

# PRIORITY SCHOOLS

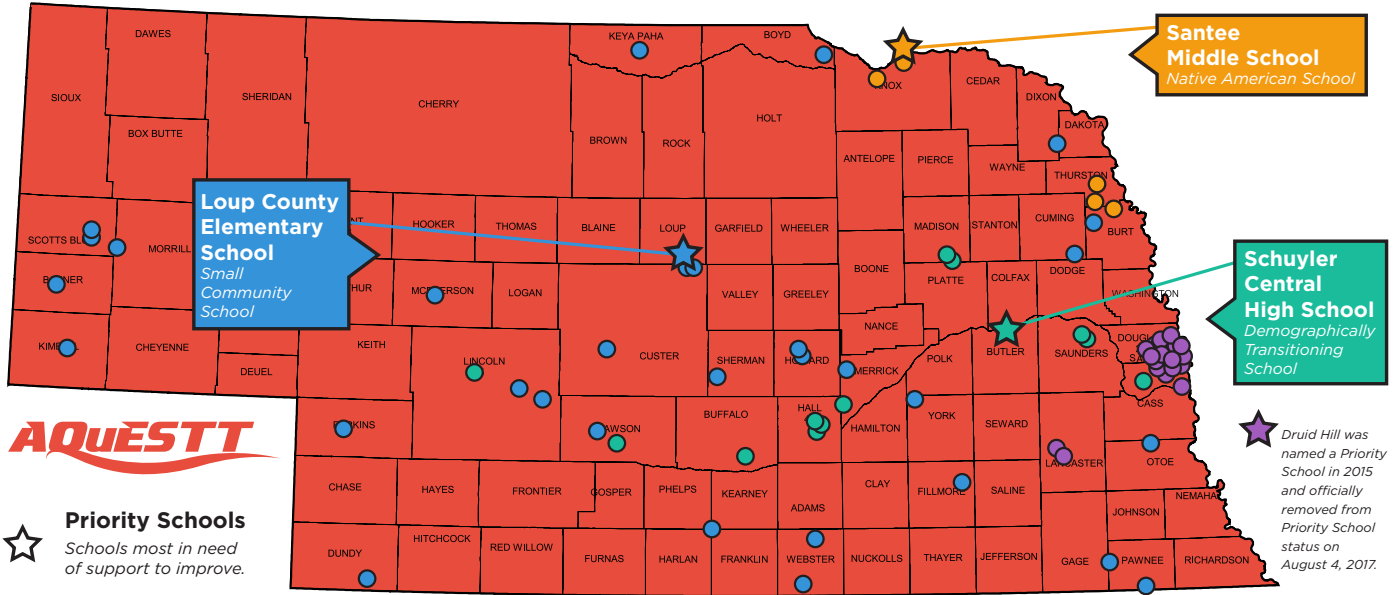


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## AQuESTT Needs Improvement Schools

There are 87 schools in Nebraska that are classified as "Needs Improvement" in the AQuESTT Classification System. These schools are further categorized into four theme areas: Demographically Transitioning Schools, Native American Schools, Small Community Schools, and Urban/Metro Schools.

**PRIORITY**



**AQuESTT**

**Priority Schools**  
Schools most in need of support to improve.

**Demographically Transitioning Schools**  
13 schools  
14.94% of Needs Improvement

**Native American Schools**  
12 schools  
13.80% of Needs Improvement

**Small Community Schools**  
31 schools  
35.63% of Needs Improvement

**Urban/Metro Schools**  
31 schools  
35.63% of Needs Improvement

Updated 07/06/2018

# PRIORITY SCHOOLS

## Designation

State law requires the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) to designate Priority Schools, those most in need of support to improve. In 2015, the NDE conducted a comprehensive study of 87 schools designated in need of support by analyzing:

- Raw Classification Data
- Evidence-based Analysis Responses
- Demographic Characteristics
- School Improvement Plans
- Existing Systems of Support

That list of schools was narrowed to 52 for additional in-depth review that involved teams of NDE subject matter experts. From those reviews, 10 schools were further analyzed by looking at a more detailed report on their Evidence-Based Analysis responses and an expanded profile. Three schools were selected from the list of 10, each reflecting different Nebraska communities that could be supported by state and local communities, NDE staff, Education Service Units, and other state education organizations. The process informs NDE staff so they can expand state assistance to effectively help more schools.



## What Happens After Priority School Designation

For each Priority School, a Support and Intervention Team collaborates with school staff to identify and guide improvement efforts focused on the six tenets of AQuESTT:

- positive partnerships, relationships, and success
- transitions
- educational opportunities and access
- college, career, and civic ready
- assessment
- educator effectiveness

The roles and responsibilities of the Support and Intervention Teams including the school staff are:

- Diagnose key areas of school effectiveness
- Develop a progress plan for improvement
- Monitor and support the progress plan implementation

Each Priority School will develop and annually submit a progress plan for improvement to the State Board of Education for approval.

The content of the Progress Plan for Improvement will include:

- Required actions for improvement
- Measurable indicators of progress
- Strategies for improvement
- Timelines for improvement

The State Board of Education will review the progress plans and determine when a Priority School may exit priority status.

## Expansion of Priority School Investments

In 2018, with the passage of LB 1081, the NDE must now designate no fewer than three Priority Schools. This important statute now allows the NDE to scale up its Priority School activities to more schools.

### About Priority Schools

#### Priority Schools are NOT

- ... the worst schools in Nebraska. On the contrary, we see potential in each site to improve outcomes for students.
- ... failing. We don't believe any schools in Nebraska are "failing." Instead, we see opportunities to improve the school through collaboration.
- ... a state takeover. Our belief is school turnaround and improvement only occur when local entities are most engaged. As a priority school, we collaboratively build a plan for progress with consultants, Educational Service Units, and staff from the NDE.
- ... struggling because of their student population. Every student can learn and every school can improve how they address student learning differences regardless of background, race, economic status, ability, or English language proficiency.

#### Priority Schools ARE

- ... the NDE's priority. We rally our resources and expertise around building school improvement plans with each site.
- ... the schools most in need of support to improve. We see potential in our priority schools and know with the right supports from the NDE and its partners, we can realize improved results for students.
- ... opportunities to learn more about what works for student learning and what doesn't. We believe we can study our work in priority schools and replicate with other schools in the state.
- ... poised to make significant growth if given some additional targeted and specific supports.
- ... composed of leaders and staff that are passionate about student learning and have the desire to improve outcomes for students.
- ... in communities that reflect the values of improving education for their students.