



*To lead and support the preparation of all  
Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living.*

# 2017–2026 STRATEGIC VISION AND DIRECTION

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NEBRASKA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
& NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

December 2, 2016  
Revised June 7, 2019

[nebraskaeducationvision.com](http://nebraskaeducationvision.com)



## Nebraska State Board of Education

The State Board of Education is an elected constitutional body, the policy forming and evaluative body for the state school program [79-301(2) R.R.S.], which in addition ensures the State Department of Education functions effectively within the framework developed by the state Legislature and by the Board. The Board is elected on a non-partisan ballot, with one member from each district. Board members serve four-year terms.

Below is a list of the State Board members who were on the Board at the time of adoption of the Strategic Plan (12/02/2016) and at the time of revision (06/07/2019).

12/02/2016		06/07/2019	
Rachel Wise	President	John Witzel	President
Lillie Larsen	Vice President	Maureen Nickels	Vice President
District 1: Lillie Larsen		District 1: Patsy Koch Johns	
District 2: Glen Flint		District 2: Lisa Fricke	
District 3: Rachel Wise		District 3: Rachel Wise	
District 4: John Witzel		District 4: John Witzel	
District 5: Patricia Timm		District 5: Patricia Timm	
District 6: Maureen Nickels		District 6: Maureen Nickels	
District 7: Molly O 'Holleran		District 7: Robin Stevens	
District 8: Patrick McPherson		District 8: Deborah Neary	

## Nebraska Department of Education

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is a constitutional agency comprised of services, programs, Vocational Rehabilitation (Nebraska VR), and Disabilities Determination Section (DDS). The NDE operates under the authority of an elected State Board of Education (Board) and the Commissioner of Education (Commissioner). The NDE is organized into divisions and offices that carry out the duties assigned by state and federal statutes and the policy directions of the Board. Divisions and offices are organized around distinct functions and responsibilities that encompass leadership and support for Nebraska's system of: early childhood, primary, secondary, and postsecondary education; direct services to clients; and internal support to the agency.

The NDE carries out its duties on behalf of Nebraska students and parents involved in public and nonpublic school systems. The NDE staff interacts with schools, parents, businesses, community partners, and institutions of higher education to develop, coordinate, and improve educational programs and services.

# STRATEGIC VISION AND DIRECTION – 2017–2026

## Introduction

In January 2016, the Board and the NDE initiated the development of a Strategic Plan to guide the vision and direction of education in Nebraska for the next ten years. Nebraska's Strategic Plan, to be known as **Nebraska Quality Education Systems for Today and Tomorrow (NEQuESTT)**, represents the evolution of a philosophical and practical approach to supporting education in Nebraska. This commitment unifies and strengthens positive outcomes for each and every Nebraskan, through bold and achievable aspirational measures of success. **NEQuESTT** not only outlines the critical needs and strengths within the system, but also reflects innovative approaches. This ensures each Nebraskan has equitable access to opportunities and is ready for success in postsecondary, career, and civic life. **NEQuESTT** is the educational journey that puts forth a new vision and a bold agenda for the system of education in Nebraska. This vision will require new and innovative ways of working together, stretching beyond the status quo, and engaging stakeholders through collaborative processes. The strategic plan defines a direction for accountability and a system of services and supports, without losing sight of the importance of ensuring compliance with state and federal policies.

**NEQuESTT** guides the Board and the NDE to address some of the most urgent priorities within Nebraska. With an intentional and comprehensive focus on ensuring a reduction of educational inequities for the most vulnerable populations, this strategic plan directs focus on student- or client-centered outcomes, high quality opportunities, and a strong system of support **for every student, every day**.

The State Board of Education, in consultation with the Commissioner of Education and the NDE staff, adopted revisions to the Strategic Plan on June 7, 2019. The revisions were the result of an internal review of the Strategic Plan after two years of implementation. Major revisions include changes to the structure of the plan, as well as added strategies around stakeholder engagement and equity. Additionally, edits were made to the Measures of Progress (formerly Goals) to provide clarity and direction to operationalize the work.

## NEQuESTT and AQuESTT

**NEQuESTT** aligns with Nebraska's accountability system, *Accountability for a Quality Education System Today and Tomorrow (AQuESTT)*. The six critical tenets of **AQuESTT** holistically address accountability and education quality in Nebraska.

**AQuESTT** provides a fundamental focus on achievement and opportunity gaps, and ensures that outcomes produce equitable results for each and every learner. Consequently, **NEQuESTT** includes measures of progress with benchmarks to measure disaggregated data that ensure equity and access.

## Roles

In order to support goals, a suite of approaches is utilized that reflect the nuance of the work, of many stakeholders, systems, and partners, which all intersect to support a state education system. The various roles are:

<b>CHAMPION</b> 	<p>NDE actively leads the strategic vision, aspirational measures of success, and policy direction to support learning, earning, and living by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging key stakeholders and partners in the emerging needs of the educational landscape and corresponding policy advocacy approach</li> <li>• Exercising policy leadership and proactively engaging and partnering with the Unicameral and Governor on priority issues</li> <li>• Advocating for necessary resources to meet needs and/or address issues to execute the vision</li> </ul>
<b>REGULATOR</b> 	<p>NDE leverages policy authority to ensure delivery of high quality, equitable education and services, beyond compliance with state and federal regulations by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assuring access to fair, equitable, and high quality education and services</li> <li>• Monitoring schools and districts to ensure regulation adherence, and setting expectations beyond compliance for accountability and growth in learning</li> <li>• Promoting best practices for leadership, using data and resources to ensure effective continuous improvement</li> </ul>
<b>CAPACITY BUILDER</b> 	<p>NDE directs technical assistance and professional development opportunities and promotes the sharing of best practices by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing technical assistance and professional development opportunities for educators, staff, and community providers</li> <li>• Actively engaging with priority and needs improvement schools, as well as continuing to support the improvement of all schools</li> <li>• Identifying schools and districts across the state with effective educational practices, to gather data on successful practices</li> <li>• Acting as a facilitator to connect schools to highlight learnings, share lessons learned, and communicate best practices</li> <li>• Developing, maintaining, and leveraging strong working relationships with education and community partners, to extend and enhance capacity across the state</li> </ul>
<b>CONNECTOR</b> 	<p>NDE helps to bridge the divide between learning, earning, and living, connecting schools, families, businesses, and communities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecting, convening, and partnering with schools, businesses, out-of-school programs, postsecondary education, state agencies, and community providers, to create a more comprehensive approach to education and service delivery</li> <li>• Supporting other agencies and organizations in active engagement, and relationship building amongst individuals, parents, and families</li> </ul>
<b>CHANGE AGENT</b> 	<p>NDE explores and supports promising new innovations by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researching, promoting, and providing support for promising new initiatives and innovations in education across the state and nation (e.g., promising activities in rural areas, blended learning, personalized learning, adult basic education)</li> <li>• Providing ongoing training, support, and resources to drive the adoption of new practices, and to assure implementation</li> </ul>

## Strategic Direction

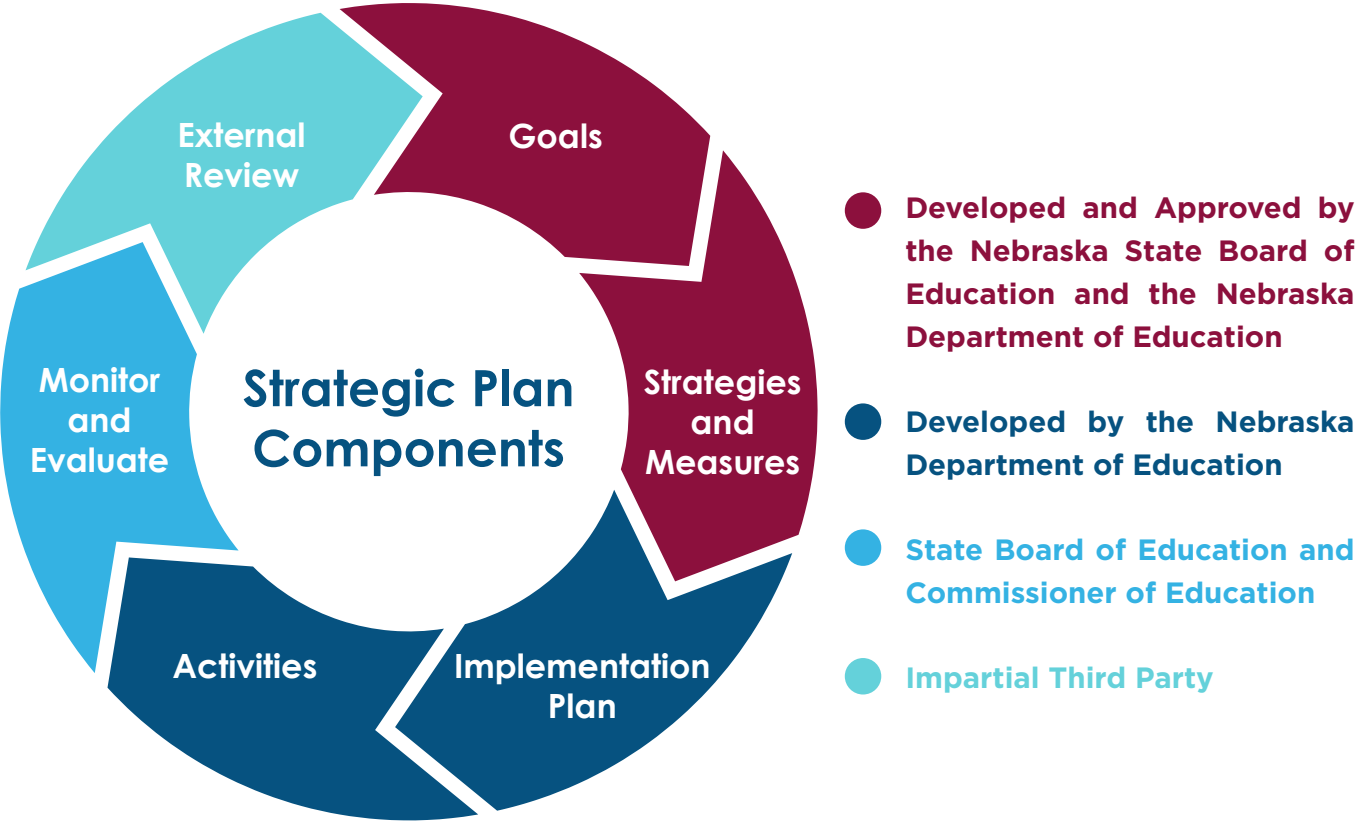
To realize the new strategic vision, it can no longer be business as usual.

	FROM	TO
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizational structure primarily oriented around subject area silos</li> <li>Decision-making authority concentrated mostly in hands of senior agency leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross-functional dynamic, with collaboration and communication across teams</li> <li>More distributed decision-making authority, staff closer to the issue empowered to make relevant decisions</li> </ul>
PERSONNEL & STAFFING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff with very specific skills primarily focused on content knowledge</li> <li>Traditional focus on regulation and compliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broader staff expertise, including both content knowledge and breadth of experiences (e.g., relationship building, background in business, work with underserved communities)</li> <li>Focus on leadership, innovation, and learning</li> </ul>
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sporadic engagement on an as-needed basis</li> <li>Limited engagement with specific populations or cultural communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistent and tailored stakeholder engagement plans for specific audiences, allowing authentic relationships and dialogue development</li> </ul>
DATA & SYSTEMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited publicly accessible data</li> <li>Focus on accountability and compliance</li> <li>Cumbersome website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Readily available data for all stakeholders, from an easy to use, up-to-date platform</li> <li>Focus on performance management</li> <li>User-friendly website and online portal with lessons learned, and best practices for practitioners</li> </ul>

# Moving Forward

The Board has taken into account the multiple roles of the NDE in the development of this strategic plan, and in the expectations set forth for the NDE. This recognition is coupled with the expectation of providing quality, equitable support through a multi- faceted system, under the charge of the NDE. The shared responsibility of leadership between the Board and the Commissioner includes developing this plan, monitoring measures of progress, and implementing outcomes through the NDE’s programs and supports for schools, students, systems, and clients across the state. The Board carries out this strategic plan through direction to the Commissioner. The Commissioner has the responsibility to build an implementation plan that makes NEQuESTT a living document, utilizing the aforementioned roles and strategic direction outlined for organizational structure, personnel and staffing, stakeholder engagement, and data and systems.

## Strategic Plan Components and Roles



## Operational Approach

**NEQuESTT** provides a framework for measuring multiple levels and processes, to ensure success through standards, quantifiable metrics, artifacts, and evidence-based analyses, utilizing a three-tiered approach:



### **NDE Accountability**

Process, regulations, support, interagency collaboration, data systems, fiscal responsibility, and evaluation



### **Service Accountability**

Quality and success of services provided by the agency



### **District and School Accountability**

School and agency progress and improvement

## Goals, Strategies, and Measures


The Board and the Commissioner will regularly review these measures of progress, as organized by the goals and strategies. The NDE measures of progress will include the Commissioner and Board activities necessary to build the department's system of accountability and support for services and schools. The NDE will track progress on these measures of progress and other metrics required by state and federal law. The Commissioner will report to the Board annually on these measures of progress.

## Implement, Monitor, and Evaluate

The Board and the Commissioner share the responsibility to:

- Champion and lead the strategic vision and aspirational measures of success
- Serve as change agents and capacity builders
- Ensure progress in the goals

The Board and the Commissioner will be responsible for implementing this plan, including the development of outcomes, activities, and monitoring on an annual basis. A review will be presented by the Commissioner and appropriate NDE personnel, annually or as directed. An objective external review of **NEQuESTT** will be conducted by an impartial third-party reviewer two years after adoption, and thereafter as determined by the Board with results being presented to stakeholders.



## MISSION

*To lead and support the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living*

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### NDE will:

- Create a dynamic vision that drives change through proactive leadership, to support learning
- Build connections amongst stakeholders, to take action in support of success for all learners
- Provide all Nebraskans significant opportunity to receive fair, equitable, and high quality education, and services to close achievement gaps
- Allow all learners to achieve their fullest potential in transitioning through phases of school, and into civic life
- Ensure all educators are effective in instructional outcomes, and monitoring student progress using multiple measures of proficiency
- Prepare all learners to be college, career, and civic ready

## GOALS

1. Ensure the education system, including the Nebraska Department of Education, is taking charge of its roles and responsibilities to provide leadership and enhance support systems in the state (Leadership)
2. Ensure that all Nebraskans, regardless of background or circumstances, have equitable access to opportunities for success (Success, Access, and Support)
3. Increase the number of Nebraskans who are ready for success in postsecondary education, career, and civic life (Teaching, Learning, and Serving)



## STRATEGIES

1. Ensure the education system, including the Nebraska Department of Education, is taking charge of its roles and responsibilities to provide leadership and enhance support systems in the state (Leadership)
  -  A. Provide leadership and high quality services in processes, regulations, interagency collaboration, data systems, fiscal responsibility and evaluation that enhance the success of educational systems in Nebraska
  -  B. Provide educational equity through the intentional allocation of resources and opportunities according to need which requires that discriminatory practices, prejudices, and beliefs be identified and eradicated
  -  C. Engage policy partners and stakeholders in the development of policies, regulations, and practices to ensure equitable opportunities for all Nebraskans
2. Ensure that all Nebraskans, regardless of background or circumstances, have equitable access to opportunities for success (Success, Access, and Support)
  -  A. Increase student, family, and community engagement to enhance educational experiences and opportunities (Positive Partnerships, Relationships, and Success)
  -  B. Provide quality educational opportunities for student success, beginning with early childhood education and continuing through transitions between grade levels, programs, schools, postsecondary institutions, and careers (Transitions)
  -  C. Ensure that all students have access to comprehensive instructional opportunities, beginning with early childhood education, to be prepared for postsecondary education and career (Educational Opportunities and Access)
3. Increase the number of Nebraskans who are ready for success in postsecondary education, career, and civic life (Teaching, Learning, and Serving)
  -  A. Ensure every student upon completion of secondary education is prepared for postsecondary education, career, and civic opportunities (College, Career, and Civic Ready)
  -  B. Use assessments to measure and to improve student achievement and to inform instruction (Assessment)
  -  C. Assure that students are supported by qualified/credentialed, effective teachers, and leaders throughout their learning experiences (Educator Effectiveness)

# MEASURES OF PROGRESS

## LEADERSHIP

- 1.A.1. Organize the NDE through personnel and processes to provide leadership in school support systems, regulations, interagency collaboration, data systems, fiscal responsibility, and evaluation that will enhance the success of educational systems in Nebraska, by 2020 [original 1.1]
- 1.A.2. Implement an evaluation framework to measure the quality of services and systems of support provided by the Nebraska Department of Education, by 2020 [original 1.2]
- 1.A.3. Develop and maintain a professional learning directory to include high-quality professional learning opportunities for teachers, service providers, school leaders and local school board members, by 2020 [original 1.3]
- 1.A.4. Collaborate with the Governor, Legislature, postsecondary institutions, and the Educational Service Units (ESUs) to create a uniform process to align dual credit opportunities for students across the state, by 2020 [original 1.4]
- 1.B.1. Create an equity lens for use by the State Board of Education that provides a common vocabulary and protocol for decision-making and evaluation of progress toward systematic equity transformation, by 2019
- 1.C.1. Develop and implement an adaptive equity plan that will ensure equity is a key focus in NDE policies, practices, and organizational culture, by 2022 [original 7.1]

# SUCCESS, ACCESS, AND SUPPORT



## Positive Partnerships, Relationships, and Success

- 2.A.1. Implement an annual protocol to collect engagement and satisfaction data from stakeholders for continuous improvement of NDE programs and services by 2019 [original 2.1]
- 2.A.2. One hundred percent of Nebraska schools will have all students in grades 7–12 create and utilize a personal learning plan, by 2026 [original 2.3]



## Transitions

- 2.B.1. A baseline and benchmarks will be developed to track all students with a disability having access to participate in career counseling, explorations, self-advocacy training, and work-based learning experiences, by 2018 [original 3.1] REPORTED COMPLETE
- 2.B.2. Implement a systematic process for supporting the needs of mobile students, by 2026 [original 3.4]



## Educational Opportunities and Access

- 2.C.1. Develop a statewide open digital course and content repository and curate high-quality instructional resources, by 2020 [original 4.1]
- 2.C.2. Ninety-five percent of Nebraska school districts will be able to identify at least one high-quality early childhood educational program accessible to all of the district's resident preschool age population, by 2026 [original 4.3]

# TEACHING, LEARNING, AND SERVING



## College, Career, and Civic Ready

- 3.A.1. Define college, career, and civic readiness, by 2020 [original 5.1]
- 3.A.2. All Nebraska elementary schools will provide a tiered system of support consisting of evidence-based curriculum, instruction, interventions, and assessment for English language arts and mathematics, by 2020 [original 5.2]
- 3.A.3. One hundred percent of Nebraska schools will provide all students with a program for a career awareness, exploration, and preparation, by 2026 [original 5.3]



## Assessment

- 3.B.1. Utilizing baseline data from the ACT, long-term goals will be developed for 11th grade achievement, including goals for subgroups, by 2018 [original 6.1] REPORTED COMPLETE
- 3.B.2. Implement a balanced assessment system to measure achievement and growth in grades 3–8 that meets the requirements of federal and state law and is timely for instructional purposes, by 2020 [original 6.2]








## Educator Effectiveness





- 3.C.1. One hundred percent of Nebraska schools will utilize performance standards and a research-based evaluation system for all certified staff as aligned to Rule 10, by 2021 [original 7.2]

# ASPIRATIONAL MEASURES OF SUCCESS

## SUCCESS, ACCESS, AND SUPPORT (SAS)

- SAS.1.  The dropout rate of all Nebraska students including subgroups will be less than 1%, by 2026 [original 2.2] (Positive Partnerships, Relationships, and Success)
- SAS.2.  There will be a reduction in the percentage of students who are absent more than 10 days per year from 27.46% to 15%, by 2026 [original 2.4] (Positive Partnerships, Relationships, and Success)
- SAS.3.  The 4-year cohort graduation rates for all Nebraska students will be greater than 92% and not less than 85% for any one subgroup, by 2026 [original 3.2] (Transitions)
- SAS.4.  The 7-year cohort graduation rates for all Nebraska students will be greater than 95% and not less than 90% for any one subgroup, by 2026 [original 3.3] (Transitions)
- SAS.5.  Eighty-five percent of all Nebraska students, upon graduation from high school, will have completed Advanced Placement coursework, earned dual credit and/or obtained industry certification, by 2026 [original 4.2] (Educational Opportunities and Access)

## TEACHING, LEARNING, AND SERVING (TLS)

- TLS.1  At least 50% of all Nebraska high school students from any given cohort year, will have earned a college degree, credential, or certificate, within five years of graduating from high school, by 2026 [original 5.4] (College, Career, and Civic Ready)
- TLS.2.  The percent of Nebraska students in grades 3–8 and 11 proficient in reading will increase from 79% to 89%, by 2026 [original 6.3] (Assessment)
- TLS.3.  The percent of Nebraska students in grades 3–8 and 11 proficient in math will increase from 72% to 82%, by 2026 [original 6.4] (Assessment)
- TLS.4.  The percent of Nebraska students in grades 3–8 and 11 proficient in science will increase from 72% to 82%, by 2026 [original 6.5] (Assessment)

Notes: (1) Aspirational Measures of Success may need to be edited in conjunction with edits to the state Every Student Success Act (ESSA) plan. (2) Measures reported as complete are indicated in *italics*, followed by the notation: “**REPORTED COMPLETE**”. (3) Strategy 1.B. adapted from the National School Boards Association’s Vision for Equity in Public Education. (4) Measure 1.B.1. adapted from the National Association of State Boards of Education equity lens. (5) References to the AQuESTT system are indicated by colored tenet icons. More information on the Strategic Vision and Direction can be found at: [nebraskaeducationvision.com](http://nebraskaeducationvision.com).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Nebraska State Board of Education and the Nebraska Department of Education give special thanks to the many partners who have provided input in the development of this strategic plan. We also recognize and appreciate the grant support of the Peter Kiewit Foundation and the Sherwood Foundation. The NDE is excited to continue this collaboration in leading and supporting the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living.

## NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

It is the policy of the Nebraska Department of Education not to discriminate on the basis of sex, disability, race, color, religion, marital status, age or national origin, in its educational programs, admission policies, employment, or other agency programs.

## GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

This guidance document is advisory in nature but is binding on an agency until amended by such agency. A guidance document does not include internal procedural documents that only affect the internal operations of the agency, and does not impose additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties, or include confidential information or rules and regulations made in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act. If you believe that this guidance document imposes additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties, you may request a review of the document. For comments regarding this document contact [nde.guidance@nebraska.gov](mailto:nde.guidance@nebraska.gov).





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