

# A COMMUNITY'S GUIDE TO NEBRASKA SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT



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## CHAMPIONS FOR EQUITY

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is committed to leading and supporting the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living. The NDE recognizes school success doesn't look the same everywhere. To be champions of equity, schools, Educational Service Units (ESUs), parents, community members, and the NDE must define success together for all students. Educational equity means all students have meaningful access to the educational resources they need at the right moment, at the right level, and with the right intensity.

## AQuESTT

The NDE and stakeholders across the state created an accountability and support system, AQuESTT (Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow), which centers around six tenets. With ESSA guidance, schools can focus more on providing supports to their students, instead of being labeled or punished.

In the past, the federal education law, *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), created a high-stakes, punitive environment for schools. In 2015, NCLB was replaced with the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), which allows states to focus on supports for schools to help them better serve their students.

AQuESTT allows schools to focus more on educational equity for their students. The NDE, through the AQuESTT system, classifies schools into four categories: *Excellent*, *Great*, *Good*, and *Needs Improvement*. These classifications are based on a number of student and school indicators. (For more information see Indicators). This classification will now occur annually.

The next step in the continuation of the AQuESTT system allows the NDE to use those classification indicators to better funnel resources and supports to students, with the ultimate goal of ensuring all students across all backgrounds and circumstances have equitable access and opportunities for success.

## SCHOOL-DRIVEN PROCESS

The CSI process focuses on schools' assets, through a comprehensive needs assessment grounded in the six tenets of AQuESTT. Schools identify areas of strength, as well as opportunities for growth, focused on increasing student achievement and outcomes. Schools must then build a comprehensive plan focused on what is going well and areas to improve, with steps to monitor progress. Progress plans should build upon a school's continuous improvement plan already in place. Each school's superintendent will be notified of their level of support. This notification will be followed by a webinar to ensure an understanding of what the levels of support will look like.

## PARTNERSHIPS

The work of providing equitable opportunities is not just the work of the NDE, ESUs, and schools receiving support. Because the focus is on all students, all schools must strive to continuously improve, regardless of the level of support they might be receiving, because of the challenges and rigor our current educational system demands. AQuESTT is the system which asks all schools, parents, and community members, in partnerships with the NDE and ESUs, to get serious about the success of all students and serve in roles like never before.

# LEVELS OF SUPPORT

All Schools		Support	Timeline	
All Schools		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tools and a continuous improvement framework (AQuESTT, EBA)</li> <li>Access to data to support continuous improvement planning process</li> </ul>	Continuous	
Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI)	Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI)	Support	Timeline	
A public school with one or more consistently underperforming student groups (2019, annually thereafter)	Any public school with one or more student group(s) performing at or below the performance level of students in state's lowest-performing public schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprehensive needs assessment</li> <li>Plan for improvement tailored to meet needs of student groups connected to continuous improvement plan</li> </ul>	2019; Annually subsequently	
Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI)		Support	Timeline	
Lowest 5 percent of Title 1 Schools <b>OR</b>	Any public high schools with graduation rate below 67%, <b>OR</b>	Public schools with consistently underperforming student groups for 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprehensive needs assessment</li> <li>Plan for improvement connected to continuous improvement plan</li> <li>Eligible for funding to support implementation of plan for improvement</li> </ul>	Winter 2018; Every three years subsequently
Priority Schools		Support	Timeline	
Public schools coming from Needs Improvement category <b>AND</b>	Multiple data sources indicating prioritization of need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intervention team appointed to aid in improvement efforts</li> <li>Intensive approach for improvement</li> <li>NDE-facilitated support with ESU partners</li> </ul>	Continuous; At discretion of State Board of Education	

For more information on Comprehensive Support and Improvement, please visit: <https://aquestt.com/csisupport>.

