



A REPORT ON PARTICIPANTS IN NEBRASKA EXEMPT SCHOOLS

2020/21 School Year

Nebraska Department of Education
Exempt School Program Office
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INTRODUCTION

Background

On April 10, 1984, legislation was enacted that allowed parents to provide educational opportunities for their children outside of approved or accredited public or non-public schools (State Statute Section 79-1601). Parents, through a parent representative, were allowed to file for exempt status based on sincerely held religious beliefs. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) was given the responsibility for establishing rules and regulations governing procedures and standards for parents filing for an exemption. Rule 13 was developed in response to the statutory directive and became effective on August 22, 1984, and subsequently revised, with a current effective date of May 21, 2016.

In March 1999, a revision was made to the original State Statute. This revision gave parents or legal guardians the option to exempt their schools because the requirements for approval and accreditation required by law interfere with the decisions of the parents or legal guardians in directing their child's education. The Department then implemented a new rule (in addition to Rule 13) entitled Rule 12: "Regulations and Procedures for Exempting Schools for Which Parents Elect Not To Meet Legal Requirements for State Approval and Accreditation for Other Than Religious Reasons," with an effective date of August 4, 1999. The repeal of Rule 12 in May 2016 was the result of combining the two exempt school regulations into one rule.

On an annual basis, families that choose to be exempt from approval and accreditation requirements or "home school," file under Rule 13 indicating these requirements either 1) interfere with the decisions of the parents or legal guardians in directing their child's education; or 2) violates sincerely held religious beliefs. Rule 13 describes the procedure and forms that are to be used in the filing process for those seeking exempt status. It was from the submissions by those filing for exempt status for the 2019/20 school year that the data in this report was compiled.

Descriptors/Definitions

The following descriptors and their definitions are used in this report.

- **Exempt status** defines those parents who file to exempt themselves from approval and accreditation regulations, and receive official notification from the Commissioner of Education acknowledging their election to do so.
- **Exempt schools** is the term used in Nebraska for "home schools."
- **Exempt students** refers to the children attending exempt schools.
- A **family unit** is a single family comprised of parent(s) or legal guardian(s) and child(ren).
- A **single family attendance center** refers to a site occupied by students belonging to one family who have received exempt status.
- A **multi-family attendance center** refers to a site occupied by a group of children from two or more families who have received exempt status.

General Information

Rule 13, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), and related information and forms can be accessed from the Exempt School Program website at <https://www.education.ne.gov/fos/exempt-schools/>.

DATA REVIEWED

Beginning with the 2017/18 school year, the data presented reflects counts taken at the end of the school year (June 30, the last reporting day for the school year); which were all active exemptions as of that date. Prior to the 2017/18 school year, the data presented reflected counts collected by January of each school year.

Students, Family Units, and Attendance Centers

The total number of students at the end of the 2020/21 school year was 14,714. Appendix A contains statistics for the 2020/21 school year regarding students, family units and attendance centers. A historical summary for school years 1985/86 through 2020/21 can be found in Appendix B.

Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment is when a student takes some courses at the local public or private school while also being home schooled. Of the total 2020/21 students, 392 were marked as dual enrolled for the 2020/21 school year. This information is not verified against school enrollment records.

Students and Family Units by County

For the 2020/21 school year, exempt students resided in all ninety-three Nebraska counties. The 10 counties with the greatest number of exempt students were as follows:

1)	DOUGLAS	3,514
2)	LANCASTER	2,556
3)	SARPY	1,803
4)	BUFFALO	415
5)	CASS	369
6)	LINCOLN	288
7)	SCOTTS BLUFF	278
8)	HALL	252
9)	WASHINGTON	251
10)	PLATTE	248

Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy Counties accounted for nearly 54 percent of the State's total number of exempt children.

Appendix C lists statistical information on families and students, in single family and multi-family attendance centers, by county.

Exempt School Students Compared to Total Census

The mandatory school attendance law (Section 79-201 R.R.S.) states that a child is of mandatory attendance age if the child will reach 6 years of age prior to January 1 of the then-current school year and has not reached 18 years of age.

Prior to the July 16, 2004 change in law, compulsory school attendance law was age 7 up to age 16.

Appendix D shows the percentage of exempt school students to the total census count. For school years 1985/86 through 2003/04, the total of exempt students each year was divided by the total census count within age 7 through age 15 range to derive a percentage figure. For school year 2004/05, the total of exempt students was divided by the total census count within age 7 through age 16 range to derive a percentage figure. From school year 2005/06 and after, the total of exempt students was divided by the total census count within age 6 through age 17 range to derive a percentage figure. The percent of students attending exempt schools compared to the total census count of Nebraska children for 2020/21 was 3.96 percent.

Students by Age

Listed below are the numbers of exempt students, by age.

Age	Number of Exempt Students
5	554
6	1,589
7	1,602
8	1,499
9	1,408
10	1,343
11	1,277
12	1,169
13	1,108
14	943
15	823
16	788
17	611
Total	14,714

Discontinuing Enrollment at the Exempt School

For a child who is of mandatory attendance age, attendance at the exempt school may be discontinued in the following two cases:

- ❑ In accordance with Section 79-202(6) R.R.S., a person who has legal or actual charge or control of a child who is at least sixteen years of age but less than eighteen years of age may withdraw such a child before graduation and be exempt from the mandatory attendance requirements by filing a “Withdrawal of a Child(ren) From the Exempt School” form (Form C) (see Section 010.01 and Appendix C of Rule 13).
- ❑ If the child is below 18 and has completed the program of instruction offered by the exempt school, then each parent or legal guardian shall sign a “Report of Completion of Program” form (Form D) (See Section 010.02 and Appendix D of Rule 13).

Reason For Discontinuing Enrollment at the Exempt School During the 2020/21 School Year	Number of Students Impacted
The child has reached the age of 16, and is below age 18, and withdrew before graduation (Form C).	11
The child is below age 18 and has completed the program of instruction (Form D).	63

Appendix A

Exempt Students, Family Units, and Attendance Centers School Year 2020/21 Reporting period July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

STUDENTS	
Single Family	13,627
Multi Family	1,087
TOTAL	14,714

STUDENTS	
Other Than Religious	7,025
Religious	7,689
TOTAL	14,714

FAMILY UNITS	
Other Than Religious	4,239
Religious	3,608
TOTAL	7,847

ATTENDANCE CENTERS			
	Other Than Religious	Religious	TOTAL
Single Family	4,073	3,184	7,257
Multi Family	26	25	51
TOTAL	4,099	3,209	7,308

Appendix B

Historical Summary of Exempt Students, Family Units, Attendance Centers, and Counties of Residence School Years 1985/86 through 2020/21

School Year	Number of Students			Family Units	School Attendance Centers			Counties Containing Exempt Students
	Single Family	Multi Family	Total		Single Family	Multi Family	Total	
2020/21	13,627	1,087	14,714	7,847	7,257	51	7,308	93
2019/20	8,616	836	9,452	4,836	4,386	30	4,416	93
2018/19	8,252	778	9,030	4,651	4,224	27	4,251	93
2017/18	8,182	737	8,919	4,504	4,094	35	4,129	93
2016/17	7,931	667	8,598	4,293	3,930	37	3,967	92
2015/16	7,678	612	8,290	4,122	3,801	30	3,831	93
2014/15	7,486	609	8,095	3,970	3,664	29	3,693	92
2013/14	7,092	582	7,674	3,749	3,457	25	3,482	92
2012/13	6,608	592	7,200	3,470	3,179	28	3,207	93
2011/12	6,273	536	6,809	3,293	3,018	28	3,046	91
2010/11	5,994	546	6,540	3,144	2,863	31	2,894	90
2009/10	5,823	472	6,295	3,024	2,769	28	2,797	91
2008/09	5,659	475	6,134	2,957	2,704	31	2,735	90
2007/08	5,536	526	6,062	2,955	2,681	35	2,716	90
2006/07	5,415	541	5,956	2,921	2,635	32	2,667	89
2005/06	5,134	482	5,616	2,852	2,587	29	2,616	89
2004/05	4,499	477	4,976	2,642	2,363	33	2,396	87
2003/04	4,448	481	4,929	2,634	2,348	32	2,380	87
2002/03	4,524	562	5,086	2,690	2,366	36	2,402	90
2001/02	4,427	573	5,000	2,628	2,310	39	2,349	90
2000/01	4,071	588	4,659	2,507	2,180	35	2,215	89
1999/00	4,125	581	4,706	2,591	2,252	39	2,291	91
1998/99	4,135	675	4,810	2,666	2,274	38	2,312	90
1997/98	4,045	716	4,761	2,603	2,200	36	2,236	92
1996/97	3,682	725	4,407	2,394	1,988	33	2,021	89

NOTE:

- For school years 1985/86 through 2016/17, statistics reflect data collected by January of each school year; for school years 2017/18 and after, statistics reflect data collected at the end of the school year (June 30).
- All statistics reported before the 1999/00 school year were Rule 13 (religious) exemption only. The first year for Rule 12 exemption (other than religious) was 1999/00. Rule 12 was merged into Rule 13 effective with the 2016/17 school year.

Appendix B

Historical Summary of Exempt Students, Family Units, Attendance Centers, and Counties of Residence School Years 1985/86 through 2020/21

School Year	Number of Students			Family Units	School Attendance Centers			Counties Containing Exempt Students
	Single Family	Multi Family	Total		Single Family	Multi Family	Total	
1995/96	3,340	797	4,137	2,220	1,770	33	1,803	90
1994/95	3,061	762	3,823	2,110	1,679	38	1,717	86
1993/94	2,633	690	3,323	1,819	1,436	29	1,465	88
1992/93	2,296	635	2,931	1,623	1,264	32	1,296	87
1991/92	2,030	574	2,604	1,443	1,122	28	1,150	83
1990/91	1,559	588	2,147	1,221	876	30	906	81
1989/90	1,341	566	1,907	1,106	755	53	808	80
1988/89	1,155	553	1,708	946	618	29	647	76
1987/88	977	660	1,637	873	509	33	542	70
1986/87	830	546	1,376	753	517	26	543	66
1985/86	492	447	939	518	262	20	282	N/A

NOTE:

- For school years 1985/86 through 2016/17, statistics reflect data collected by January of each school year; for school years 2017/18 and after, statistics reflect data collected at the end of the school year (June 30).
- All statistics reported before the 1999/00 school year were Rule 13 (religious) exemption only. The first year for Rule 12 exemption (other than religious) was 1999/00. Rule 12 was merged into Rule 13 effective with the 2016/17 school year.

Appendix C

Number Of Students And Families By County
 School Year 2020/21
 Reporting period July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

County	Students					Family Units				
	Other Than Religious	Religious	Multi	Single	Total	Other Than Religious	Religious	Multi	Single	Total
ADAMS	78	101	6	173	179	49	50		6	105
ANTELOPE	29	31		60	60	16	12			28
ARTHUR	1	2		3	3	1	1			2
BANNER	2	16		18	18	2	5			7
BLAINE	4	5		9	9	4	2			6
BOONE	6	9		15	15	3	4			7
BOX BUTTE	58	52		110	110	39	29			68
BOYD	8	8		16	16	4	4			8
BROWN	17	38		55	55	11	15			26
BUFFALO	229	186	2	413	415	131	91		2	224
BURT	34	32		66	66	20	17			37
BUTLER	27	38		65	65	18	14			32
CASS	161	208	62	307	369	86	64	2	36	188
CEDAR	11	35		46	46	8	14			22
CHASE	18	10		28	28	11	5			16
CHERRY	34	29	7	56	63	19	16	4		39
CHEYENNE	60	57		117	117	36	28			64
CLAY	19	41	1	59	60	11	17		1	29
COLFAX	11	20		31	31	7	7			14
CUMING	15	6		21	21	13	4			17
CUSTER	61	71	8	124	132	31	27		5	63
DAKOTA	32	45		77	77	19	20			39
DAWES	33	39		72	72	20	18			38
DAWSON	57	59	14	102	116	42	23		8	73
DEUEL	5	10		15	15	5	7			12
DIXON	5	22		27	27	3	10			13
DODGE	110	119	1	228	229	68	54		1	123
DOUGLAS	1,666	1,848	394	3,120	3,514	987	707	31	175	1,900
DUNDY	9	2		11	11	4	1			5
FILLMORE	13	14		27	27	7	9			16
FRANKLIN	12	17		29	29	8	5			13
FRONTIER	7	13		20	20	2	5			7
FURNAS	16	21		37	37	11	10			21
GAGE	99	59	11	147	158	66	29	4	3	102
GARDEN	23	12		35	35	16	5			21
GARFIELD	1	17		18	18	1	8			9
GOSPER	5	6		11	11	3	3			6
GRANT	7	6		13	13	2	2			4

Appendix C

Number Of Students And Families By County
 School Year 2020/21
 Reporting period July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

County	Students					Family Units				
	Other Than Religious	Religious	Multi	Single	Total	Other Than Religious	Religious	Multi	Single	Total
GREELEY	2	42	27	17	44	1	8		16	25
HALL	124	128		252	252	77	52			129
HAMILTON	46	58	4	100	104	23	25	3		51
HARLAN	9	15		24	24	6	7			13
HAYES	1	4		5	5	1	1			2
HITCHCOCK	16	27		43	43	7	10			17
HOLT	35	45	5	75	80	17	19	5		41
HOOKER	6	5		11	11	2	2			4
HOWARD	9	15		24	24	7	8			15
JEFFERSON	24	9	1	32	33	20	4		1	25
JOHNSON	17	22		39	39	8	8			16
KEARNEY	22	61		83	83	11	25			36
KEITH	69	22	26	65	91	26	12	14		52
KEYA PAHA		16		16	16		6			6
KIMBALL	32	27		59	59	20	17			37
KNOX	19	29		48	48	9	9			18
LANCASTER	1,277	1,279	100	2,456	2,556	731	551	35	30	1,347
LINCOLN	129	159	16	272	288	76	76	4	5	161
LOGAN	3	14		17	17	1	4			5
LOUP	1	4		5	5	1	2			3
MADISON	111	108	5	214	219	69	48	2		119
MCPHERSON		3		3	3		2			2
MERRICK	16	32		48	48	12	16			28
MORRILL	25	25		50	50	14	12			26
NANCE	15	15		30	30	7	7			14
NEMAHA	45	38		83	83	22	19			41
NUCKOLLS	15	15		30	30	8	8			16
OTOE	72	86	8	150	158	44	40		3	87
PAWNEE	4	15	1	18	19	3	6			9
PERKINS	81	12	71	22	93	5	7	42		54
PHELPS	45	21		66	66	32	11			43
PIERCE	26	17		43	43	12	11			23
PLATTE	73	175	115	133	248	43	29		45	117
POLK	11	23		34	34	6	13			19
RED WILLOW	67	23		90	90	39	13			52
RICHARDSON	31	44		75	75	18	18			36
ROCK	9	8	2	15	17	6	5	2		13
SALINE	44	26		70	70	26	12			38

Appendix C

Number Of Students And Families By County
 School Year 2020/21
 Reporting period July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

County	Students					Family Units				
	Other Than Religious	Religious	Multi	Single	Total	Other Than Religious	Religious	Multi	Single	Total
SARPY	898	905	169	1,634	1,803	517	356	17	75	965
SAUNDERS	111	95	2	204	206	60	39		1	100
SCOTTS BLUFF	134	144		278	278	80	75			155
SEWARD	59	122	21	160	181	31	52		8	91
SHERIDAN	41	28		69	69	28	17			45
SHERMAN	8	14		22	22	5	7			12
SIOUX	10	8		18	18	7	4			11
STANTON	17	26		43	43	14	10			24
THAYER	37	34		71	71	21	14			35
THOMAS	4			4	4	2				2
THURSTON	10	11		21	21	5	5			10
VALLEY	12	43		55	55	8	16			24
WASHINGTON	87	164	8	243	251	47	67	1	3	118
WAYNE	25	21		46	46	16	6			22
WEBSTER	17	32		49	49	13	12			25
WHEELER		5		5	5		2			2
YORK	41	66		107	107	25	37			62
STATEWIDE	7,025	7,689	1,087	13,627	14,714	4,073	3,184	166	424	7,847

Appendix D

Percentage Of Exempt School Participants To Total Census Count School Years 1985/86, 1990/91, 1995/96, 2000/01 – 2020/21

School Year	Total Census Count	Exempt Student Count	Percent Of Exempt Students In Total Census Count
1985/86	214,998	939	.44
1990/91	227,895	2,147	.94
1995/96	235,193	4,137	1.76
2000/01	233,014	4,659	2.00
2001/02	230,140	5,000	2.17
2002/03	227,935	5,086	2.23
2003/04	229,095	4,929	2.15
2004/05	253,919	4,976	1.96
2005/06	302,191	5,616	1.86
2006/07	299,990	5,956	1.99
2007/08	298,928	6,062	2.03
2008/09	298,039	6,134	2.06
2009/10	300,079	6,295	2.10
2010/11	300,344	6,540	2.18
2011/12	302,007	6,809	2.25
2012/13	306,135	7,200	2.35
2013/14	308,886	7,674	2.48
2014/15	313,985	8,095	2.58
2015/16	320,952	8,290	2.58
2016/17	321,867	8,598	2.67
2017/18	327,039	8,919	2.73
2018/19	327,932	9,030	2.75
2019/20	329,447	9,452	2.87
2020/21	333,837	14,714	3.54

- *Data for schools years prior to 2000/01 is shown in 5-year increments for space.*
- *School Years 1985/86 & 1990/91: Statistics And Facts About Nebraska Schools, Nebraska Department of Education, 1985 & 1990; Ages 7 through 15.*
- *School Year 1995/96: Statistics And Facts About Nebraska Schools, Nebraska Department of Education, 1995/96; Ages 7 through 15.*
- *School Years 2000/01 through 2003/04: School District/System Census Report, 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003; Ages 7 through 15.*
- *School Year 2004/05: School District/System Census Report, 2004; Ages 7 through 16.*
- *School Years 2005/06 through 2020/21: School District/System Census Reports, 2005 through 2019; Ages 6 through 17.*