to ensure test security and administrative processes are followed.

Technology Requirements

DRC INSIGHT, NWEA NSCAS Growth Platform, ELPA21, and ACT TestNav operate in secure browsers, which do not allow students to access the internet or other software during testing. See Technology Requirements.

- NSCAS General: [NWEA Technology Coordinators](#).

- NSCAS Alternate: [Web-Based Testing Engine System Requirements](#), and
- ACT: [Technical Requirements for the ACT Test Taken Online](#)
- ELPA21: <https://ne.portal.cambiumast.com/coordinators.html>

For districts experiencing technical difficulties that cannot be locally resolved, the district DAC or NTAC should contact NWEA, DRC, ELPA21, or ACT Help Desk Lines.

- **NWEA Help Desk 855-255-9926**
- **DRC Help Desk 866-342-6280**
- **ACT Help Desk 800-553-6244x2800**
- **ELPA21 Help Desk 866-287-5617**

NSCAS Required for ALL Students

It is a requirement of NDE that any student in the Advanced Data Views Improving Student Education Response (ADVISED) in tested grades participate in NSCAS tests. Test scores will be reported to parents in Individual Student Reports (ISR).

All enrolled students in required grade levels are to be included in NSCAS Summative Tests in one of three ways:

- NSCAS General education tests, including ACT
- NSCAS General education tests with approved accommodations, including ACT
- NSCAS Alternate Assessment

The following scoring rules apply to all students, including those with disabilities or those learning the English language.

- If enrolled students are not tested, the district must account for the reason why each student is not tested.
- All students will be tested at grade level.
- Students will receive scores only on the items that are completed.

High School Students Tested in the Third Year Cohort

The requirements for students taking high school NSCAS tests are the following:

- High school students are expected to be tested in their third year of high school. Testing occurs in the year prior to their expected graduation year rather than their assigned grade level. A student's "expected graduation year" or "cohort" is determined by adding four years to the school year in which the student enters grade nine for the first time. For example, a student with a Cohort Year of 2025 will take his/her tests in spring 2024.
- In the 2023-2024 school year students who are in their third year of cohort at the high school level will participate in the college entrance exam, the ACT, unless qualified to take the NSCAS Alternate. This test is normally administered in all public high schools in Nebraska, however, circumstances may offer another location.
- A student who is considered a "junior" due to credits earned, but who is not in the third-year cohort may not participate in the school-day statewide ACT test. Any student who receives 50% or less of their instructional services from the district (i.e., homeschool or private school), may not participate in the ACT test.

Testing Students attending a contracted service program or Rule 18 school

Districts maintain the responsibility for assessing and reporting student results for students who are in Rule 18 schools, ESU program schools or in contracted service programs (see **Who Reports What** and **Systems Involved Student Reporting** on the [ADVISER Resources](#) page). Districts must have a plan for the assessment of and the reporting of those students' results. Students who are enrolled in the Iowa School for the Deaf are included in NSCAS testing through coordination with the student's home district. DACs should be tracking their students and contacting these programs or Rule 18 schools to assure their students' participation.

NSCAS Scoring Rules

These rules apply to NSCAS Growth, NSCAS Alternate, ACT and ELPA21.

- NSCAS is a system of state tests, which are scored by vendors. The scores are loaded by NDE into ADVISER for statewide calculations. Students will be considered participants for federal and state accountability if they respond to at least one question or prompt.
- If teachers modify any NSCAS tests, all resulting scores are zeroes.
- If a parent refuses (in writing) to allow a student to participate in a test, the student will receive the lowest possible score and non-participant status in federal and state accountability.

Score Invalidation and Waivers

Throughout the NSCAS process, the NDE has written and will apply business rules for waivers, zero scores, and invalidations. Each situation is weighed individually. For NSCAS Growth, General, and Alternate summative, and for ACT the following rules are applied:

Emergency Medical Waiver (EMW)

An Emergency Medical Waiver (EMW) is granted if the situation is a medical emergency and the emergency situation prevents testing. The EMW must be approved by the Statewide Assessment Office during the testing window. If special circumstances impede the timely submission of an EMW, please contact the Statewide Assessment office. EMWs are not granted for long-term medical conditions or for situations where the school could have tested the student. The complete [Emergency Medical Waiver Form for NSCAS, ACT, ELPA21](#) is available on the Statewide Assessment website [NSCAS Overview Documents](#) section. All EMW codes result in waived scores and are not included in reporting.

Exempt (EXP)*

Exempt (EXP) is used due to certain circumstances, such as a student requiring an unprovided accommodation or student attending an out-of-state facility. EXP codes must be approved by the Statewide Assessment Office during the testing window. EXP codes are not included in reporting.

Full-Time Equivalency (FTE)*

Full-Time Equivalency (FTE) is used for any student who's Full-Time Equivalency is less than 51%. All verified FTE codes result in waived scores and are not included in reporting.

Invalid (INV)*

Invalid (INV) is used in situations where the construct of the NSCAS test was violated or a security issue occurs. INV codes result in the lowest possible score, and count as participants.

Left Before Window (LBW)

Left Before Window (LBW) is used when a student withdrew from the district or school BEFORE the test window(s) began. All verified LBW codes result in waived scores and are not included in reporting.

Not Currently Enrolled (NCE)

Not Currently Enrolled (NCE) is used for any student not enrolled in the district or school DURING the test window. NCE can be indicated in the test management systems or on the student's answer sheet (for student's preregistered to test paper/pencil). Please note that this does not update the student's information in the district's SIS/SRS or

ADVISER, which also must be updated. All verified NCE codes result in waived scores and are not included in reporting.

Other (OTH)*

Other (OTH) is used for situations where emergencies or drastic unforeseen circumstances occur and adequate documentation is provided. Examples include a death of an immediate family member, or extended emergency weather such as prolonged flooding. Districts with students in drastic unforeseen circumstances should contact the Director of Assessment at the Statewide Assessment Office by email before the end of the test window. The email should be titled "Unforeseen Testing circumstance." All OTH codes, once approved, result in waived scores and not included in reporting.

Parent Refusal (PAR)

Parent Refusal (PAR) is used for any student removed from testing due to a formal request (documentation kept at district level) from the parent or guardian. All PAR codes result in the lowest possible score and are counted as non-participants.

Student Refusal (STR)*

Student Refusal (STR) is used for any student who refuses to participate in testing. Districts should provide multiple opportunities for students to engage in testing before marking the student as STR. All STR codes result in the lowest possible score and count as non-participants.

District Unable to Test Student (UTT)

District Unable to Test Student (UTT) is used when a district is unable to test the student during the testing window due to excessive absences or suspension/expulsion. UTT codes result in the lowest possible score and are counted as non-participants.

- Students provided with education in Interim schools (alternative programs with certified teachers), ESU program schools, or contracted service programs must be tested. Therefore, if students attending one of these schools/programs are not tested, but are enrolled in your district during the test window, he or she will receive a UTT code.

*These codes are not utilized with the ELPA 21

Specific to ELPA21:

Student Misclassified/No Longer EL (03)

Student Misclassified/No Longer EL (MIS) is used for any student who was misclassified as EL or is no longer an EL student. All MIS codes result in waived scores and are not included in reporting.

Absent for Testing Window but Remained in District (05)

Absent for Testing Window (ATW) is used for any student who remains enrolled in the district but was absent during the scheduled test dates. All ATW codes result in the lowest possible score and are counted as non-participants.

Non-public student (06)

Non-public student (NPS) is used for any student who is enrolled in a non-public school and receives less than 51% of their instruction provided by the LEA. All NPS codes result in waived scores and are not included in reporting.

Summative Test Taken in Another ELPA21 State During this Year (07)

Summative Test Taken in Another ELPA21 State During This Year (SAT) is used for any student who completed the ELPA21 while residing in another state that assesses EL

students using the ELPA21 summative assessment. All SAT codes result in waived scores and are not included in reporting.

Embargoed Data

District personnel have access to NSCAS results before the information has been released publicly. Districts are asked to embargo their data until the Nebraska Department of Education releases data publicly.

- Do not share scores publicly through newsletters, school board meetings, award ceremonies, media releases, and other formal publications.
- Finalized individual scores for each student can be shared with the student and with the student's parent or guardian. However, classroom, school, district, or any other form of aggregate scores cannot be shared with students or with individuals outside the school staff.
- Aggregate scores can be shared with school/district staff, but do remind recipients that scores are embargoed.
- No public recognition of individuals can be given if doing so reveals summative test scores, such as awarding students who earn perfect scores on an NSCAS test.
- For NSCAS Growth ELA and Mathematics, preliminary scores will be available within 48 hours of students submitting tests. Districts will be able to access preliminary scale scores and preliminary achievement levels via the CAP online management system.
- For NSCAS Alternate, raw scores are embargoed; students can be told their raw scores, but staff should be careful about sharing information with students and/or parents about performance level until scores are finalized.
- Preliminary and Raw scores should only be shared with school/district staff, but do remind recipients that scores are embargoed. Districts should exercise great caution when sharing Preliminary and Raw scores because they are not finalized.

- Questions about embargoed data should be directed to the NDE Statewide Assessment Office.

The NDE is very appreciative of districts' efforts to provide data in an appropriate and timely manner to all stakeholders, respecting and honoring the procedures that we must all follow.

The Nebraska Technical Advisory Committee

The NDE has consulted with numerous assessment experts, including many from outside the state. These assessment experts have assisted the NDE in advisory roles in assessment development, in federal documentation, and many other tasks.

A Technical Advisory Committee was appointed by the Governor in 2008 and approved by the Legislature. Committee members serve three year terms and may be reappointed. The role of this committee is to:

“Review the statewide assessment plan, state assessment instruments, and the accountability system developed under the Quality Education Accountability Act.”

The current committee members include the following:

Committee Member	Member’s Organization	Member’s Role
Chad Buckendahl, Ph.D. Chair	ACS Ventures, Las Vegas, NV	National Expert
Christy Hovanetz	Foundation for Excellence in Education - Minnesota	Senior Policy Fellow National Expert
Jeffrey Nellhaus, Ed.M.	Educational Consultant	National Expert
Linda Poole	Papillion-LaVista Public Schools	Nebraska Teacher
Joshua Fields	Seward Public Schools	Nebraska Superintendent



III. Standards, Assessment, and Accountability: NSCAS Information Applicable to ACT

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 administration of a college entrance exam. ACT was selected as the exam on a five-year Request For Proposal to be administered to all public school third-year cohort students, except those identified as needing alternate assessment. They continue to provide this assessment under a new Response For Proposal in 2021.

Students will participate in ACT Reading, English, Math, Science and Writing in spring 2024. Although ACT writing is optional for National administrations, the ACT writing test is required for state testing for all students. Writing is part of the calculation for the ELA score required under statute, 79-760.03.

All students, including special education students, English Language Learners, and foreign exchange students who are in their third-year cohort at a public high school must participate in the ACT. Students who are enrolled less than 51% FTE or who are juniors due to credits they have earned, but are not in third-year cohort, will not be tested in a public school district through the NDE ACT statewide assessment program.

Spring 2024 ACT Test Dates

Test Administration	Test Window 1 Initial	Test Window 2 Initial and Make-up	Make-up ONLY Test Window
ACT Paper Test	March 26, 2024	April 9, 2024	April 23, 2024
ACT Online Test	March 26-29 & April 1-5	April 9-12 & April 15-19, 2024	April 23-26 & April 29-30, May 1-3 2024
ACT Accommodations Paper Test	March 26-29 & April 1-5, 2024	April 9-12 & April 15-19, 2024	April 23-26 & April 29-30, May 1-3 2024
ACT Accommodations Online	March 26-29 & April 1-5, 2024	April 9-12 & April 15-19, 2024	April 23-26 & April 29-30, May 1-3 2024

ACT Test Information for Standard Time

Section	# of Questions & Time Limit	Content/Skills Covered	Question Types
English	75 questions in 45 min.	Grammar & usage, punctuation, sentence structure, strategy, organization, and style	Four-choice, multiple-choice usage/mechanics and rhetorical skills questions
Math	60 questions in 60 min.	Pre-algebra, elementary algebra, intermediate algebra, coordinate geometry, plane geometry, and trigonometry	Five-choice, multiple-choice questions
Reading	40 questions in 35 min.	Interpretation, analysis, evaluation, reasoning, and problem solving	Four-choice, multiple choice referring and reasoning questions

Science	40 questions in 35 min.	Interpretation, analysis, evaluation, reasoning, and problem solving	Four-choice, multiple-choice data representation, research summaries, and conflicting viewpoints questions
Writing	1 essay in 40 min.	Writing skills	Essay prompt

Help Contacts

Iris Owens, Nebraska ACT Coordinator

Email: iris.a.owens@act.org

Phone: 531-207-9019

Assessment at The Nebraska Department of Education

Nebraska Department of Education

Statewide Assessment

Email: NDE.stateassessment@nebraska.gov

Phone: 402-314-3013

Fax: 402-742-2319

ACT Contacts

Customer service hours (excluding ACT holidays):

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

General Inquiries Phone: 800-553-6244

ACT hosted webpage: www.act.org/stateanddistrict/nebraska

Accommodations and EL Support Questions

Email: ACTStateAccoms@act.org

Phone 800-553-6244, ext. 1788

ACT Online Prep

Email: actonlineprep@act.org

Phone: 319-337-1429

PreACT

Email: preact@act.org

877.789.2925 option 5

ACT Participation for English Language Learners

Students may have EL Supports and receive college-reportable scores only through an ACT approval process through the ACT Test Accessibility and Accommodations site (TAA).

ACT English Learner Supports requests may include:

- Testing in a familiar environment or small group
- Extended time testing: Timing Code 6 (50% time extension, single session)
- Use of an approved word to word bilingual dictionary ([ACT Approved Bilingual Word-to-Word Dictionaries](#))
- Use of test directions in 18 native languages
 - Arabic
 - Brazilian Portuguese
 - Chinese (Simplified)
 - Chinese (Traditional)
 - French
 - German
 - Haitian Creole
 - Hmong (White)
 - Japanese
 - Korean
 - Navajo
 - Russian
 - Samoan
 - Somali

- Spanish
- Tagalog
- Tongan
- Vietnamese

ACT Participation for students with IEPs and/or 504 Plans who are not identified as needing alternate assessment

Students may have accommodations and receive college-reportable scores only through an ACT approval process through the ACT Test Accessibility and Accommodations site (TAA). Parents, students, staff, and the IEPs and/or 504 Plans should guide decisions for students.

ACT and NSCAS Alternate Assessment Administration

In spring 2024, the ACT will be administered as the statewide summative assessment at the high school level. All third-year cohort students (2025) are required to participate unless identified as Alternate Assessment students. **Students identified as having the most severe cognitive disabilities will participate in NSCAS Alternate Assessment.**

Regardless of how many credits a student has earned, public high school students must participate in state testing in their third year of high school (2025).

Interim-Program Schools and Contracted Service Programs

Students enrolled in Interim-Program Schools (Rule 18 schools), ESU program schools or contracted service programs must participate in the ACT at those sites. These entities have designated ACT test coordinators for each site. Students should be added by the District Assessment Coordinator so tests will arrive for those students. Interim-Program schools, ESU program schools and contracted service programs are required to follow all the same testing procedures and security procedures as the Nebraska public high schools.

The student's school of enrollment should be communicating with the Interim-Program school, ESU program school or contracted service program which its student(s) is attending to assure all students are tested.

ACT Test Coordinators

Each public high school building, contracted service program, and Rule 18 school is an ACT test site for the state administration of the ACT. Each test site has a test coordinator as the main source of contact with ACT. Test Coordinators cannot be coaches or have family members that will be testing in the state administration of the ACT. District Assessment Contacts receive ACT DAC Updates throughout the year and should share that information with ACT building test coordinators.

ACT Testing Mode

Each school site determines the mode of ACT administration, either paper/pencil or online for the current year. All students do not have to be tested in the same mode within a school or district. Some may participate with paper/pencil and some online at the district's discretion with input from the students/parents involved. The majority of students were assessed with paper/pencil in spring 2023; however, many school sites have elected to complete make-up tests online as more days are available for make-up testing.

ACT Make-up

Paper/Pencil Make-up Tests

Schools must return test booklets and order new materials if they intend to have students make-up tests on paper/pencil. It is important that schools pay close attention

to be sure they are using the correct form for the corresponding administration. Schools should refer to the yearly ACT Schedule of Events for all due dates and deadlines.

Online Make-up Tests

Schools may administer make-up tests online. Any school planning to administer any tests online must make sure they have met ACT technical readiness requirements. Make-up testing online will require setting up a testing session for the students in PANext.

Technical Readiness

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

This video series includes information on downloading installable TestNav, and running system and app checks. It is important that districts follow **all** ACT technical guidance in order to provide a successful online testing experience for their students.

Requirements of ACT Administration and Security Procedures

District Assessment Contacts and School Site principals sign security agreements for all NSCAS summative assessments, including the ACT. The requirements of the agreement must be strictly followed. In addition, all ACT requirements must be 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 2024 in any school. ACT room test administrators or proctors cannot be a direct relative of student(s) being tested in their rooms.

The test manuals shipped by ACT to school sites contain specific details on procedures for test administration. Training for test administration is located on the [ACT website](#).

Test Manuals Test Coordinator Manuals, Test manuals, and any requested paper/pencil ACT tests are shipped to the test sites on the dates indicated in PANext by the site test coordinator.

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

ACT Non-cognitive Survey

Prior to and up to two days after participating in the ACT, students will be asked to complete the non-test information and non-cognitive survey.

- All questions in the non-cognitive section are in the *MyACT platform* which is located online at www.myact.org. Whether a student is testing paper or online should create an account in MyACT to provide the non-test information and college score report requests.
- Students will be provided instructions on how to create an account and match state scores to accounts already created. This information is sent with test materials.
- It is required that parents and students have access to the survey to preview it if they want. Students are not required to complete any or all of the survey.
- Students who complete the survey have these advantages:

- It is through the non-cognitive portion of the assessment that students can request up to four free score reports sent to colleges of student's choice. If not completed during the pretest session, there is a cost of \$16 for each report to a college.
- 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 from ACT.
- If the student elects to be a part of Educational Opportunities Service (EOS), then ACT will also provide their information to approved colleges/financial aid opportunities for which they would fit the criteria.
- Some of the data collected will also be used to inform the profile reports, so with missing data, all reports will not be as complete.

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).
EXP	Exempt	Student exempt from testing due to certain circumstances, such as a student requiring an unavailable accommodation; student attending an

		out-of-state facility; or testing irregularities. Must be verified by NDE (excluded from reporting).
FTE	Full-Time Equivalency	Student's Full-Time Equivalency is less than 51% so the student is excluded from testing (excluded from reporting).
NCE	Not Currently Enrolled	Student not enrolled in the district/school during the test window (excluded from reporting).
OTH	Other	Student was not tested for reasons not covered by other descriptions. For example, the occurrence of a natural disaster. Must be verified by NDE (excluded from reporting).
PAR	Parent Refusal	Student was not tested because of a written request from parent(s) or guardian(s) (included in reporting as scale score 0 and performance level of 3).
LBW	Left Before Window	Student withdrew from the district/school BEFORE the test window(s) began (excluded from reporting).
STR	Student Refusal	Student was not tested because the student refused to participate (included in reporting as scale score 0 and performance level of 3).
UTT	District Unable to Test Student	District was unable to test the student during the testing windows due to excessive absences or suspension/expulsion (included in reporting as scale score 0 and performance level of 3).
WSR	Waived Score Replacement	Students with previous ACT scores that met the qualifications and are approved by NDE. The district must submit an ACT Score Replacement Request to NDE and needs to be approved by the Statewide Assessment Office before the ACT testing windows. WSR codes result in the acceptance of approved scores and counted as a participant.

The "State Use Questions" in PANext are to be used to explain why a student has not tested. Please refer to the Pearson Access Next User Guide for instructions on how to access "State Use Questions".

Invalid (INV) codes are determined by the assessment team at NDE in situations where the construct of the ACT was violated or a security issue occurred.

Business Rules for ACT Tests with Misadministration or Prohibited Behavior scores for State Reporting and Accountability

In certain situations, while ACT will have invalidated the score for ACT post-secondary reporting, NDE may count the student scores as State Scores Only and use the score for the AQuESTT Accountability calculations. Schools will be notified when this occurs.

In the following situations, not only will ACT have invalidated the score for ACT post-secondary reporting, NDE will also invalidate the score, resulting in zero scores for state reporting.

- If a student receives an accommodation that is not part of the student's IEP/504 or part of the student's learning plan, *scores will be invalidated to zero.*
- If the student looked ahead or behind to another test than the one he/she was currently taking, or filled in other ovals on the answer document for another test, *scores will be invalidated to a zero.*
- If the student's cell phone, watch or any other device (which is removable or able to be silenced) made noise, *the scores will be invalidated to a zero.*
- If a student accessed a cell phone or used an unapproved calculator, or other unapproved tool, *scores will be invalidated to zero.*
- If a student looked at another examinee's answer sheet and was discharged from the test session, *scores will be invalidated to zero.*
- In addition, the student may not receive a writing score if the student:
 - Writes an essay off topic.
 - Writes an essay that is unreadable or illegible.

- Does not write or transfer the essay to the answer document.
- Left the essay portion blank.

District Choice of ACT Online Prep (AOP) or PreACT

For 2023-2024 districts are able to select between two different ACT supports. Districts selected either AOP or PreACT.

AOP (ACT Online Prep)

AOP is available to every student in the third-year cohort, whose district elected to participate in AOP.

- 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 operational administration is, however, scored by human readers.
- AOP is not only available to students during the school day, but students may access it at any time with their Username and Password.
- AOP will remain available to each third-year cohort student who accesses it from August 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024. Students in member districts may individually choose to use AOP if they want to prepare to retake the ACT in their senior year.
- Information about ACT Online Prep is available on the [ACT website](#).
- Districts may use the results of the AOP to improve student learning. The AOP results are not embargoed or barred in any way from use by districts, including questions and actual answer choices.

PreACT

The PreACT is available to every student in either the second-year or third-year cohort whose district elected to participate in PreACT. Instructions on ordering and proctoring the PreACT can be found on the [ACT Website](#).

- Depending on the district choice, districts may test in fall or spring of the students' second-cohort year or in the fall of their third-cohort year.
- The PreACT is one complete multiple choice test that follows the same test design as the ACT. An ACT writing test is not included.
- Districts are provided with student reports on the PreACT.
- Districts may use the results of the PreACT to improve student learning. The PreACT results are not embargoed or barred in any way from use by districts, including questions and actual answer choices. Do, however, note that currently the same form for PreACT is used in the fall and spring each year, so sharing items with students in the same grade that have not taken the PreACT may affect effective interpretation of PreACT results.

ACT Reporting

[The ACT Test: User Handbook for Educators](#) contains information about ACT score reports, as well as samples of the reports.

- Score reporting starts on page 39.
- Students and schools will begin receiving reports from ACT for their students three to 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.

Standard Setting

The Nebraska Department of Education must report statewide summative scores in at least three levels for state accountability on the Nebraska Education Profile (NEP).

With ACT as the state summative test at the high school level, Nebraska educators and NDE engaged in a standard setting process to determine the three levels of performance used for state accountability. The Nebraska State Board of Education set the following performance levels for state accountability only.

- ACT Cut Scores for ACT English Language Arts, ACT Mathematics, and ACT Science
- The English Language Arts score includes ACT Reading, ACT English, and ACT Writing.

Nebraska ACT Performance Definitions

Performance Level	Math	ELA	Science
ACT Benchmark	22-36	20-36	23-36
On Track	18-21	18-19	19-22
Developing	1-17	1-17	1-18

ACT Benchmark

Students that meet or exceed the ACT College Readiness Benchmark are equipped to enroll (without remediation) and succeed in a credit-bearing first-year course at a two-year or four-year institution, trade school, or technical school. Students have at least a 50% chance of getting a B or better and a 75% chance of getting a C or better in a first-year related content course.

On Track

On Track students are approaching the ACT College Readiness Benchmark and are likely to be able to access credit-bearing first-year related content courses at some Nebraska postsecondary institutions without remediation.

Developing

Students in the Developing Level are likely to need developmental courses before being able to access credit-bearing first-year courses in the majority of Nebraska postsecondary institutions.

Additional Information to Performance Level Definitions

In order to increase the chances of success after high school, students are encouraged to do the following:

- Engage in rigorous coursework during their senior year.
- Take part in a wide range of career exploration activities.
- Build on existing strengths and address challenge areas.
- Work with adults to plan for college, career, and civic life.
- Gain work or volunteer experiences.
- Participate in activities beyond the classroom.

The ACT processes for standard setting are described in detail in the standard setting reports available at:

- [ACT Nebraska Standard Setting](#)
- [ACT Standard Setting Post Committee NDE Work](#)

The Assessment Team of NDE engaged educators in a series of workshops to better inform educators about alignment to Nebraska State Standards and to provide descriptions of the skills and content needed for students to achieve a performance level. Two documents were released in September 2018.

- [ACT State Performance Level Descriptors Alignment of the ACT](#)

- [Writing to Nebraska Statewide Content Standards](#)



IV. Standards, Assessment, and Accountability: NSCAS Information Applicable to NSCAS General and Alternate Summative Assessments

The NSCAS Testing Window for Summative general and alternate English language arts, mathematics, and science is April 1 - May 3, 2024. The make-up window for general and alternate is May 5 - May 10, 2024. Make-up tests may also be administered throughout the window. However, initial testing for each grade and content should not be scheduled in the make-up window.

NSCAS Cut Scores

English Language Arts Cut Scores

The cut scores for NSCAS ELA and ELA Alternate were set in summer 2023 and reviewed by a policy review panel. ELA validation of the cut scores will occur during the summer of 2024.

NSCAS Growth ELA Cut Scores		
Grade	NSCAS ELA Growth On Track	NSCAS ELA Advanced Benchmark
Grade 3	2443	2536
Grade 4	2493	2567
Grade 5	2504	2583
Grade 6	2518	2594
Grade 7	2527	2609
Grade 8	2524	2624

NSCAS Alternate ELA Cut Scores		
Grade	NSCAS ELA Alternate On Track	NSCAS ELA Alternate Advanced
Grade 3	200	250
Grade 4	200	250
Grade 5	200	250
Grade 6	200	250
Grade 7	200	250
Grade 8	200	250
Third-year Cohort	200	250

Standard setting reports available:

- [NSCAS \(Formerly NeSA\) ELA Standard Setting Report](#)
- [NSCAS \(Formerly NeSA\) ELA Standard Setting Post-Committee NDE Work](#)

NSCAS Math Cut Scores

The cut scores for the NSCAS Math and NSCAS Alternate Assessment Math were set in summer 2023 on the 2018 standards.

NSCAS Growth Math Cut Scores		
Grade	NSCAS MATH Growth On Track	NSCAS MATH Growth Advanced Benchmark
Grade 3	1176	1297
Grade 4	1208	1331
Grade 5	1207	1320
Grade 6	1228	1321

Grade 7	1212	1314
Grade 8	1231	1319

NSCAS Alternate Math Cut Scores		
Grade	NSCAS MATH Alternate On Track	NSCAS MATH Alternate Advanced Benchmark
Grade 3	200	250
Grade 4	200	250
Grade 5	200	250
Grade 6	200	250
Grade 7	200	250
Grade 8	200	250
Grade 11	200	250

NSCAS Science Cut Scores

The cut scores for the NSCAS Science were set in summer 2022. During the summer of 2023, the science cut scores were validated.

NSCAS General Science Cut Scores		
Grade	NSCAS General Science On Track	NSCAS General Science Advanced Benchmark
Grade 5	3100	3150
Grade 8	3100	3150

NSCAS Alternate Science Cut Scores		
Grade	NSCAS MATH Alternate On Track	NSCAS Science Alternate Advanced Benchmark
Grade 5	200	250
Grade 8	200	250
Grade 11	200	250

The Role of Nebraska Educators in the Development of the English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science Assessments

Nebraska will continue to be a leader in engaging our educators to write test questions for the summative assessments.

- NDE will continue to gather diverse groups of educators from across Nebraska to write test items during NDE-hosted item-writing workshops in Lincoln.
- Educators will receive item-writer training, develop test items, and conduct peer-review of test items as they are written.
- Additional educators will meet to review items that were created at item-writing workshops to determine whether the items are eligible for field testing.
- NDE will continue to encourage Nebraska educator involvement in other related events associated with the transition to the College and Career Ready Standards, including Standard Setting.

NSCAS ELA, Math, and Science Spring 2024 Test Specifics



Grades	Operational Items Types	Field Tested Item Types	Standards Tested
Growth Grades 3-8	<p>Multiple Choice</p> <p>Technology-enhanced items</p> <p>Composite items (multi-part and machine scored)</p> <p>No open-ended text-dependent analysis will be included; items that test the skills for text-dependent analysis will be included. They will be MC, TE, or composite items.</p>	<p>Multiple Choice</p> <p>Technology-enhanced items</p> <p>Composite items</p>	College and Career Ready ELA Standards
NSCAS Alternate Grades 3-8 & HS 3rd yr cohort	Multiple Choice	Multiple Choice	Extended College and Career Ready ELA Standards

NSCAS Mathematics			
Grades	Operational Items Types	Field Tested Item Types	Standards Tested
Growth Grades 3-8	<p>Multiple Choice</p> <p>Technology-enhanced items</p> <p>Composite items (multi-part and machine scored)</p>	<p>Multiple Choice</p> <p>Technology-enhanced items</p> <p>Composite items</p>	College and Career Ready Math Standards

NSCAS Alternate Grades 3-8 & HS 3rd yr cohort	Multiple Choice	Multiple Choice	Extended College and Career Ready Math Standards
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NSCAS Science

In spring of 2022, the NSCAS Science test was operational for both NSCAS General and Alternate. Information about the design of the assessment and the item types can be accessed on the [NSCAS Science](#) webpage. The NSCAS Science tests are aligned to Nebraska College and Career Ready Standards of Science.

Scheduling

Online Assessment

The table below lists the approximate number of test questions per content area and the estimated time to complete each content area. Some students may require more time than others. When scheduling test sessions, these variances should be considered.

Grade Level	Content Area	Approximate number of test questions	Estimated test-taking time
3-8	Mathematics	45	90 minutes
3-8	English Language Arts	45	90 minutes
5 and 8	Science	25-34	60 minutes

When scheduling test sessions, please consider the following:

- [Scheduling guidance](#) is updated annually and provided to districts digitally. Districts should use all available information when building testing schedules. **Note: Districts should consider using two or more test sessions for each content area.**

- Districts should not wait until the end of the testing window. The final week of each test window is a makeup week. No regular sessions should be scheduled in the makeup week.
- Mondays are not the best testing days.
- Makeup sessions for operational testing must be scheduled within the testing window as students will be scored on the items completed and will receive no credit for blank, incomplete, or missing items.
- Scheduling of NSCAS testing should NOT wait until the last few days of the window. If scheduled at the end, districts run the risk of not getting everyone scheduled because of illness, weather, breaks, or other disruptions.
- In each testing window, the final week of the window is included only for make-up tests. Students who are not tested due to sickness during a regularly scheduled test that takes place in the final week of a test window will not be eligible for an Emergency Medical Waiver.
- The testing window runs through all the days of the published timeline. That means ADVISER will expect a score for all students enrolled during the testing window. However, students who are newly enrolled two weeks prior to the last test date (i.e., ACT: 4/12/24; NSCAS Alternate and Growth, 4/26/24) will not be expected to participate in NSCAS General or Alternate. Please contact Anne Hubbell (anne.hubbell@nebraska.gov) regarding any questions on this issue for the ELPA 21 and ALT ELPA.
- When students arrive at a new school, the receiving school should contact the previous school to determine what NSCAS tests have already been completed. Students are to be enrolled at the time of their arrival. There is no “waiting” for the testing process to be over. It is not ethical or fair to delay or adjust an enrollment based upon the arrival of the student and testing schedule. That is absolutely not fair to the student and family.

- Regardless of the schedule used, the test administration must be consistent, standardized, and the scripted directions must be followed. This is true for both online and paper/pencil testing.
- Student benefit should be considered first with regard to scheduling, not adult convenience or logistical issues.
- Districts are asked to review the following scheduling considerations and to read [Suggestions for a Smooth Testing Process](#).

Consideration for Online Testing

- Students need to have access to the student tutorial, and Item Type Samplers prior to the testing in order to be familiar with the online environment or students.
- For younger students, districts need to allow more time to log in to the test and need to be sure that students have had an opportunity to practice logging in prior to testing. Students that struggled to log in may receive assistance from adult proctors.
- Proctors should provide students with their test ticket prior to testing. Test tickets must be collected at the end of the test session.
- Student tickets are considered secure. They do need to be printed. However, proctors are provided with a session name and password that they will write on the board for students to access the particular session being conducted. Essentially the student ticket is the same for every single NSCAS summative test, so tickets could be shared EXCEPT for any student who has different accommodations for different content areas. For example, if a student has text-to-speech being provided online for math and science, but not for ELA, the ticket for ELA will be different than the one that will work for math and science. With the previous exception noted, otherwise tickets could even be reused across content areas by different teachers/proctors of test sessions. However, logistically, it may prove easier to print tickets for each session. This is a school/district choice.

- Parents should be reminded of the school's testing schedule so that personal appointments are not scheduled during the testing time.

Administration

- Standardized testing environments and protocols must always be followed. Test content must be protected and the integrity of students' answers must be assured by districts following all security protocols and standardized testing procedures as required.
- Districts are responsible for destroying any secure materials used in testing.

Testing Modes: Paper/Pencil or Online and Placing Orders

All students taking the NSCAS Growth and General Science Summative must take the test online.

- This requirement will NOT apply to the following groups of students:
 - Students with a medical condition that does not allow the use of computer screens
 - English Learners requiring written translations of languages other than Spanish
 - Cultural considerations for English Learners
 - English Learners who need side-by-side English and Spanish tests for math and science only
 - Students taking the Braille or large print assessments
 - Students contracted to institutions where online access is not allowed
 - Students taking the alternate tests (NSCAS-AA ELA, NSCAS-AA M or NSCAS-AA S). Students taking the NSCAS-AA may take the tests online or paper/pencil based on individual student needs.

- Additional information about students that are allowed to take NSCAS General on paper/pencil can be found in the [Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System \(NSCAS\) Accessibility Manual](#).
- Districts will have access to the NSCAS Growth platform to identify paper/pencil students and order materials. Paper/Pencil orders must be placed at least two weeks prior to the last test date for any given test administration.
- Districts will be required to designate online accommodations through the Acacia Manage (NSCAS Growth Platform) system once the test management system opens. Text to Speech and Spanish-translations are available online accommodations.

Individual Student Needs

Districts need to research the needs of individual students to determine their needs. All students, including those tested with the alternate test (the 1% most significantly cognitively challenged) are included in the NSCAS. Test scores for all students in grades 3-8 and the third-year cohort in high school are expected in ADVISER. Because of the inclusionary testing requirements in a state system, any student not tested will receive a zero state score unless granted an allowable exception.

After thorough research with internal and external groups, the NDE team developed and has annually reviewed the [Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System Accessibility Manual](#). It is expected that a student's IEP and/or 504 plan will include the appropriate accommodations in order to participate in NSCAS and for regular instruction. Districts need to have all teachers review the allowable accommodations in this document.

For future consideration of an accommodation currently not included in the manual, districts are encouraged to contact:

Trudy K Clark, Director of Statewide Assessment

Phone: 531-739-8403

or

Sharon Heater, Educational Specialist, Office of Special Education

Phone: 531-289-8068

If the student is unable to respond directly online, or if using a paper/pencil form, a Test Administrator must transcribe the student responses into the online system.

Students will be able to receive accommodations as outlined in their IEPs and as allowed by the [Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System \(NSCAS\) Accessibility Manual](#)

- School personnel should review the *NSCAS Summative & Alternate Accessibility Manual: How to Select, Administer, and Evaluate Use of Accessibility Supports for Instruction and Assessment of All Students*.
- As appropriate, school personnel may consult with individual students concerning mode of testing decisions.
- The individual needs of English Language Learners should inform the district decisions, and students should know whether they will be tested in English or Spanish before they are administered the tests.
- Accommodated students may need paper/pencil in one subject area but not all.
- See [Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System \(NSCAS\) Accessibility Manual](#) to inform decisions for EL students, students with 504 plans, and students with IEPs.

Alternate Assessment

Any student who needs NSCAS-AA ELA, AA Math, and AA Science must be flagged in ADVISER. Districts are required to use the [Alternate Assessment Participation Criteria](#) to inform decisions on identification of students who require alternate assessment.

Tables of Specification

Tables of Specifications (TOS) for NSCAS-GEN ELA, Math, and Science and NSCAS-AA ELA, Math, and Science are posted on the [NDE Assessment Website](#) under General Summative Assessment and each subject area or on the [NDE Alternate Summative Assessment](#) page. TOS are made public in efforts for all educators to know what is being tested.

NSCAS Growth Student Preparation

Online Opportunities

Online Student Tutorials are available on the [NDE/NWEA Assessment Portal](#). The Student Tutorial is an interactive video that introduces students to the NSCAS Growth testing environment and provides an initial introduction to the online tools. All students scheduled to test online should have access to the Online Student Tutorial prior to using the Item Type Samplers. Other stakeholders are welcome to view the Online Student Tutorial.

Item Type Samplers are provided for each grade and content; the purpose of the samplers is to familiarize students with the system interface, system functionality, and embedded universal tools and accommodations. As a result, scores will not be provided. A publicly available PDF answer key will be provided. All students scheduled

to take the NSCAS Growth online should have an opportunity to experience the Item Type Samplers prior to testing.

Others interested in NSCAS Summative, such as teachers and parents, are welcome to use the samplers to better understand the experience of students. New and/or updated samplers will be available publicly on the [Nebraska Assessment Portal](#).

Item Type Samplers include:

- Updated Online Item Type Samplers for NSCAS General ELA, Math for grades 3-8
- New Online Item Type Samplers for NSCAS General Science for grade 5 & 8
- Corresponding Online Spanish Item Type Samplers
- The following paper/pencil Item Type Samplers can be downloaded from the [NDE/NWEA Assessment Portal](#):
 - Updated Paper/Pencil Item Type Samplers for NSCAS General ELA, Math for grades 3-8
 - New Paper/Pencil Item Type Samplers for NSCAS General Science for grade 5 & 8
 - Corresponding Paper/Pencil Spanish Item Type Samplers
 - If a district places an order for a large print or Braille assessment, a corresponding Item Type Sampler will be sent to the district with other ordered paper/pencil testing material prior to the testing window.

Mathematics Supports

The NSCAS General Mathematics assessments in grade 6-8 utilizes the **DESMOS Online Calculator** for certain items. Educators are encouraged to expose students to the appropriate DESMOS calculator for each grade. DESMOS calculators are free to use. [Guidance](#) about the DESMOS calculator is available on the [NDE Assessment Portal](#).

Students in grades 4-8 have access to a **Universal Mathematics Reference Sheet** during NSCAS Growth Mathematics assessments. Educators are encouraged to introduce their students to the reference sheets prior to testing and many use the reference sheets

through-out the year. Reference sheets are available as a tool in the online tests and in the test booklet for paper/pencil. Schools may also provide a print version of the appropriate grade level version of the reference sheet for students taking the test online. Printed reference sheets used for the summative assessment may not have any additional writing or notations. The reference sheets are available in both English and Spanish and can be accessed on the [NDE Assessment Portal](#).

NSCAS Growth Software

NWEA attempts to have any updated software prepared by the start of the school year. Occasionally, software has to be updated because of updates made by other software companies. Software updates are only made during the school year if not doing so is determined to present a sizable risk to NSCAS testing. The software used for NSCAS Growth is a lockdown browser that will provide the online interface for all subjects and will be used for MAP Growth testing.

Information about installation, including system requirements can be found at [NDE/NWEA Assessment Portal](#). Click on the tab labeled "Technology Coordinators." Questions about system requirements and installation of NWEA software should be directed to NWEA help desk.

Nebraska NWEA Help Desk

Toll Free 855-225-9926

Email: NWEANebraska@nwea.org

7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. M-F CST

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

Trudy K Clark, Director of Statewide Assessment

Phone: 531-739-8403

Email: trudy.clark@nebraska.gov

NSCAS Growth

Professional Learning

The Professional Learning Plan for Nebraska has been designed to help build balanced assessment literacy ranging from formative assessment and instruction, through the use of the interim and summative assessment results. This approach will help balance the variability in purpose, design, and data from each assessment type. In partnership with NWEA, the Nebraska Department of Education expanded upon the existing Certified Facilitator Program. This program provides focused professional development and online resources to the Nebraska certified facilitators. Equipped with the training and tools from this program, certified facilitators are then able to tailor the professional learning for Nebraska educators to meet the needs of both large and small schools or districts. Prior to the fall of 2017, these trainings focused primarily on the MAP Growth Foundation Series Workshops (Applying Reports, Informing Instruction, Focusing on Growth). The current goals of the program include:

- Deepening educator understanding of NSCAS tools and foundational practices introduced in 2017-18.
- Providing data coaching to support the use of MAP® Growth™ data in conjunction with other measures included in the NSCAS.
- Delivering tailored formative practice and interim offerings that meet the unique needs of learners in each district.
- Continuing the focus surrounding a Balanced Assessment System by offering Assessment Literacy offerings for certified facilitators and plus-ones across the state.

Certified Facilitators

There are 72 slots for Certified Facilitators across the state. These facilitators consist of Educational Service Unit (ESU) staff developers and/or district leaders. Facilitators have

had the option to be trained in Applying Reports, Informing Instruction, Assessment Literacy for Teacher, Formative Assessment Practices, and Focusing on Growth. These offerings are all designed to support the appropriate use and implementation of MAP Growth. The [ESU Certified Facilitators](#) are available to provide district professional development on topics below. Contact ESUs directly.

Professional Learning Workshops offered in 2023-2024 to all Certified Facilitators include:

- Applying Reports for Teachers and Applying Reports for Administrators
- Student Goal Setting
- Focusing on Growth
- Growth for Students, Staff and Stakeholders
- Informing Instruction: Responsive Planning
- Nurturing Collaborative Learning Spaces
- Building Learning Paths With Students

For a complete listing of all professional learning opportunities for Certified Facilitators, see the [Save the Date](#) document for professional learning opportunities for 2023-24.

Questions about any portion of the Professional Learning program may be directed to:

Aly Martinez Wilkinson, Professional Learning Lead for Nebraska

Email: aly.martinez.wilkinson@nwea.org



V. Standards, Assessment, and Accountability: National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP)

NAEP is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment. NAEP is not designed to report results for individual students or schools; so a sample of students representative of Nebraska demographically are selected to participate. Results provide insight on student achievement, instructional experiences, and school environment factors for the nation, states and participating urban districts.

Nebraska participated in 2022 state NAEP. 100 Nebraska districts and 201 schools were selected to participate in Reading and Math in grades 4 and 8. A small group of 8th grade students took Civics and US History. The testing window was January 24, 2022 through March 31, 2022. NAEP 2022 results were released in the fall of 2022. NAEP is given every other year. The next NAEP assessment will be given in 2024.

NAEP 2022 Results

Grade 4	Math	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nebraska's average math score is 242 for fourth grade, seven points higher than the national average of 235. • No other state scored higher than Nebraska in fourth grade math.
	Scale Score	
	Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nebraska's average reading score is 219, three points higher than the national average. . • Three states outscored Nebraska in fourth grade reading
	Scale Score	

Grade 8	Math	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The average scale score of 8th grade students in Nebraska was 229, six points higher than the national average of 273. • One state had a scale score that was higher.
	Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The average scale score of 8th grade students in Nebraska was 259, the same as the national average. • Seven states/jurisdictions had a scale score that was higher.

NAEP 2022 Nebraska Population

January 24 through March 31, 2022 was the testing window for NAEP 2022. Results were reported in the fall of 2022. 210 schools and 4,900 students in grades 4 and 8 participated in Math, Reading. Results for the operational Math and Reading assessments are reported at the state level for grades 4 and 8.

NAEP assessment results reported on the *The Nation's Report Card*, has provided important information about how students are performing academically since 1969.

The 2022 NAEP report card can be viewed at <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>.

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

Polly Bowhay, NAEP Coordinator

Phone: 531-207-4252

Email: polly.bowhay@nebraska.gov



VI. Coherence and Alignment among Science Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (CASCIA)

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) has been awarded a three-year grant under the U.S. Department of Education's Competitive Grants for State Assessments (CGSA) program to develop instructionally embedded science assessments. As the lead state, the NDE will collaborate with two other states (Alabama, Alaska) and three organizations providing technical support (edCount, LLC, the Learning Sciences Research Institute at the University of Illinois, Chicago, and EdMetric), and an external evaluator (Seneca Consulting).

CASCIA will establish replicable and scalable reporting templates and mechanisms that communicate assessment results, their meaning, and how they can be made actionable to improve instruction and learning for all students. It will connect information from multiple assessments administered for different purposes and uses and at different points in time throughout year-long instruction to create a profile of students' learning and growth. This will support state and local educators' capacity to interpret assessment results and use data to inform instructional design and classroom practices

The CASCIA work builds from and extends the accomplishments of another grant funded by the US Department of Education in which Nebraska was the lead state, Stackable, Instructionally-embedded, Portable Science Assessments (SIPS). This work developed Stackable, Instructionally-embedded, Portable Science assessment tasks (SIPS) and provided resources for educators that support science learning throughout the school year. SIPS developed processes, tools and resources aimed at building state and local educators' capacity to offer high quality science instruction, evaluate

students' learning, and make appropriate and effective instructional decisions. The SIPS team developed resources that benefit education agencies both within and outside of the SIPS project. These resources, including curriculum maps, assessment tasks, summary briefs, and annual and culminating reports can be found [here](#).

Rhonda True, CGSA Specialist

Phone: (531) 207-4180

Email: rhonda.true@nebraska.gov



VII. Standards, Assessment, and Accountability: Including All Students in Assessment and Accountability

Students with Disabilities and Scoring Rules

All students with disabilities are expected to participate in the NSCAS. 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 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.

Students with disabilities may be included in state assessment and accountability in the following ways:

- Students may be tested on the NSCAS tests without accommodations.
- Students may be tested on the NSCAS tests with accommodations specified in the student's IEP. Accommodations appropriate for the NSCAS 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 student on NSCAS ELA, and that accommodation is administered, the district is obligated to report this incident as a security breach to the Statewide Assessment Office the student's name and ID number before the testing window is over. The student's score will be a "zero" and the student will not be considered a participant. Violations of this procedure are considered a breach in ethics.

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 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 or changes 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 NSCAS-AA. The NSCAS-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, online assessment with the option to print a paper form that appropriately measures skills tied to the academic content standards as required by ESSA. Further discussion of the NSCAS-AA is found later in this section.

If the IEP team determines that a student is to take an alternate assessment, the NSCAS-AA, a statement of why the student cannot participate in the regular NSCAS

and the rationale for selecting the NSCAS alternate shall be included in the IEP (Rule 51 007.07A7a and 007.07A7b).

Guidelines for Participation in the NSCAS Alternate Assessment

The [Alternate Assessment Participation Criteria](#) for determining which students are to take the alternate assessment must be followed by the IEP team.

The U.S. Department of Education and the State of Nebraska have defined “most significantly cognitively disabled students” and criteria for identifying students who fit this designation. You will find both definition and criteria [here](#). 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 aligned to Nebraska standards with extended indicators.
- Possesses significant limitations, both in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills.
- Requires extensive, pervasive, and frequent support in order to acquire, maintain, and demonstrate performance of knowledge and skills.
- Demonstrates cognitive ability and adaptive behavior that prevents completion of general academic curriculum, even with extensive modifications and accommodations.
- May have an accompanying communication, motor, sensory, or other disability.

Nebraska Rule 51: Title 92, Nebraska Administrative Code, Chapter 51

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 individual 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 is appropriate for the child

1% Rule on the NSCAS Alternate Assessment (AA)

All districts must provide documentation of the predicted number and percentage of students that will be taking the NSCAS-AA in the spring. Districts that anticipate exceeding the 1% threshold must provide justification as to why they will exceed the threshold and assurances that they are following NDE Guidance when determining if a student qualifies for the NSCAS-AA.

The USDOE'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 assessment have that opportunity.

Further information on the 1% rule for alternate assessments may be found at [School Age Statewide Assessment Tests for Students with Disabilities](#) or by contacting:

Sharon Heater, Education Specialist, Office of Special Education

Phone: 531-289-8068

Email: sharon.heater@nebraska.gov.



The Alternate Assessments: Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System Alternate for English Language Arts, Mathematics and Science (NSCAS-AA ELA, NSCAS-AA Math, and NSCAS-AA Science) and the Alternate ELPA21.

In order to be consistent with the NSCAS ELA, NSCAS Math, and NSCAS Science tests for general education students and to meet federal requirements, alternate assessments for English language arts, mathematics, and science (NSCAS-AA ELA, NSCAS-AA Math, NSCAS-AA Science) were developed in conjunction with the tests for general education. These tests have been designed for students with most significant cognitive disability or multi-handicapping conditions, generally less than 1% of the overall student population.

The NSCAS-AA ELA, NSCAS-AA Math, and NSCAS-AA Science are tests of appropriate tasks, summative in nature, that provide a single snapshot of a student's performance. The tests have gone through the same processes as the NSCAS tests for general education. Students with the most significant 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 NSCAS-AA Tables of Specification, Performance Level Descriptors, and Extended Indicators on the NDE [NSCAS Alternate Summative Assessment](#) webpage.

Like the NSCAS Growth, the alternate assessment will be administered between April 1, 2024 through May 10, 2024, which is a six-week administration window. Various trainings on the alternate assessment will be provided in the 2023-2024 school year.

NSCAS-AA Testing

- The NSCAS-AA ELA, the NSCAS-AA Math, and the NSCAS-AA Science are required in 2024 for all students whose IEPs specify the need for an alternate assessment. (Note: Only grades 5, 8 and high school, third-year cohort test in science).
- All three tests (English language arts, mathematics, and science) are found on the DRC INSIGHT website and are downloadable. No materials are sent to the district nor returned to DRC. All materials must be securely destroyed following the test window.
- Students can take the NSCAS-AA paper/pencil or online and the decision should be made based on what is best for each individual student.
- Students who take the alternate must take it in all subjects. They will not be allowed to only take it in one subject.
- In 2024, the alternate assessment results will be entered by the educator into the online software.
- All security procedures outlined in this Update also apply to the NSCAS-AA testing process.
- All students who have been flagged in ADVISER as students eligible for the alternate assessment will be added to the DRC INSIGHT management software and will require answers to be added to the system or a reason why not testing.
- Administration manuals are available from the secure DRC INSIGHT website.

For questions about these processes, you may contact:

DRC Help Desk

Email: necustomerservice@datarecognitioncorp.com

Phone: 866-342-6280

Alternate ELPA21(Alt ELPA)

The Alt ELPA is a new English Language proficiency (ELP) assessment for English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The Alt ELPA will be fully operational beginning Spring 2024. English Learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities who participate in the Alt ELPA will take that assessment in lieu of the general ELPA21.

Students Learning the English Language

Who are English Learners?

According to ESEA, 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 challenging state academic standards, (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 EL students should have a plan for identifying and serving these students that meets the requirements of the Office for Civil Rights, Title III, and Rule 15. The requirements can be found in the [Nebraska EL Program Guide, Guide for Administrators](#), updated 2022.

NEW: Enrollment of foreign exchange students is consistent with Rule 15 Identification guidelines. A home language survey is given and if a language other than English is indicated, the student must be screened for English Learner identification.

Including EL Students in State Assessment and Accountability: Accessibility and Supports for ELs

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

- ESEA requirements allow supports for students in the system; districts should use the [Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System \(NSCAS\) Accessibility Manual](#).
- Approved accessibility supports are not test modifications. Districts must be aware of the difference between accessibility supports (allowed), and modifications (not allowed).
 - For students learning the English language, linguistic supports are changes to testing procedures, testing materials, or the testing situation that enable accessibility to the assessment and thereby allow the student meaningful participation in the assessment. Effective supports for ELs address the unique linguistic and socio-cultural needs of the student. Some supports for ELs may be determined appropriate without prior use during instruction throughout the year. For a detailed discussion of supports for ELs on state content assessments, please refer to the [Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System \(NSCAS\) Accessibility Manual](#).
 - 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 allowed on state content assessments.**

Translated Assessments

Under ESSA, English learners may be provided linguistic supports on state assessments to ensure students are assessed in a valid and reliable manner, including to the extent practicable assessments in the language and form are most likely to yield accurate

data on what the students know and can do in academic content areas. English Learners may receive translated content tests, with the exception of the ELA test, for up to three years. An additional two years may be allowed if the LEA determines, in consultation with NDE, on a case-by-case basis a native language test is appropriate for a student. ELs are allowed accommodations on the ACT according to ACT guidance.

Spanish Translations

Note: Only the official NDE Spanish translations are allowed on state content testing.

NSCAS ELA

The translations of directions are available and through the Text-to-Speech accommodation. Reading passages and items remain in English, and should not be translated. Translating reading passages and items will invalidate the student score.

Students have the option of using the audio and/or written translation of the directions in place of or alongside the English NSCAS ELA paper/pencil test. Student responses are entered on a student answer document if the student takes a paper/pencil assessment. The proctor is responsible for entering the student responses into the student testing platform.

NSCAS Mathematics

The NSCAS mathematics tests in their entirety will be available in Spanish in both paper/pencil and online forms. If a student requires side-by-side tests, the NSCAS paper/pencil tests may be used. Student responses are entered on a student answer document- if the student takes a paper/pencil assessment. The proctor is responsible for entering the student responses into the student testing platform.

NSCAS Science

NSCAS Science is available in Spanish through the Text-to-Speech accommodation.

Translations into Languages other than Spanish

Translations for NSCAS in languages other than Spanish will need to be provided by local districts. Reading passages and test items on the NSCAS ELA cannot be translated. Districts must follow NDE security protocols when translating assessments into languages other than Spanish. All test forms must be secure.

Guidance for Recently Arrived English Learners

Under NCLB, students who had attended a U.S. school for less than 12 months could be granted a waiver from the NSCAS ELA assessment. **Under ESSA, this exemption is no longer allowed.** All ELs must participate in all state-administered content assessments. Scores in the first year of assessing the student, however, will not be included in state accountability. In the second year, students must test, but only growth will be calculated. In the third year, students will participate and scores will be included in state accountability systems.

Under ESSA, Recently Arrived English Learners (RAELs) are ELs who have been enrolled in a school 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 state must assess and report the performance of RAEL on the ELA and mathematics assessments in each year of the student's enrollment.

For the purpose of accountability:

- **In Year 1:** For the first year of enrollment, exclude the results on the English language arts assessment in the state accountability system.
- **In Year 2:** Assess the student but include only a growth measure in the state accountability system.
- **In Year 3:** Assess the student and include proficiency (achievement scores) in the state accountability system.

§1111(b)(3)(A)(ii)

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 supports 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 supports and/or accommodations.

Former English Learners

Former English learners or "redesignated English fluent" students are allowed some linguistic support on content tests, if appropriate. These supports may include additional time to process the language demands and the use of word-to-word bilingual dictionaries or word lists. No translated assessments or paper/pencil forms are allowed. Former ELs, for the purposes of accountability, remain in the EL subgroup for the duration of the four-year federal monitoring period. §1111(b)(3)(B)

Language Acquisition Testing: ELPA21

As required by ESEA and Rule 15, districts must annually assess the English language proficiency of all K-12 English learners. The tests provided by the Nebraska Department

of Education to test English language proficiency are the English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21) and the Alt ELPA, for English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

All students designated as English learners in ADVISER must participate in ELPA21 testing. ELs need to be identified in ADVISER by January 8, 2024 in order to have a record in the TIDE system for testing; ELs who are identified after this date will have to be manually entered at the district level. The ELPA21 and Alt ELPA 2023-2024 testing window is February 5 - March 15, 2024.

It is important to note that the purpose of this test is to determine English language proficiency, not proficiency in ELA standards. Former ELs (Redesignated English Fluent) do not participate in ELPA21 testing.

English learners eligible for alternate assessments for NSCAS (NSCAS-AA ELA, NSCAS-AA M, NSCAS-AA S) are still required to participate annually in either the ELPA21 or the Alt ELPA with appropriate accommodations as allowed in the [ELPA21 Accessibility and Accommodations Manual](#). DACs concerned about a student with a disability that would prohibit access to a domain subtest of ELPA21 (for example, in the case of a deaf student being unable to hear the Listening subtest) should contact the NDE Title III office for further guidance.

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

Anne Hubbell, English Learner Specialist

Email: anne.hubbell@nebraska.gov

Phone: 402-405-7017



VIII. Standards, Assessment, and Accountability: Assessment Data, Cleanup, and Reporting

Data Quality

Data quality is a partnership and everyone involved with data has some responsibility to assure data quality. NDE encourages every district to establish processes for assuring quality data is in the SIS system and shared with NDE. Communication plays a large role in data quality and Statewide Assessment regularly reviews processes and solicits feedback in order to continual improvement processes. It is important that stakeholders meet established deadlines. Additionally, waiting until right before deadlines can also cause problems when there is not enough time to remedy identified issues. **Reviewing student data in ADVISER periodically will help keep the data updated and lessen data cleanup following the end of testing.**

NSCAS Growth, General and Alternate Achievement Levels

Students taking NSCAS General and Alternate ELA and Mathematics tests are placed into one of the following three achievement levels:

- Developing
- On Track
- Advanced

Achievement Level Descriptors: An achievement level is a range of scores that defines a specific level of student achievement, as articulated in the achievement level descriptors (ALDs). The ALDs are a plain-language description of what students must know in order to fall into each of the achievement levels established through cut scores.

The ALDs thereby firmly root the cut scores and achievement levels in the content that students are supposed to learn. In qualitative and quantitative terms, the ALDs and cut scores together define the difference between a student who is performing at, below, or above grade-level expectations.

[NSCAS Growth ELA Achievement Level Descriptors](#)

[NSCAS Growth Mathematics Achievement Level Descriptors](#)

[NSCAS Alternate ELA & Mathematics Achievement Level Descriptors](#)

[NSCAS Science Achievement Level Descriptors](#)

NSCAS Growth, General & Alternate ELA and Mathematics Achievement Level

Definitions:

- **Developing:** Developing learners do not yet demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level, as specified in the assessed Nebraska College and Career Ready Standards. These results provide evidence that the student may need additional support for academic success at the next grade level.
- **On Track:** On Track learners demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level, as specified in the assessed Nebraska College and Career Ready Standards. These results provide evidence that the student will likely be ready for academic success at the next grade level.
- **Advanced:** Advanced learners demonstrate high levels proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level, as specified in the assessed Nebraska College and Career Ready Standards. These results provide evidence that the student will likely be ready for academic success at the next grade level.

The Advanced Data Views Improving Student Educational Response (ADVISER)

The Advanced Data Views Improving Student Educational Response, ADVISER, is the record keeping system of NDE effective July 1, 2018. Each district's Student Information Systems (SIS) should be configured to regularly communicate data to ADVISER.

Information about the ADVISER is available from the NDE Information Systems & Services on the [ADVISER Resources](#) webpage. Regular updates are communicated to districts in the [NDE Bulletin](#). On this page, in the upper right is an envelope icon where one can subscribe to the bulletin. More in-depth information on the Bulletin process can be found here: [NDE Bulletin Details](#). NDE encourages all district personnel that have any data responsibility to sign up to receive the NDE Bulletin.

The Statewide Assessment Office accesses student data from ADVISER to provide student rosters to the four Nebraska assessment vendors. Districts need to make sure their SIS are fully updated by January 8, 2024 to make sure the most current information is shared with assessment vendors before spring testing.

Additional ADVISER resources include a regularly updated [ADVISER Calendar](#) and [District ADVISER Monthly Meetings](#).

ADVISER Questions should be directed to the NDE Helpdesk.

How To Contact The NDE Helpdesk

1. Click on the "Helpdesk Request" in the upper right hand corner of the NDE Portal Home Page. This will open your email to send your question to the NDE Helpdesk at ADVISERHelp@nebraskacloud.org.
 - a. Include your full name, organization and a detailed description of your question.
 - b. This email will automatically create a ticket.
2. Send an email directly to: ADVISERHelp@nebraskacloud.org

- a. Include your full name, organization, a detailed description of your question, alternate contact and phone number.
 - b. This email will automatically create a ticket.
3. Call Toll Free: 888-285-0556 – **This is a Voicemail line ONLY.**
 - a. Leave your full name, organization, call back number and a brief description of your question.

The Helpdesk Request and email to ADVISERHelp@nebraskacloud.org are the fastest ways to get your questions to the Helpdesk. All questions are answered in the order in which they are received.

Who Reports What? And the Systems Involved Student Reporting

Oftentimes students may be contracted or assigned to external programs or institutions. The rules governing who is responsible for reporting information about students contracted, assigned, and/or shared with other schools and programs are complicated. NDE has developed guidelines and compiled the complex scenarios into two documents, **Who Reports What?** and the **Systems Involved Student Reporting** on the [ADVISER Resources](#) page. This is the most current and authoritative source for determining which district, school, and/or program has a legal responsibility to report information to NDE. Questions about the Who Reports What and Systems Involved Student Reporting guidelines should be directed to the NDE Helpdesk.

National Assessment Instruments: Reporting Individual Scores

NSCAS Growth information for grades 3-8 will be submitted directly to NDE by NWEA. There are MOUs in place with every district allowing NWEA to send this information directly to NDE.

To determine which grade levels districts want used to meet reporting requirements, districts enter this information in the Consolidated Data Collection (CDC) via the NDE Portal. Once in the CDC, districts choose the Nebraska Education Profile (NEP). Then, under the School Information, click on the Edit button next to each school. If the grade levels for the schools are in the range of Grade 02 to Grade 08, the following text appears below the School Description box:

2) NAI Grades to Report Rule 10, section 005.01B, requires schools to report a National Assessment Instrument in at least one grade in grades 2-5 and in grades 6-8 (as appropriate). Indicate below which grade level(s) the school would like to report on the Nebraska Education Profile for each of these grade ranges:

Below this are checkboxes for grades ranges 2-5 and grade ranges 6-8 (as appropriate for the school) where the school can select one or more grades to report when meeting Rule 10 requirements. Clicking on Save Data or Save Data and Close will save this information. Districts do need to Submit and Approve the entire collection, once all information for the collection has been completed.

This collection opens on approximately May 1 of the school year and closes on June 30.

For assistance contact:

The Nebraska Department of Education help desk

Phone: 402-471-3151 or 888-285-0556

Email: nde.helpdesk@nebraska.gov

Processes Timeline

Pre-Test Processes

Prior to testing it is important that districts do their best to assure information in their SIS and SRS is accurate. These systems are directly connected to ADVISER Validation which

is how NDE pulls data for the testing rosters for all four assessment vendors. Districts need to make sure their SIS and SRS are fully updated by January 8, 2024 to ensure the most current information is shared with assessment vendors before spring testing.

Validating NSCAS Data in ADVISER Validation

Prior to January 8, 2024 districts are able to validate their data using ADVISER Validation in the [NDE Portal](#), under Student Verification Report/Assessment titled "ACT/Alternate Rosters" and "NSCAS Growth Roster".

Specific instructions are sent to DACs annually (usually in December) from the Statewide Assessment Office on how districts are able to access and validate the data using ADVISER Validation. NSCAS Growth, NSCAS Alternate, and ACT data can all be confirmed in this manner.

Verifying Demographic Indicators for Tested Students

Districts are able to check demographic information about their students throughout the year. NDE pulls demographic information from ADVISER Validation after the June 30 snapshot. Public reports and accountability calculations are based on the end of year demographic information. Districts should verify the demographic information of tested students by mid-June.

During Test Processes

Districts have an important role to play during testing by managing rosters and checking/updating information in each of the NSCAS test management systems.

ACT

ACT is managed in the [Pearson Access Next](#) (PA Next) system. NDE will provide the initial rosters to ACT based on information in ADVISER Validation as of January 8, 2024.

When students enroll or unenroll from a school the school test coordinator is responsible

for updating the roster in PA Next. Directions for updating and managing information in PA Next are available on [ACT Nebraska Webpage](#).

Districts are also responsible for identifying the reasons students did not test with state use questions in the PA Next system.

NSCAS Growth and General Science

NSCAS Growth and General Science are imported and managed by the district in the [Comprehensive Assessment Platform](#) (CAP or MAP Growth). When students enroll or unenroll from a school the school test coordinator is responsible for updating the roster in CAP. Districts can add students manually to CAP or wait for the weekly updates.

Directions for updating and managing information in CAP are available on [NDE Assessment Portal](#).

Districts are also responsible for identifying the reasons students did not test and accommodations used for any student in the CAP system. This information is due in the system by May 15, 2024.

NSCAS Alternate

NSCAS Alternate is managed in the [DRC INSIGHT](#) portal. NDE will provide the initial rosters to DRC based on information in ADVISER Validation as of January 8, 2024. When students enroll or unenroll from a school the school test coordinator is responsible for updating the roster in DRC INSIGHT. Directions for updating and managing information in DRC INSIGHT are available in the system once you login.

Districts are also responsible for identifying the reasons students did not test and accommodations used for any student in the [DRC INSIGHT](#) portal. This information is due in the system by May 10, 2024.

Post-Test Processes

Embargoed Data

The NSCAS Growth, Alternate, and ACT all provide access to a certain level of preliminary data during and/or after testing. Preliminary data is embargoed until the data is released publicly by NDE. 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.

Guidelines 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/guardian. Sharing this data is risky until the data is finalized.
- C. Individual ACT scores are not Embargoed as the results have been sent directly to students and parents. However, classroom, school, district—or any other form of aggregate scores cannot be shared outside the school or with students.
- D. Aggregate scores can be shared with school/district staff, but do remind recipients that scores are embargoed.
- E. Board meetings are subject to Open Meeting Law and are public events. Embargoed data should not be shared at board meetings until the data has been released publicly by NDE
- F. No public recognition of individuals can be given if scores are revealed.

Preliminary Data

Following testing, it is possible but not likely that preliminary data is updated after quality assurance processes are used to make sure the automated process of scoring and data intensive process of equating are conducted. For this reason, there is some risk in sharing any preliminary data with district/school staff. When sharing information it is important to tell the audience that the data could be updated and it is embargoed. Despite the fact that preliminary data, in rare instances, can be changed, the preliminary data serves two primary purposes. First, it can provide a preliminary look at

how students performed, and, in concert with other data, the results can be used to inform decision making. Secondly, preliminary data provides information that fuels the data clean up processes for each of the NSCAS assessments. Data clean up processes begin before the end of the school year and often extend throughout the summer and occasionally into the next school year. The Statewide Assessment Office will provide a timeline of clean up activities before the end of the school year. It is important that the DAC regularly check email throughout the summer to ensure that data clean up deadlines are still met. Data clean up processes can be assigned to other personnel if the DAC is not on a year long contract. DACs should discuss the clean up timeline with district leaders before leaving for the summer or ending employment with a district. For most districts, clean up activities do not involve long hours of work, but are important to make sure public data and accountability calculations are correct. Ensuring data is correct prior to and during testing will make final clean up processes even more efficient. Clean up timelines will be distributed to DACs as soon as they are finalized so plans can be established.

Post-Test Verification Windows

Post-test verification windows will be established for each assessment and communicated in the post-test verification timeline. The process for each assessment window is unique and directions will be sent to DACs at the beginning of each verification window. The directions will detail the process as well as the specific data elements that should be verified or updated. Occasionally, the verification process will identify data errors that must be fixed in ADVISER Validation before the assessment data can be updated. For this reason, it is highly recommended that districts engage in data verification processes as early in the clean up window as possible. Updating incorrect information in ADVISER Validation is not instantaneous and often involves research or verification before it can be changed.

It is important that each district engage in each verification window. Often there are multiple opportunities for data to be corrected or updated, but the earlier the error or issue is discovered the easier it is to be corrected. Once the end of the year data snapshot occurs on June 30, it is difficult or impossible to have data corrected.

Final Data

Final data and reports will be available as soon as possible after the conclusion of testing. Often this is a lengthy process but processes are necessary to ensure that all final data is of the highest quality which includes a chance for districts to review the preliminary data.

Final data is available through each test's specific portal:

- ACT: ACT Success
- NSCAS Growth: Acacia Manage
- NSCAS Alternate: [DRC INSIGHT Portal](#)

ACT, Growth, and Alternate reports are only available for a limited time in each of the management systems. Once data is finalized each district should have a process for downloading all reports, a secure place for the reports to be stored digitally, and a process for sharing the results with others in the district or with a successor. Establishing processes for final data is an important duty that helps ensure that the data can be used for district/school processes such as Continuous School Improvement.

Reports Interpretive Resources

The reports for each NSCAS assessment also have supplemental resources. The resources are intended to help users make sense and use the reports provided for each assessment. Resources are updated annually to reflect updates and improvements in the reports. Resources may include short video, sample reports, and/or text based documents.

Report resources are available through each test's specific portal:

ACT: [Nebraska ACT Webpage](#)

NSCAS Growth: [NDE NSCAS Portal](#)

NSCAS Alternate: [DRC INSIGHT Portal](#)

Individual Score Reports

ACT provides two copies to the high school and one is sent to the student's home address provided in the test. One of the copies is for the student's cumulative file.

NDE does not specify the method of distribution or give districts a specific deadline. Districts often will attempt to distribute the ISRs at parent/teacher conferences or similar events in order to save money on postage. Districts are welcome to use any method of distribution as long as they make every effort to ensure the parents/guardians actually receive the ISR and that the distribution is complete relatively soon after the embargo is lifted.

Public Reporting

Once data is finalized the Statewide Assessment Office provides the NDE Information Systems & Services (ISS) team access to the data for preparation to be publicly reported on the [Nebraska Education Profile](#) (NEP). The ISS team in consultation with other NDE offices will create and distribute a reporting timeline to districts.

Data is prepared for public reporting by using established processes and published business rules. The business rules are reviewed and updated annually to reflect best practice and any statutory obligations.

Typically, the reporting timeline includes a preview for districts where district leaders are provided secure access to all data. This preview is not an additional opportunity to find errors and fix the underlying data. Rather it is an opportunity for districts to ensure the processes for preparing data and any calculations using the data were done correctly.

Additionally, this preview provides district leaders a chance to prepare communication plans for when the data is publicly released. The data is also used to calculate [AQuESTT](#) Accountability Classifications. Details about AQuESTT can be accessed in the next section of this document or online.



IX. Accountability

Nebraska Accountability System - AQuESTT

AQuESTT, Accountability for a Quality Education System Today and Tomorrow, is a next generation accountability system for Nebraska public schools and districts. AQuESTT is designed to integrate statutory requirements for accountability (79-760.06-.07 R.S.S), accreditation (Rule 10), the effective use of data, and support for professional learning for educators into a system focused on continuous school improvement. AQuESTT is fully aligned with the requirements of federal education law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which promotes and supports efforts to have a single system of accountability of Nebraska schools.

AQuESTT classifications and designations are one way to signal specific areas for school improvement. They also tell the NDE and ESUs how best to target specific supports. To comply with state statute, the NDE will classify all public schools and districts this fall using 2022-2023 school year data.

Per the ESSA, the NDE is required to meaningfully differentiate schools based on overall school performance and student group performance. This fall, the NDE will identify Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI), Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI), and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) using 2022-2023 school year data.

The NDE continues to study the long-term effects of the pandemic on student outcomes. As such, we have made some attempts in our accountability processes to account for inconsistencies in data from the past three years. The NDE will continue to seek stakeholder input in designing a path for the classification and designation processes beyond 2023.

Contact Us:

Derek Ippensen, Assistant Administrator & Director of Accountability

Email: derek.ippensen@nebraska.gov Phone: 402-471-2295

Shirley Vargas, Administrator, Coordinated School and District Support

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X. Standards, Assessment, and Accountability: Early Childhood Assessment

Results Matter in Nebraska is a child and family outcomes and program improvement system designed and implemented to improve programs and supports for all young children, birth to age five, served through school districts, Educational Service Units (ESUs), the Early Development Network, and community partners. The system grew out of earlier efforts to monitor and evaluate grant funded early childhood education programs. Its broader application came as a result of federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requirements for reporting outcomes for children with disabilities and requirements for monitoring programs funded through a range of state funds. The system employs both child outcomes assessment and program quality assessment to accomplish the following:

- Improve experiences, learning, development, and lives of young children (birth to age five) and their families
- Inform program practices
- Demonstrate program effectiveness
- Guide the development of local and state policies and procedures
- Provide data to demonstrate results

The system is administered by the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) Offices of Early Childhood and Special Education. Partners include the Department of Health and Human Services and the Munroe-Meyer Institute, University of Nebraska Medical Center.

A state Results Matter Child Task Force composed of state and local stakeholder representatives serves in an advisory role to the system.

The child and program assessment tools implemented for *Results Matter* are congruent with:

- [Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines](#) (Birth to Three and Three to Five)
- [NDE Rule 11](#), Regulations for the Approval of Prekindergarten Programs Established by School Boards or Educational Service Units and for the Issuance of Early Childhood Grants.
- [NDE Rule 51](#), Regulations and Standards for Special Education Programs. Rule 51 applies to all infants and toddlers with disabilities (birth-21).
- [NDE Rule 52](#), Regulations and Standards for the Provision of Early Intervention Services. Rule 52 applies to all infants and toddlers with disabilities (birth to age 3).
- The federal [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#) Part B and Part C.

Measuring Child Outcomes

Results Matter (in Nebraska) calls for measuring child outcomes through an assessment system that:

- Is based on ongoing observation of children engaged in real activities, with people they know, in natural settings
- Reflects evidence-based practices
- Engages families and primary care providers as active participants
- Integrates information gathered across settings
- Is individualized to address each child's unique ways of learning
- Informs decisions about day-to-day learning opportunities for children
- Reflects the belief that development and learning are rooted in culture supported by the family

NDE requires that all school districts use a single, statewide child assessment system, Teaching Strategies GOLD. This comprehensive system measures individual child progress across six domains of development and learning for all children, birth to age 5 who are served by school districts and ESUs. Districts enter ongoing observational data in the GOLD online system to document progress towards meeting research-based widely-held expectations for young children, birth to age five. District outcomes are compared to state targets related to three outcomes most highly associated with success in school and in life:

- Positive social-emotional skills, including social relationships
- Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, including early language, communication and early literacy; and
- Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.

Annual reporting of *Results Matter* child progress data is required by OSEP, the State Board of Education and the Nebraska legislature. The use of a single online assessment system provides the state with unprecedented opportunities to compile needed data, not only for the required state and local reporting functions, but most importantly for ongoing curriculum planning, differentiated instruction, program improvement, and improved child outcomes.

Program Quality Assessment

Results Matter also includes evaluation of program quality to assure that early childhood classrooms achieve and maintain overall high quality, employ qualified staff, and operate in compliance with federal and state guidelines. Each district and ESU is required to participate in the Results matter program outcomes system for all children birth to kindergarten entrance age using one or more of the following environment rating scales:

- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale - Third Edition (ECERS-3)

- Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale - Revised (ITERS-R)
- Classroom Assessment Scoring System - PreK (CLASS PreK)
- Classroom Assessment Scoring System - Toddler (CLASS Toddler)
- Classroom Assessment Scoring System - Infant (CLASS Infant)
- Home visiting Rating Scales (HoVRS) (for Sixpence programs only)

All school districts and Educational Service Units are required to submit the annual NDE Early Childhood Program Report to be in compliance with the Rule 11 approval processes. In addition, programs are highly encouraged to participate in the NAEYC Accreditation process or Step Up to Quality. NDE provides technical assistance for each process and financial assistance for NAEYC Accreditation.

Professional Development

School districts and programs receive continuous support to ensure that their participation in *Results Matter* provides the highest quality data and knowledge about how to use data to improve program quality and child and family outcomes. The state's [Early Childhood Training Center](#) and statewide network of early childhood professional development (Early Learning Connection), in collaboration with the organizations which provide the program and child assessment tools, regularly offer training in their use. NDE maintains a cadre of professionals who have achieved reliability in the use of the Environment Rating Scales and the CLASS assessment tools.

Results Matter Fidelity

Results matter Fidelity is designed to assure the reliability and validity of GOLD assessment data.

GOLD Inter-Rater Reliability (IRR) Certification

This certification is required to be completed online by each teacher/practitioner responsible for scoring child observations and documentation for children, birth to age five. Individual Inter-Rater Reliability (IRR) must be completed online by teachers who have completed one year of use in GOLD. IRR certification must be renewed every three years. In Nebraska, most teachers/practitioners work with children, birth to kindergarten entrance age. For certification, these individuals must achieve and maintain inter-rater reliability for the following two groups of children:

- Birth through age 2, including children with disabilities
- Preschool (3-5), including children with disabilities

If only one age group of children is served by a teacher, then only that certification level is required.

For information, resources, and updates related to *Results Matter*, see:

[Results Matter Technical Assistance Document \(July 2019\)](#)

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

Melody Hobson, Administrator, Early Childhood

Phone: 402-471-0263

Email: melody.hobson@nebraska.gov

Teresa Berube, Coordinator, Early Childhood Special Education

Email: teresa.berube@nebraska.gov



XI. Standards, Assessment, and Accountability: The Continuous Improvement Process



The Continuous Improvement is set forth in NAC 92 Chapter 10, Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Schools. "School Improvement" is not limited to student achievement data and an external visitation every five years. Continuous Improvement involves a multi-faceted approach to ongoing actions, systematic and systemic procedures, and strives to involve all internal and external stakeholders.

Standards and assessment are essential to Continuous Improvement. Student performance data generated from assessments that are aligned with content standards informs the Continuous Improvement process. Specifically, deep data analysis should assist committees with formulating priorities and target goals. The action plan is developed based upon areas of need and establishes actionable steps to make measurable progress. Periodic reviews of the action plan allow the school to be responsive and impact 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 the NDE are focused on these topics.

CIP Support Days

Professional development is provided by the NDE Accreditation Section. During the 2022-2023 school year, workdays were hosted throughout the state at various Educational Service Units. The day is spent providing guidance and materials to attending schools surrounding Continuous Improvement best practices. Resources shared highlight the importance of data based decision making and utilizing multiple data points. Additional partners providing support may include NDE Special Education, NeMTSS, and Cognia.

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

Todd Wolverton, Acting Accreditation Section Director

Email: todd.wolverton@nebraska.gov

Phone: 402-219-2542