



**ACCREDITATION, CERTIFICATION
& APPROVAL**

**Host School and
Team Leader
Responsibilities Handbook**

Nebraska Continuous Improvement

Revised March 2024



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INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

The external visit is an opportunity for the host school to showcase the efforts made during the 5-year cycle. Accredited schools must comply with 92 NAC 10, the rules and regulations which govern standards and procedures for the accreditation of all public schools and any nonpublic schools that request state accreditation. Section 009 of Rule 10 lists the required actions for continuous improvement.

***009.01B** The school improvement process includes a visitation by a team of external representatives to review progress and provide written recommendations. A copy of the school system's improvement plan and the written recommendations of the external representatives are provided to the Department. The external team visits are conducted at least once each five years.*

The guiding principle behind an external visit is to provide an outside, objective view of the continuous improvement processes being implemented by the school. Peer reviews are a common strategy for supporting school and teacher improvement and there is research to suggest the potential value in peer review as a part of larger school improvement initiatives. Of note, some suggest that peer reviews may reduce "top-down" accountability mindsets and generate greater practitioner-driven innovations. Several states utilize peer review as part of their larger school quality, accountability, or accreditation processes (Hanover, August 2021).

The external team is composed of professional peers who will review the school system's action plan to affirm progress and to offer commendations and recommendations. The action plan is a living document that school systems use to determine goals and the steps needed to make progress on those goals.

009.01A3 *Selection of improvement goals. At least one goal is directed toward improving student academic achievement.*

009.01A4 *Development and implementation of an improvement plan which includes procedures, strategies, actions to achieve goals, and an aligned professional development plan.*

The external team verifies goal setting, decision making, and the use of multiple data points to drive continuous improvement. Themes are developed by the external team using a triangulation approach during the review as they engage in stakeholder interviews, classroom visits, and learn about the unique characteristics of the community. At the end of the visit, the external team provides an exit presentation of initial findings including commendations and recommendations to the school system. Additionally, the team prepares an exit report which is submitted within four weeks of the visit. By affirming success and providing specific feedback, the external team provides direction for the launch of the next five-year journey.

NEBRASKA CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Nebraska Framework Model was originally released in July 2012 by the Nebraska Department of Education's Accreditation and School Improvement Section. This initial model focused on four components: Creating the Profile, Setting the Goals, Planning to Improve, and Implementing the Plan.

Since the original Nebraska Framework model, there have been multiple state and federal changes that have changed educational practices in Nebraska. In 2019, the Accreditation Section of the Office of Accreditation, Certification, and Approval (re-named in 2023), which oversees compliance with NAC 92 Rule 10 and provides guidance on continuous improvement, began studying the connection between regulations for state statutes and agency requirements for operating schools in Nebraska.

Continuous improvement is broadly defined as the process of ensuring ongoing improvement through timely and new enhancements. Another framing of continuous improvement defines it as integrating worthy improvements into the daily work of individuals in the organization. The term and concept come from the field of quality control and assurance and are commonly used across many sectors and industries and for many goals within an organization.

Increasingly, state, district, and school-level leaders are using components of a continuous improvement cycle to support student achievement and achieve school improvement goals. While some may view it as a trend driven by directives from the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the core components of continuous improvement have been shown to produce meaningful and sustainable positive change in K-12 settings (Hanover, August 2021).

In 2015, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaced No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which allows states to focus on support for schools to help them better serve their students. For schools in Nebraska, AQuESTT was developed to provide educational equity for each and every student. This allows the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) to better funnel resources and support with the

ultimate goal of ensuring all students across all backgrounds and circumstances have equitable access and opportunities for success.

The Accountability for a Quality Education System Today and Tomorrow (AQuESTT) was established to integrate components of accountability, assessment, accreditation, career education, and data into a system of school improvement and support. More information can be found by accessing the [AQuESTT Timeline Graphic](#) and the [AQuESTT Tenets 2020](#). In October of 2019, the State Board of Education voted to adopt revised Position Statement S2 which included additional tenets and indicators.

Since 2019, collaboration between NDE Accreditation and NeMTSS focused on identifying similarities between the 2012 Nebraska Framework and the NeMTSS problem solving model. In 2020-21 and 2021-22, NeMTSS Regional Leads, Accreditation Staff, and ESU partners provided continuous improvement workdays to empower educators to utilize materials from both models to best serve students. Another aspect of this collaboration was to combine the 2012 Nebraska Framework and the NeMTSS action plans. Beginning in 2022-23 a single action plan, called the [CIP Template](#), was created and shared, for school systems to utilize as they transition from previously used templates. This ongoing attention to creating a positive learning environment, organizing instruction and intervention to improve outcomes for every student through continuous improvement actions is known as coherence work.

HOST SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

Section 009 of Rule 10 states that an external team shall visit the school system as part of the accreditation process. These external teams, composed of volunteers approved by the host school and team leader, review another school system's progress, which Nebraska schools undergo at least once every five years.

Scheduling the Visit with NDE Accreditation

The Accreditation Section maintains the 5-year schedule. Prior to the year of the visit, a representative from Accreditation will contact school systems and begin the scheduling process. The head administrator or designated leader responds with up to three potential calendar dates. Accreditation staff organizes the selections and confirms the date of the visit with the host school.

Selecting a Team Leader

Accreditation staff and the host school collaborate on identifying a team leader to guide the external on-site visit. The Accreditation staff member has the responsibility of contacting and inviting the potential team leader to lead the five-year visit. The host school may submit potential names to Accreditation from the volunteer database. Due to the increased number of school systems utilizing Nebraska Continuous Improvement tools and resources, the priority for the Accreditation section has been in prioritizing building the capacity of professional peers to lead the external review.

| Team Leader Skill Set |
|---------------------------------|
| Oral and written communication |
| Team Building and facilitation |
| Organization and adaptability |
| Analysis and consensus building |
| Relationship building |
| Positivity |

Once the team leader is confirmed, the host school can review the current External Team Volunteer database and generate a list of potential names for the team leader. The team leader is then responsible for extending the initial invitation to the possible team members. A final team roster is completed and submitted to the Nebraska Department of Education Accreditation Section for record keeping.

The size of the team is determined largely by student enrollment and the number of buildings located in the school system. At a minimum, the team must include two members other than the external team leader. School systems with high student enrollment and multiple buildings will plan for a cross-representation of schools.

Initial Planning

The schedule for each visit is a joint responsibility of the host school and the external team leader. One of the strengths of Nebraska Continuous Improvement is the collegial relationship that can and should develop among the local staff and the external team visitors.

A number of variations are possible for the schedule. At a minimum the host school will plan for a day and a half visit. Two or more days are possible for larger systems to ensure thoughtful data analysis and sufficient time to develop commendations and recommendations.

Required schedule components include time for an opening presentation by the school system's continuous improvement committee, focus group interviews, and classroom visits. The external team will also need sufficient time built into the schedule, to meet privately to develop the exit presentation and to begin the external review writing responsibilities.

At the conclusion of the on-site visit, the external team will share the exit presentation which highlights initial findings and themes. Any interested staff and stakeholders are encouraged to attend. This brief presentation provides key commendations, progress on improvement goals, and ideas for next steps for the host school audience.

The host school can expect the external report within four weeks of the on-site visit. The external report is a critical document that helps the school system understand the effects of previous efforts and helps launch the next five-year cycle. If the external team is to accomplish this purpose, the host school must provide information and evidence in a timely manner. The team leader and host school will confer and agree upon the timeline of the school profile and action plan being shared in advance and accessible to all external team members. Please reference the checklist for additional details.

School Profile and Opening Presentation

Specifically, the school profile provides longitudinal and up to date data that external team members need to understand school performance in isolation and relative to CIP goals. Schools may, and are encouraged by the NDE, to categorize data for school improvement into four areas: perceptions, student performance, school processes, and demographics. Considering these four areas, rather than solely student performance, provides additional perspectives on school operations and areas for improvement. Bernhardt (2013) describes the benefit of studying all four measures. By using all four measures, data teams can examine the effect of schools on student achievement to help teams define the questions to ask and focuses teams on what data is necessary to find the answers.

The continuous improvement committee and school leadership of the host school will launch the external review by providing an opening presentation. This allows the school to share their story and to present data efficiently and effectively. Attention is given to provide complete, accurate, and timely information in a clear and organized way.

The opening presentation sets the tone for the visit and allows the on-site team to gain a deeper understanding of the school system's improvement journey and to begin analyzing areas of focus for commendations and recommendations.

Section 009 of NAC 92 Rule 10 (for the Opening Presentation)

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| 009.01A1 | Review and update of the mission and vision statements. |
| 009.01A2 | Collection and analysis of data about student performance, demographics, learning climate, and former high school students. |
| 009.01A3 | Selection of improvement goals. At least one goal is directed toward improving student academic achievement. |
| 009.01A4 | Development and implementation of an improvement plan which includes procedures, strategies, actions to achieve goals, and an aligned professional development plan. |
| 009.01A5 | Evaluation of progress toward improvement goals. |

Adapted from Bernhardt, V.L "Multiple Measures" California Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998. p. 1

| Demographics | Perceptions | Student Performance | Programs |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Enrollment | Students | Norm | Special Education |
| Socio-economics | Non-Instr. Staff | Referenced | High-Ability |
| Race/Ethnicity | Teaching Staff | State Standards | ELL |
| Gender | Parents Graduate | Criterion | Extra-curricular |
| Attendance | Surveys | Reference | Early Childhood |
| Mobility | Technology | College | After School |
| Language | Surveys | Readiness | Nutrition |
| Proficiency | Other locally | Growth | Wellness |
| Graduation Rates | administered surveys | Measures | |
| | | Screening tools | |

Logistics

Careful attention by the host school to visitation logistics will assist the external team in effectively and efficiently carrying out their responsibilities. These logistics include the following.

- Team Collaboration Room: A space for the external team that has

internet access and a projector which allows for discussions in privacy throughout the span of the visit. Materials such as a markerboard, notepads, and post-it notes are also helpful. Name tags that identify external visitors as they move about the building should also be included.

- Focus Group Interview Location: Specified and scheduled locations for stakeholder group meetings.
- The host district is responsible to reimburse, at rates established by the local board of education, meals, mileage, and lodging expenses of external team members and should provide the necessary forms to see that this occurs in a timely way for members.
- In the event of inclement weather or illness, the host school will notify the team leader and the team leader will notify team members. The host school and team leader will communicate to establish an alternate date to occur at the earliest convenience possible and notify the NDE Accreditation Section with updates.

Host School Checklist of Responsibilities

- 1) Coordinate with the NDE on date of visit and assignment of the team leader.
- 2) Organize for the visit with CIP committee.
- 3) Provide accommodations and logistics for the visiting team.
- 4) Demonstrate continuous improvement through an action plan.
- 5) Showcase efforts during the opening presentation.
- 6) Schedule interactions between the external team and the school community.

| Step 1: Planning for the Visit | Notes |
|---|-------|
| <p>Prior year before the On-Site Visit</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <p>Accreditation staff contacts host schools for scheduling dates and assigning the team leader.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <p>Generate a list of potential team members for the team leader External Visit Volunteer List.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team leader will send initial invitation. Team leader confirms available team members. </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <p>Send a welcome letter with accommodations and logistics to the confirmed team members. Host School Welcome to On-Site Team</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <p>Build a Schedule with required components. Sample Visit Schedules</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <p>Request a copy of previous external report and action plan by emailing. nde.accreditation@nebraska.gov</p> </div> | |
| <p>Several Weeks Prior:</p> | |
| <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Prepare for the opening presentation.</p> </div> | |
| <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Prepare the school profile - School Profile Data Points.</p> </div> | |
| <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Ensure action plan is updated.</p> </div> | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Arrange for meals, transportation, and expense reimbursement.</p> | | |
| <p>Two Weeks Prior:</p> | | |
| <p>Share school profile and action plan with the external team.</p> | | |
| <p>Confirm team lodging and communicate arrangements to team leader.</p> | | |

| <p>Step 2: Launching the Visit</p> | <p>Notes</p> | |
|---|---------------------|--|
| <p>Opening presentation and welcome.</p> | | |
| <p>Tour of school grounds / workroom location.</p> | | |
| <p>Be available to the external team as needed.</p> | | |
| <p>Communicate any changes to the schedule.</p> | | |
| <p>Ensure workroom supplies, building access, names of persons on the stakeholder interview groups.</p> | | |

| <p>Step 3: Closure of the Visit</p> | <p>Notes</p> | |
|--|---------------------|--|
| <p>Location and technology for exit presentation.</p> | | |
| <p>Invite staff and stakeholders to exit presentation.</p> | | |
| <p>Express appreciation for the review process and team.</p> | | |

Collect needed reimbursement forms.

Ensure the team leader has a copy of the action plan to submit with the external report to NDE Accreditation.

Step 4: Receipt of the External Visit Report

- Expect a copy of the external report within four weeks of the on-site visit.
- The team leader will submit the action plan and the external report to the NDE Accreditation section.

EXTERNAL TEAM LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES

Serving as an external visit team leader is an important professional responsibility. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) appreciates the leadership skills and peer collegiality of educators throughout the state that volunteer for this role.

This section outlines the necessary organizational and leadership skills needed to lead a successful visit. Each year, the Accreditation Section of the NDE distributes a volunteer form for interested professionals from across the state to express interest in serving as a team leader or team member. Input from the school system is considered when selecting a team leader. Other information including the specific skill set, professional experiences, and availability of the team leader are also considered when appointing the team leader.

Team leaders shall have developed their skills through previous participation as a team member and/or team leader, by being involved in continuous improvement committees at their respective school systems, professional credentials, and by reviewing available resources from the Nebraska Department of Education.

Leading the Visit

Once the host school and team leader confirm the members of the external visit, it is time to prepare the team for their role in analyzing data and developing themes. Before the team orientation meeting, team members will review the Hanover materials located on the NDE Accreditation website. By completing this professional reading and participating in the self-assessment activities, team members increase their readiness for working with school data. Open and closed-ended reflection and assessment activities appear in the following two activities located in the Data Literacy Workbook on pages 5-7.

- Data Use and Collaboration Anticipation Guide
- Team Readiness Tool

At least two weeks before the on-site visit, the team leader should request logistical information, the school profile, and action plan if the items have not already been submitted by the host school. Purposeful review of these documents enables team members to initiate their in-person review knowing how the school is performing on paper, the direction in which the school aims to go, and how the visit will proceed.

Reviewing and Summarizing Submitted Materials

The school profile provides longitudinal and up to date data that external team members need to understand school performance in isolation and relative to CIP goals. Schools may and are encouraged by the NDE, to categorize data for school improvement into four areas: perceptions, student performance, school processes, and demographics. Considering these four areas, rather than solely student performance, provides additional perspectives on school operations and areas for improvement. The following table presents questions that current and longitudinal data in these areas, or measures, help to answer.

Information corresponds with Section 009 Regulations and the Opening Presentation

| Measures | Current Data | Longitudinal Data |
|------------------|--|---|
| Demographics | How many students are enrolled this year? | How has enrollment changed over the past 5 years? |
| Perceptions | How satisfied are parents, students, and/or staff with the learning environment? | How have student perceptions of the learning environment changed over the years? |
| Student Learning | How did students at the school score on a test? | Are there differences in student scores on standardized tests over the past five years? |
| School Processes | What programs are operating in the school system this year? | What programs have developed or been changed in the past five year? |

During the Visit

- **Focus group interviews** are a preferred method for gathering data about student, staff, and community beliefs and experiences with the school system. Successful facilitation of the focus group Interviews involves building a rapport and providing a space among interviewees where they feel comfortable to speak freely. Focus group interviews allow for deeper discussions on continuous improvement implementation by the school system.

Core questions are provided for each focus group (Instructional Staff, Community Stakeholders, and Students). Additional questions may be selected from the provided Question Bank, and additional Focus Groups can be added to the Schedule.

| Required Focus Groups | Groups to Consider / Examples |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Instructional Staff | Teachers, Counselors, Media, and others |
| Administrator / Leadership | District level, Building Level, Board Members, CIP Steering Committee |
| Community Stakeholders | Parent/Guardians, Community Foundation Groups, Grants Personnel, Club Sponsors, business owners |
| Students | Representative of school enrollment and grade levels served |

- **Classroom visits** allow on-site members to directly observe instruction and experience the classroom environment. The observer's attention is focused on elements of teacher and student behavior and the environment that may indicate successful implementation of a target strategy or resource. Generally, observers will want to examine specific practice and student action in response to the practice. However, observers must be aware that "precisely what they are looking for in a classroom visit is a function of the instruction framework that the school system has adopted" (Hanover, February 2022, p.12).

Classroom visits by external team members are not evaluative. Both external team members and host school staff must be aware of this fact to alleviate anxiety among those being observed. Host school leaders and the team leader may determine target areas for the visits that are directly

related to the continuous improvement action plan. This additional information adds value to the visit and may decrease potential confusion.

Although individual classroom visits are brief, lasting from 5-8 minutes, external team members will anecdotally report elements of teaching and learning behaviors using the Classroom Visit Note Catcher which serves to inform commendations and recommendations.

- **Analyzing Data and Determining Findings**

Toward the end of the external team visit, time will be devoted to revisiting submitted evidence for the visit and engaging in purposeful conversations to determine themes and identify commendations and recommendations.

Closing the Visit

- **Exit Presentation** The on-site team will present their preliminary findings. It may be presented by the external team as a whole or by representatives of the team. The exit presentation is an opportunity for any school staff and community members to hear about initial themes, commendations, and recommendations.

Submitting the External Team Report

Within a timeframe of four weeks, the external team leader will share a copy of the External Report with the School Administrator.

A copy of the school system Action Plan and External Report will be emailed to: nde.accreditation@nebraska.gov.

For school systems participating in regional accreditation services, a copy of the External Review and Action Plan will be submitted by the regional accreditation service to: nde.accreditation@nebraska.gov.

External Team Leader Checklist of Responsibilities

- 1) Advise the host school in planning and preparation.
- 2) Select and invite the team members for the visit.
- 3) Provide an orientation to the team members before the visit.
- 4) Guide the on-site team during the visit.
- 5) In collaboration with the team, draft recommendation and commendation themes for the exit presentation.

Step 1: Planning with the Host School

A. Confirm

| | Completed / Notes |
|--|-------------------|
| Dates of visit as identified by NDE Accreditation | |
| Contact the host school Team leader Introduction Letter | |
| Primary contact for planning the external visit (Name / Phone / Email) | |

B. Build the Team

| External Visit Volunteer List | Completed / Notes |
|--|-------------------|
| Generate List of team members with host school | |
| Send Invitation to potential members Initial Invitation | |
| Confirmation of roster External Team Roster | |
| Assign professional reading materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Literacy Workbook (Hanover, August 2022) • Continuous Improvement: Review of Literature (Hanover, August 2021) | |

C. Plan the Schedule with the Host School

| Required Components for the Visit | Completed / Notes |
|---|-------------------|
| Opening presentation by host school | |
| Focus group interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional staff • Community stakeholders • Students • Administration / Leadership | |
| Classroom visits | |
| Analyzing data and determining findings | |
| Exit presentation | |

D. Logistics for External Team

| | Completed |
|---|-----------|
| Travel Accommodations | |
| Dietary Restrictions | |
| Workroom Space | |
| Wi-Fi Access | |
| Nametags / Building Maps / Access | |
| Plans for communicating changes due to weather, illness, or otherwise | |

Step 2: Prior to the Visit (at least 2 weeks prior)**E. Materials for External Team**

| Required Materials | Completed / Notes |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Finalized schedule and school profile | |

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| CIP action plan | |
| Perceptual survey data | |
| Student achievement data | |

F. Pre-Visit Orientation of Team Members

| Team Orientation Slides | Completed / Notes |
|--|-------------------|
| Orientation meeting | |
| Landing page for external team only | |
| Access to submitted school materials | |
| Discuss interview questions Focus Group Interviews - Question Bank <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Questions (provided) • Additional Questions (selected) | |

Step 3: Launching the Visit

G. Finalize Responsibilities

| Team Landing Page | Completed / Notes |
|--|-------------------|
| Review schedule for any needed adjustments | |
| Assign team members to interview groups | |
| Assign team members for classroom visits Classroom Visit Note Catcher | |
| Coordinate note takers on the landing page | |

H. Prepare the Exit Presentation

| <u>Exit Presentation Slides</u> | Completed / Notes |
|---|-------------------|
| Review landing page documentation | |
| Analyze data and determine findings | |
| Connect commendations to goals | |
| Connect recommendations to goals | |
| Provide direction for next steps | |

Step 4: Completion of the External Report

| <u>External Team Report</u> | Completed |
|---|-----------|
| Copy of action plan from the school | |
| Assign writing sections and due dates to team members | |
| Proof and edit document | |
| Download external report PDF and action plan and submit to nde.accreditation@nebraska.gov | |
| Email PDF of the External Report to the School Administrator <u>Exit Report</u> | |

Data Sources for Continuous Improvement School Profile

Adapted from Bernhardt, V.L. "Multiple Measures" California Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998. p. 1

| | |
|--|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;">DEMOGRAPHICS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Enrollment Average Daily Attendance Graduation Rate Ethnicity Students with IEPs Disciplinary Data High Ability Learners Staffing Endorsements Retention Advanced Degrees</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">PERCEPTIONS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Student Staff Non-Instructional Staff Parents Focus Groups Strategic Planning Observational Post-Graduate Data</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">SCHOOL PROCESSES</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Selection of Goals Monitoring Goals Allocation of Resources Selection of Curriculum Mission & Vision Grants Pilots Professional Learning Teacher Recruitment & Retention</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">STUDENT LEARNING</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Balanced Assessment System NSCAS Growth ACT NeMTSS Decision Rules Norm-Referenced Criterion-Referenced Progress Monitoring</p> |

GLOSSARY

Accreditation: Accredited school systems shall comply with all the numbered provisions of 92 NAC 10 (Rule 10). School systems will be classified as accredited if they meet all of the applicable requirements of this Chapter. Nonpublic schools that are classified as accredited shall meet all of the requirements of Rule 10 except when specifically excluded or when a requirement is for districts only.

Action Plan (Continuous Improvement Plan): A continuous improvement plan is a set of activities designed to bring gradual, ongoing improvement to products, services, or processes through constant review, measurement, and action.

Schedule: Required items and events scheduled by the host school to allow the external team sufficient time to determine commendations and recommendations.

Commendations: Acknowledgement of efforts that have positively impacted the school community and student achievement.

Continuous Improvement: Any school or instructional improvement process that unfolds progressively, that does not have a fixed or predetermined endpoint and that is sustained over extended periods of time. The concept also encompasses the general belief that improvement is not something that starts and stops but requires an organizational or professional commitment to an ongoing process of learning, self-reflection, adaptation, and growth.

Classroom Visits: A brief and non-evaluative visit by the external team. The classroom environment, student engagement and instructional delivery are recorded anecdotally to inform feedback, and to develop themes of commendations and recommendations related to continuous improvement efforts by the school system.

External Team Meeting: Time allotted in the schedule to compare notes and impressions, identify areas for further review or inquiry, and discuss how to showcase successes and handle any problematic matters that have arisen. These meetings are sharing and strategy sessions during which individual external team members discuss possible commendations and recommendations for the exit presentation and external report.

Final Team Roster: A form that is completed by the team leader that provides the contact information and position of the external team members. The roster is submitted to Accreditation staff for record keeping.

Focus Group Interviews: Structured interviews that allow for the in-depth gathering of knowledge from those who know the most within the school community. These interviews provide a way to corroborate evidence gathered from classroom visits, opening presentation and school profile.

Initial Invitation: A formal greeting by the team leader to the potential team members. The final roster is based upon availability and acceptance of the invite.

Opening Presentation: This is a relatively formal presentation by the steering committee and others that includes a chronology of the continuous improvement process, committee structures, an overview of data-gathering procedures and instruments, decisions, goal overviews, strategies, issues, and to answer questions from the external team.

Perceptual Survey: An instrument that measures an individual's lived experiences. Survey data informs continuous improvement and identifies components of school culture and climate. The NDE provides perceptual survey instruments for students, teachers, non-instructional staff, and parents. School systems may use a locally developed perceptual survey.

Professional Learning: A broad term that describes processes used to build skills needed for one's job expectations within education, and is also called Professional Development, Continuous Learning, Continuing Education, and Staff Development. Professional learning is used to support continuous improvement with the purpose of advancing student learning.

Recommendations: The external team provides suggestions or proposals as the best course of action for sustaining continuous improvement efforts. This professional input aims to positively impact student learning experiences and achievement outcomes for the next continuous improvement cycle.

School Climate: School climate refers to a school's effects on students, including teaching practices; diversity; and the relationships among administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

School Culture: School culture refers to the way teachers and other staff members work together and the set of beliefs, values, and assumptions they share. A positive school

climate and school culture promote students' ability to learn.

Section 009: A group of regulations in 92 NAC 10 which requires school systems to meet compliance with Continuous Improvement.

Themes: A unifying idea or topic that is developed through observation and discourse. The external team develops thematic topics as they engage with stakeholders during the external visit.

Triangulation: A method of comparing multiple data sources to substantiate conclusions reached, resulting in greater confidence in identified successes to be leveraged and challenges to be addressed.

Volunteer Form: Educational peers who desire to serve as an external visit team leader or Member complete the volunteer form provided by NDE Accreditation. The database of team leaders and team Members is updated on an annual basis.

Resources

Data Literacy Workbook for On-Site Volunteers (February 2022)

[View Workbook Here](#)

This workbook supports External Teams who conduct on-site visits for Nebraska Continuous Improvement. Team members will use the toolkit when preparing for External Visits to guide responsibilities and provide specific, meaningful feedback. Members of the Host School can also benefit from interacting with the Data Literacy Workbook and understanding purposes and use of data.

District Continuous Improvement: Review of Literature and Practice (August 2021)

[View Report Here](#)

This report summarizes both literature on CI and details on the practice of using CI within K12 settings. In particular, this report is designed to support decision-making and planning around the Nebraska Department of Education's (NDE) framework for district-level CI and the accompanying guidance and resources to support district use and implementation. Whenever possible, this report highlights practical examples and insights from the perspective of State Departments of Education.

Infographic for Continuous Improvement (October 2021)

[View Infographic Here](#)

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is in the process of updating and refining its Continuous Improvement Process and Procedures in accordance with Section 009 of NAC 92 Chapter 10 (2015).

This infographic provides an overview of Continuous Improvement (CI) along with important background context on how CI can be used to achieve higher levels of accountability within schools. Continuous Improvement is a fundamental part of accreditation regulations in Nebraska and woven into each tenet of the AQuESTT model. The NDE will work to ensure a greater and intentional focus on the key components of CI shown to be most important and relevant for K12 schools.

References

Bernhardt, Victoria, L. (2013). *Data analysis for continuous school improvement*. Routledge.

Hanover (August 2021). *District continuous improvement: Review of literature and practice*. <https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Continuous-Improvement-Review-of-Literature-and-Practice-Nebraska-DOE.22.pdf>

Hanover (February 2022). *Data literacy workbook for on-site volunteers*. <https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Data-Literacy-Workbook-Nebraska-Department-of-Education-v4.pdf>