

HOST SCHOOL AND TEAM LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES HANDBOOK NEBRASKA CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

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OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

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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 that 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 objective, external view of the school's continuous improvement processes. Peer reviews are a common strategy for supporting school and teacher improvement, and research suggests their potential value as 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 toward them.

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 through triangulation during the review, as they conduct stakeholder interviews, visit classrooms, and learn about the community's unique characteristics. 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 directions for the launch of the next five-year journey.

***Supporting Documentation** referenced throughout this process may be provided in various file formats. All linked documents will be clearly labeled to indicate the program required to open them (e.g., PDF, Microsoft Word, or Google Docs) to ensure accessibility for all reviewers and stakeholders. *

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**, multiple state and federal changes have altered educational practices in Nebraska. In 2019, the Accreditation Section of the Office of Accreditation, Certification, and Approval (renamed in 2023), which oversees compliance with NAC 92 Rule 10 and provides guidance on continuous improvement, began studying the relationship between state statutes and agency requirements governing school operations 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, as well as for many organizational goals.

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 under the **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**, the core components of continuous improvement have been shown to produce meaningful, sustainable positive change in K-12 settings (Hanover, August 2021).

In 2015, **ESSA** replaced **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**, allowing states to focus on supporting schools to better serve their students. For schools in Nebraska, **Quality Education System Today and Tomorrow (AQuESTT)** was developed to promote educational equity for every student. This allows the **Nebraska Department of Education (NDE)** to provide more effective funding and support, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that all students, regardless of background or circumstances, have equitable access to opportunities for success.

The Accountability for AQuESTT was established to integrate accountability, assessment, accreditation, career education, and data into a unified system to improve and support schools. More information can be found by accessing the [AQuESTT Timeline Graphic](#) (PDF) and [the AQuESTT Tenets 2020](#) (PDF).

In October 2019, the State Board of Education voted to adopt the revised Position Statement S2, which included additional tenets and indicators. Since then, collaboration between the NDE Accreditation and NeMTSS has focused on identifying the similarities between the 2012 Nebraska Framework and the NeMTSS problem-solving model.

During the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years, NeMTSS Regional Leads, Accreditation Staff, and ESU partners conducted continuous improvement workdays. These sessions empowered educators to utilize materials from both models to better serve students. Another aspect of this collaboration involved integrating the 2012 Nebraska Framework with the NeMTSS action plans.

Beginning in the 2022-23 school year, a single action plan, known as the CIP Template, was created and shared with school systems to assist with their transition from previously used templates. This ongoing focus on creating a positive learning environment and organizing instruction and intervention to improve outcomes for every student through continuous improvement actions is referred to 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 Team maintains the 5-year schedule. Prior to the visit year, a representative from Accreditation will contact school systems and begin scheduling. The head administrator or designated leader responds with up to three potential calendar dates. Accreditation staff organizes the selections and confirms the visit date with the Host School.

Selecting a Team Leader

The accreditation staff member and the Host School collaborate to identify a Team Leader to guide the external on-site visit. The Accreditation staff member is responsible for 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 Accreditation Team has prioritized 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 Team Leader candidates. The Team Leader is then responsible for extending the initial invitation to the possible team members. The final team roster has been completed and submitted to the NDE Accreditation Team for record-keeping.

The size of the team is largely determined by student enrollment and the number of buildings 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 may be needed for larger systems to ensure thoughtful data analysis and sufficient time to develop commendations and recommendations.

The required components of the schedule include time for an opening presentation by the school system's continuous improvement committee, focus group interviews, and classroom visits. Additionally, the External Team will need enough time scheduled for private meetings to prepare the exit presentation and begin the writing responsibilities for the external review.

At the conclusion of the on-site visit, the External Team will deliver an exit presentation that 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 External Team Leader and Host School will confer and agree on the timeline for sharing the school profile and action plan in advance, so they are accessible to all External Team members. Please reference the checklist for additional details.

School Profile and Opening Presentation

Specifically, the school profile provides longitudinal, up-to-date data that External Team members need to understand school performance both 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
- 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, helping them define the questions to ask and focus on the data necessary to find the answers.

The continuous improvement committee and the Host School's leadership will launch the external review with an opening presentation. This allows the school to share its 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 that 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 • Socioeconomics • Race/Ethnicity • Gender • Attendance • Mobility • Language • Proficiency • Graduation Rates	• Students • Non-Instr. Staff • Teaching Staff • Parents Graduate • Surveys • Technology • Surveys • Other locally administered surveys	• Norm • Referenced • State Standards • Criterion • Reference • College • Readiness • Growth • Measures • Screening tools	• Special Education • High-Ability • ELL • Extra-curricular • Early Childhood • After-School • Nutrition • Wellness

Logistics

Careful attention by the Host School to visitation logistics will help the External Team carry out their responsibilities effectively and efficiently. 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 for **Reimbursing**, 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 ensure this occurs in a timely manner for members.
- In the **event of bad weather or illness**, the Host School will inform the Team Leader, who will then notify the Team Members. The Host School and Team Leader will work together to establish an alternate date as soon as possible and will update the NDE Accreditation Team accordingly.

HOST SCHOOL CHECKLIST OF RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1) Coordinate with the NDE on the date of the visit and the assignment of the Team Leader.
- 2) Organize the visit with the CIP committee.
- 3) Provide accommodation and logistics for the visiting team.
- 4) Demonstrate continuous improvement through an action plan.

Step 1: Planning for the Visit

A. Prior year before the On-Site Visit

- ☐ Accreditation staff contact Host Schools to schedule dates and assign the Team Leader.
- ☐ Generate a list of potential team members for the [Team Leader's External Visit Volunteer List \(Google\)](#).
 - ◆ The Team Leader will send the initial invitation.
 - ◆ Team Leader confirms available team members.
- ☐ Send a welcome letter with accommodation and logistics to the confirmed team members.
 - ◆ [Host School Welcome to the On-Site Team \(Google\)](#) or [\(Word Doc\)](#)
- ☐ Build a Schedule with the required components.
 - ◆ [Sample Visit Schedules \(Google\)](#) or [\(Word Doc\)](#)
- ☐ Request a copy of the previous external report and action plan by email.
 - ◆ nde.accreditation@nebraska.gov

B. Several Weeks Prior:

- ☐ Prepare for the opening presentation.
- ☐ Prepare the school profile - School Profile Data Points.
- ☐ Ensure the action plan is updated.
- ☐ Arrange for meals, transportation, and expense reimbursement.

C. Two Weeks Prior:

- ☐ Share the school profile and action plan with the External Team.
- ☐ Confirm the team's lodging and communicate the arrangements to the Team Leader.

Notes

Step 2: Launching the Visit

- ☐ Opening presentation and welcome.
- ☐ Tour of school grounds/workroom location.
- ☐ Be available to the External Team as needed.
- ☐ Communicate any changes to the schedule.
- ☐ Ensure workroom supplies, building access, and the names of people on the stakeholder interview groups.

Step 3: Closure of the Visit

- ☐ Location and technology for exit presentations.
- ☐ Invite staff and stakeholders to attend the presentation.
- ☐ Express appreciation for the review process and team.
- ☐ 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.

Notes

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 who volunteer for this role.

This section outlines the necessary organizational and leadership skills needed to lead a successful visit. Each year, the Accreditation Team of the NDE distributes a volunteer form for interested professionals from across the state to apply to serve 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, is 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, involvement in continuous improvement committees at their respective school systems, professional credentials, and review of available resources from the NDE.

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.

[Accreditation – NDE](#)

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](#) (PDF) 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 the action plan if the items have not already been submitted by the Host School. A purposeful review of these documents enables team members to begin their in-person review knowing how the school is performing on paper, the direction the school aims to take, and how the visit will proceed.

Reviewing and Summarizing Submitted Materials

The school profile provides longitudinal, up-to-date data that External Team members need to understand school performance both 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
- demographics

Considering these four areas 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 been developed or changed in the past five years?

During Visit

- **Focus group interviews** are a preferred method for gathering data about students, staff, and community beliefs and experiences with the school system. Successful facilitation of the focus group Interviews involves building rapport and providing an environment where interviewees feel comfortable speaking 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 [Focus Group Interviews - Question Bank](#)(PDF), 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 practices and students' actions in response to that 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 5-8 minutes, External Team members will anecdotally report elements of teaching and learning behaviors using the [Classroom Visit Note Catcher \(Google Doc\)](#) ([Word Doc](#)), which informs commendations and recommendations.

- **Analyzing Data and Determining Findings**

At the conclusion of the External Team visit, time will be dedicated to reviewing the submitted evidence and engaging in meaningful discussions to identify themes, 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 its representatives. The exit presentation is an opportunity for any school staff and community members to hear about initial themes, commendations, and recommendations.

External Team Report

- The External Team Leader is responsible for writing and submitting the report. The External Team Leader should collaborate with the other External Team Members to create the report.
 - The External Team Leader should follow the prompts in the External Report.
- The **checklist** shown below was added to the report in 2026. This should be completed by the External Team Leader once the report is finished. The checklist alerts the Accreditation section to any required components that are missing, as outlined in Rule 10. This is found toward the end of the External Team Report.

CHECKLIST OF REQUIRED REGULATIONS FOR FIVE-YEAR VISITS			
To be filled out by the external visit team leader			
Required Regulations	Evidence Observed (yes/no)		Notes (optional)
009.01A1 Review and update Mission/Vision	☐ Yes	☐ No	
009.01A2 Collection and analysis of data	☐ Yes	☐ No	
009.01A3 At least one goal directed toward academic achievement	☐ Yes	☐ No	
009.01A4 Action plan to include procedures, strategies, and actions to achieve goals	☐ Yes	☐ No	
009.01A5 Evaluation of progress	☐ Yes	☐ No	

- Within four weeks, the External Team Leader will provide a copy of the External Report to the School Administrator.
- Additionally, a copy of the school system's Action Plan and External Report will be emailed to nde.accreditation@nebraska.gov.
- For school systems participating in regional accreditation services, the regional accreditation service will submit a copy of both the External Review and the Action Plan 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 for 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

- ☐ Dates of visit as identified by NDE Accreditation
- ☐ Contact the Host School - [Team Leader Introduction Letter \(Google\)](#) or [\(Word Doc\)](#)
- ☐ Primary contact for planning the external visit
(Name / Phone / Email)

B. Build the Team

- ☐ [External Visit Volunteer List \(Google\)](#)
- ☐ Generate a list of team members with the Host School
- ☐ Send an invitation to potential members -
[Initial Invitation \(Google\)](#)
- ☐ Confirmation of roster -
[External Team Roster \(Google Doc\)](#) or [\(Word Doc\)](#)
- ☐ Assigning professional reading materials
 - ◆ [Data Literacy Workbook](#) (Hanover, August 2022) (PDF)
 - ◆ [Continuous Improvement: Review of Literature](#) (Hanover, August 2021) (PDF)

C. Plan the Schedule with the Host School

- ☐ Required Components for the Visit
 - ☐ Opening presentation by Host School
 - ☐ Focus group interviews
 - ◆ Instructional staff, Community stakeholders, students, Administration / Leadership
 - ☐ Classroom visits
 - ☐ Analyzing data and determining findings
 - ☐ Exit presentation

D. Logistics for External Team

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

Notes

Step 2: Prior to the Visit (at least 2 weeks prior)

E. Materials for External Team

☐ Required Materials

- ☐ Finalized schedule and school profile
- ☐ CIP action plan
- ☐ Perceptual survey data
- ☐ Student achievement data

F. Pre-Visit Orientation of Team Members

☐ [Team Orientation Slides \(Google\)](#)

- ☐ Orientation meeting
- ☐ Landing page for External Team only
- ☐ Access to submitted school materials
- ☐ Discuss interview questions -
[Focus Group Interviews - Question Bank](#) (PDF)
 - ◆ Required Questions (provided)
 - ◆ Additional Questions (selected)

Notes

Step 3: Launching the Visit

G. Finalize Responsibilities

☐ [Team Landing Page \(Google Doc\)](#) or [\(Word Doc\)](#)

- ☐ Review the schedule for any need for adjustments
- ☐ Assign team members to interview groups
- ☐ Assign team members for classroom visits -
[Classroom Visit Note Catcher \(Google Doc\)](#) or [\(Word Doc\)](#)
- ☐ Coordinate note takers on the landing page

H. Preparing the Exit Presentation

☐ [Exit Presentation Slides \(Google\)](#)

- ☐ Review landing page documentation
- ☐ Analyze data and determine findings
- ☐ Connect Commendations to goals
- ☐ Connect recommendations to goals
- ☐ Provide directions for next steps

Step 4: Completion of the External Report

- ☐ [External Team Report \(Google Doc\)](#) or [\(Word Doc\)](#)
 - ☐ Copy of the action plan from the school
 - ☐ Assign writing sections and due dates to team members
 - ☐ Proof and edit the document
 - ☐ Download the external report PDF and action plan and submit to nde.accreditation@nebraska.gov
 - ☐ **Email PDF of the External Report to the School Administrator - [Exit Report \(Google\)](#) or [\(Word Doc\)](#)**

Notes

DATA SOURCES FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT SCHOOL PROFILE

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

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

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 requirements of Rule 10, except when specifically excluded or when a requirement applies only to districts.

Action Plan: An Action Plan, also known as a Continuous Improvement Plan, consists of activities aimed at achieving gradual, ongoing improvement in products, services, or processes through regular 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: Acknowledgment 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.

Continuous Improvement Plan: See Action Plan

Classroom Visits: Brief, non-evaluative visits by the External Team. The classroom environment, student engagement, and instructional delivery are recorded anecdotally to inform feedback and develop themes of commendations and recommendations related to the school system's continuous improvement efforts.

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 completed by the Team Leader that provides the contact information and positions of External Team members. The roster is submitted to the 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 answers 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, noninstructional 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 supports continuous improvement and advances student learning.

Recommendations: The External Team provides suggestions or proposals on the best course of action to sustain 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 how teachers and other staff members work together, as well as the 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 that 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 annually.

RESOURCES

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

[View Workbook Here](#) (PDF)

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 engaging with the Data Literacy Workbook to understand the purposes and uses of data.

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

[View Report Here](#) (PDF)

This report summarizes both the literature on CI and the practice of using CI in 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, along with the accompanying guidance and resources for 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](#) (PDF)

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is 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) and important background 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, more intentional focus on the key components of CI that have been shown to be most important and relevant for K12 schools.

REFERENCES

Bernhardt, Victoria L. (2013). *Data analysis for continuous school improvement*. Routledge. (PDF)
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Rule 10: Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Schools

The official version of the rule is available on the [Nebraska Secretary of State's Rules and Regulations](https://rules.nebraska.gov/rules?agencyId=24&titleId=58) webpage. Users should scroll to the appropriate section to locate the specific rule they are seeking.
<https://rules.nebraska.gov/rules?agencyId=24&titleId=58>