

**State Accreditation Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 18, 2024**

The Nebraska State Accreditation Committee met via Zoom on January 18, 2024. Chair Dale Hafer, called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m., declared a quorum present, and established the legality of the meeting. Members present were the following: LeeAnn Amm, Jackie Anderson, Wayne Brown, Susan Christopherson, Susanne Cramer, Brad Dirksen, Rebecca Dunn, Courtney Feeney, Josie Floyd, Dale Fornander, Jeff Ganz, Dale Hafer, Stacie Hardy, Pat Hoehner, Vickie Kauffold, Dan Koenig, Marco Pedroza, Teresa Perkins, Dan Schnoes, and Tiffanie Welte.

Members absent: Mitch Kubicek, Heather Phillips, and Sarah Salem.

NDE staff members scheduled to present: Dr. Decua Jean-Baptiste, Todd Wolverton, Dr. Sandra Suiter, and Guest Speaker Dr. Brian Maher, Commissioner.

Meeting Opening

Following introductions, Committee Members were asked to approve the agenda for the January 18, 2024, meeting. Pat Hoehner moved to accept the agenda and Josie Floyd seconded the motion.

Voting yes: LeeAnn Amm, Jackie Anderson, Wayne Brown, Susan Christopherson, Susanne Cramer, Brad Dirksen, Rebecca Dunn, Courtney Feeney, Josie Floyd, Dale Fornander, Jeff Ganz, Dale Hafer, Stacie Hardy, Pat Hoehner, Vickie Kauffold, Dan Koenig, Marco Pedroza, Teresa Perkins, Dan Schnoes, and Tiffanie Welte.

Voting no: none.

Approval carried 20-0 with 3 absent.

Committee Members were asked to approve the minutes from the May 16, 2023, meeting. Dan Schnoes moved to accept the minutes and Tiffanie Welte seconded the motion.

Voting yes: LeeAnn Amm, Jackie Anderson, Wayne Brown, Susan Christopherson, Susanne Cramer, Brad Dirksen, Rebecca Dunn, Courtney Feeney, Josie Floyd, Dale Fornander, Jeff Ganz, Dale Hafer, Stacie Hardy, Pat Hoehner, Vickie Kauffold, Dan Koenig, Marco Pedroza, Teresa Perkins, Dan Schnoes, and Tiffanie Welte.

Voting no: none.

Approval carried 20-0 with 3 absent.

Overview/Purpose of the State Accreditation Committee – Dr. Decua Jean-Baptiste

Dr. Jean-Baptiste reviewed the primary purpose of the SAC Committee, State Statute requirements, and the responsibilities of the State Accreditation Committee.

Instructional Units Presentation - Dr. Dan Schnoes, Superintendent Dale Hafer, and Dr. Sandra Suiter

At the May 16, 2023, SAC Meeting, Dr. Schnoes suggested the creation of a SAC Subcommittee to further explore more meaningful changes to existing rules rather than a complete restructure. Sub Committee Members included: Dale Hafer, Todd Wolverton, Sandra Suiter, Tiffanie Welte, Stacie Hardy, Vickie Kauffold, Dan Koenig, Mitch Kubicek, Josie Floyd, Jeff Ganz, Brad Dirksen, Decua Jean-Baptiste, and Chair, Dan Schnoes.

The Sub Committee looked at the current number of districts not meeting Rule 10 Instructional Units, the current interpretation of Instructional Units, the definition within Rule 10 and what State Statutes says, to help determine why schools were having trouble meeting instructional unit requirements. Dr. Suiter shared Instructional Units Data for 2022-23 to help identify the issues that districts are experiencing.

Rule 10 does not indicate how to count classes offered vs. classes taken. After review of state statute, the legal review by the NDE came back without any legal documentation for the current interpretation for Rule 10's Instructional Units.

Group discussion followed with members asked to review the definition of an "offered" course vs. a "taken" course in addition to how districts will demonstrate and provide documentation that the class offerings were available to students during the current school year.

If approved by the NDE Leadership, this interpretation can be used and implemented for the current school year.

Compliance Visits – Dr. Sandra Suiter

Dr. Suiter gave an overview of the compliance visit process which is based on Statute and contained in Rule 10.

Compliance visits give NDE Accreditation Staff the opportunity to:

- Verify compliance with Rule 10, 14, and 18 to identify violations, provide recommendations or options for corrections, and ensure equity within our Nebraska schools
- Provide observations that may be useful to the administration and local board in providing quality education
- Gain understanding of the current status of Nebraska schools to provide assistance and effectively administer accreditation regulations and to recommend any needed changes

The Accreditation Section of the office of Accreditation, Certification and Approval, identifies schools that are due for a compliance visit based on a combination of factors. Dr. Suiter reviewed

the purpose, how schools are identified, number of schools visited in 2022-23, 2023-24 and the process the Accreditation Section Staff follows.

Continuous Improvement - Todd Wolverton

Todd Wolverton gave an overview of the Continuous Improvement process contained in Rule 10.

Nebraska Schools are accredited based upon their compliance with Rule 10 Regulations. Continuous Improvement is a required component of Rule 10, and thus a part of the accreditation process. These visits are not Accreditation visits. They are Continuous Improvement visits, or Five-Year visits.

Facts and Figures for 2023-2024 were shared with the Committee including: the number of schools scheduled for a visit, the number of people serving as Team Leads, and the current percentages of schools using the Continuous Improvement Process or Cognia.

In addition, information was shared on the number of CIP Work Days scheduled at ESUs in collaboration with NeMTSS staff and Team Leader/Team Member trainings.

Guest Speaker - Dr. Brian L. Maher, Commissioner of Education

Dr. Maher thanked Committee Members for their work and willingness to serve. Beyond what is required by State Statute, this Committee provides invaluable direction and guidance to the NDE Staff.

While the State of the Educational System in Nebraska is strong, we still have work to do. Are we satisfied with where we are today? His challenge to the Committee is to push each other, colleagues, and the Nebraska Department of Education as we look forward to next steps in the year ahead.

The Commissioner also reviewed his goals set forth by the State Board of Education:

- Evaluate Statewide Assessment
- Understand the Internal Operations of the Agency
- Conduct a review of our Strategic Plan
- Evaluate existing communication strategies
- Build relationships

Following his comments, the Commissioner asked for any input or questions from the Committee.

Monitoring 487 Staff Errors – Dr. Sandra Suiter

The Accreditation Office is responsible for monitoring data to make sure schools and districts are in compliance. These reports include:

- Personnel Reports
- Assurance Statements
- Counselor/Media Collection
- Curriculum Report Non-Public Schools

- Instructional Units

Dr. Suiter focused on the process for tracking 487 Staff Errors. To maintain accreditation, schools are required by State Statute to have certified administrators and staff. Staff reports are due September 15. Accreditation Staff starts monitoring staff reports in August to allow NDE Accreditation Staff to reach out and contact districts that are showing staffing errors. Dr. Suiter also shared data on error totals and types of errors.

Failure to Meet - Dr. Decua Jean-Baptiste

Failure to Meet “FTM” is a term used to indicate requirements in code/sections 003 Mandatory Requirements for Legal Operation and all other codes/sections 004-012 in Rule 10 that have not been met.

Statutory vs. Regulatory

Statutory: “Failure to meet” code 003 (sections 003.01-003.12) demonstrates a school district/system has failed to comply with state statute (law).

Regulatory: “Failure to meet” in codes 004-012 demonstrates a school district/system has failed to comply with NDE regulations (several include state statutes) and is considered a Violation.

Dr. Jean-Baptiste reviewed the consequences of statutory failure to meet vs. regulatory failure to meet and the multiple steps in place prior to a school system going before the State Board of Education for accreditation on probation or loss of accreditation.

Past meeting dates have not provided enough time for due process in the event a school would be placed on Accreditation on Probation/Non-Accreditation and the Committee was asked to consider alternative meeting dates.

In closing Dr. Jean-Baptiste shared some upcoming agenda items for the Spring 2024 SAC Meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:00 p.m.