

STATE ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes April 17, 2025

Opening of Meeting

The Nebraska State Accreditation Committee met at the Nebraska Department of Education on April 17, 2025. Chair Dale Hafer called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., established the meeting's legality, and declared a quorum present.

Members present were: LeeAnn Amm, Joel Bednar, Gina Bittner, Wayne Brown, Brad Dirksen, Rebecca Dunn, Courtney Feeney, Dale Fornander, Jeff Ganz, Dale Hafer, Stacie Hardy, Marco Pedroza, Teresa Perkins, Sarah Salem, Kim Saum-Mills, Dan Schnoes, and Ashley Tomjack.

Members are absent: Susanne Cramer, Vickie Kauffold, Mitch Kubicek, Heather Phillips, and Nicole Regan.

The **NDE staff members** facilitating the meeting were Decua Jean-Baptiste, Todd Wolverton, and Sandra Suiter.

Chair Dale Hafer requested a motion to approve the April 17, 2025, agenda. Dale Fornander moved to approve the agenda, and Gina Bittner seconded the motion.

Voting yes: LeeAnn Amm, Joel Bednar, Gina Bittner, Brad Dirksen, Rebecca Dunn, Courtney Feeney, Dale Fornander, Jeff Ganz, Dale Hafer, Stacie Hardy, Marco Pedroza, Teresa Perkins, Kim Saum-Mills, Dan Schnoes, and Ashley Tomjack.

Voting no: none

Approval carried 15-0 with 7 absent.

Members were asked to approve the minutes from the December 12, 2024, meeting. Joel Bednar moved to approve the minutes, and Marco Pedroza seconded the motion.

Voting yes: LeeAnn Amm, Joel Bednar, Gina Bittner, Brad Dirksen, Rebecca Dunn, Courtney Feeney, Dale Fornander, Jeff Ganz, Dale Hafer, Stacie Hardy, Marco Pedroza, Teresa Perkins, Kim Saum-Mills, Dan Schnoes, and Ashley Tomjack.

Voting no: none

Approval carried 15-0 with 7 absent.

Meeting Opening

Opening remarks and committee introductions.

NDE Strategic Plan

Updates from the Administrator of the Office of Policy and Strategic Initiatives on the NDE Strategic Plan. A Strategic Plan creates a single, forward-focused vision, provides structure for day-to-day operations, and tracks progress against strategic goals. The NDE's goal is to make this plan meaningful. Committee Members participated in an analysis activity focusing on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the education system.

Violation Updates

State Accreditation Committee members Ashley Tomjack and Joel Bednar met with Accreditation team members Sandra Suiter, Todd Wolverton, and Decua Jean-Baptiste to discuss concerns regarding the current process of managing violations within Rule 10:

- Language in Rule 10 does not spell out specifically how to manage violations when they are found outside of a school system's self-reporting on the Annual Assurance Statement.
- February 1st and September 1st due dates for Plans of Corrections/Evidence create inequalities for violations that are discovered through other monitoring processes (i.e., various reports or compliance visits)

Accreditation Section Recommendations:

1. Eliminate current due dates.
2. The school system would be given two weeks to submit a plan of correction and 6 months to present evidence of correction or substantial progress.
3. Evidence of progress on the correction of the violation provided at regular intervals as approved by the Accreditation Section.

Members were asked to approve changes to the violation process. Wayne Brown moved to approve the changes, and Ashley Tomjack seconded the motion.

Voting yes: LeeAnn Amm, Joel Bednar, Gina Bittner, Wayne Brown, Brad Dirksen, Rebecca Dunn, Courtney Feeney, Dale Fornander, Jeff Ganz, Dale Hafer, Stacie Hardy, Teresa Perkins, Sarah Salem, Kim Saum-Mills, Dan Schnoes, and Ashley Tomjack.

Voting no: none

Approval carried 16-0 with 6 absent.

Waivers and Modifications

Members were asked to approve potential revisions to waivers and modifications in Rule 10.

- Retain current section 13.04 related to special purpose school system waivers and revise the last sentence to: “...the Board may waive such requirement for a period up to four years. The Board may reaffirm waivers.”
- Eliminate waivers and modifications in Rule 10, section 13.01 through 13.03 and 13.05, and add “Pilot Programs and Processes.”

Sarah Salem moved to approve the potential revisions, and Rebecca Dunn seconded the motion.

Voting yes: LeeAnn Amm, Joel Bednar, Gina Bittner, Wayne Brown, Brad Dirksen, Rebecca Dunn, Courtney Feeney, Dale Fornander, Jeff Ganz, Dale Hafer, Stacie Hardy, Marco Pedroza, Teresa Perkins, Sarah Salem, Kim Saum-Mills, Dan Schnoes, and Ashley Tomjack.

Voting no: none

Approval carried 17-0 with 5 absent.

Middle Grade Athletics Subcommittee Updates

An overview of previous and current discussions on potential changes: keep Rule 10 as is, rewrite Rule 10, or remove middle school athletics from Rule 10 and move to NSAA for governance.

Members were asked to support moving middle-grade athletics from Rule 10 to the NSAA for governance. Joel Bednar moved to approve the potential change, and Kim Saum-Mills seconded the motion.

Voting yes: LeeAnn Amm, Joel Bednar, Gina Bittner, Wayne Brown, Brad Dirksen, Rebecca Dunn, Courtney Feeney, Dale Fornander, Jeff Ganz, Dale Hafer, Stacie Hardy, Marco Pedroza, Teresa Perkins, Sarah Salem, Kim Saum-Mills, Dan Schnoes, and Ashley Tomjack.

Voting no: none

Approval carried 17-0 with 5 absent.

Nebraska Literacy Project

The Academic Officer and Administrator of the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Office presented an overview of the Nebraska Literacy Project. The Vision: foster a culture of proficient, lifelong readers in Nebraska by focusing on evidence-based reading instruction, unlocking students' potential to learn, earn, and live.

Questions and discussion followed.

Instructional Units

Updates on next steps from the Instructional Units subcommittee. The committee discussed moving forward with a draft regulation that would remove instructional units and add a definition of credit.

Dan Schnoes moved to approve the potential changes, and Kim Saum-Mills seconded the motion.

Voting yes: LeeAnn Amm, Joel Bednar, Wayne Brown, Brad Dirksen, Rebecca Dunn, Courtney Feeney, Dale Fornander, Jeff Ganz, Dale Hafer, Stacie Hardy, Marco Pedroza, Teresa Perkins, Sarah Salem, Kim Saum-Mills, Dan Schnoes, and Ashley Tomjack.

Voting no: none

Approval carried 16-0 with 6 absent.

Presentation of the Annual Report for Accreditation

Overview of schools up for accreditation for the 2025-26 school year.

Action on Accreditation of School Systems

Dale Hafer, Chair, asked for a motion to recommend continued accreditation for the 2025-2026 school year. Dan Schnoes moved to approve accreditation for the 2025-26 school year, and Dale Hafer seconded the motion.

Voting yes: LeeAnn Amm, Joel Bednar, Wayne Brown, Brad Dirksen, Rebecca Dunn, Courtney Feeney, Dale Fornander, Jeff Ganz, Dale Hafer, Stacie Hardy, Marco Pedroza, Teresa Perkins, Sarah Salem, Kim Saum-Mills, Dan Schnoes, and Ashley Tomjack.

Voting no: none

Approval carried 16-0 with 6 absent.

Action on Conditional Accreditation of School Systems

Dale Hafer, Chair, asked for a motion to recommend conditional accreditation for the Dual Language Academy in 2025-2026. Ashley Tomjack moved to approve conditional accreditation for the 2025-26 school year, and Teresa Perkins seconded the motion.

Voting yes: LeeAnn Amm, Joel Bednar, Wayne Brown, Brad Dirksen, Rebecca Dunn, Courtney Feeney, Dale Fornander, Jeff Ganz, Dale Hafer, Stacie Hardy, Marco Pedroza, Teresa Perkins, Sarah Salem, Kim Saum-Mills, Dan Schnoes, and Ashley Tomjack.

Voting no: none

Approval carried 16-0 with 6 absent.

Discussion on any upcoming vacancies

Meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.