

# A SCHOOL'S GUIDE TO THE AQuESTT SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS



[www.aquestt.com](http://www.aquestt.com)

[www.education.ne.gov/essa](http://www.education.ne.gov/essa)

[nep.education.ne.gov](http://nep.education.ne.gov)

## 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. 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. The NDE recognizes school success does not 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.

## 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. The AQuESTT system allows schools to focus more on educational equity for their students, and puts renewed emphasis on school improvement.

With ESSA guidance, schools can focus more on providing supports to students instead of being labeled or punished. AQuESTT serves as a comprehensive tool to classify schools, and more importantly identify schools needing support to achieve more educational equity in all six tenets for our students.

## A FOCUS ON STUDENT GROUP PERFORMANCE

School improvement conversations must start with students at the center. This means considering the differing needs of each student, and identifying themes or trends among student groups. Beginning in 2019, NDE will strengthen their support to schools with lower performing student groups. Schools will be designated for Targeted Support and Improvement, a cohort of schools that will intentionally focus on the more intensive strategies to reach student groups. This support exemplifies the NDE's focus on equity and will build off a school's assets, while ensuring learners and their needs are at the center.

To personalize supports for students, schools must look critically at their data, breaking it down by student characteristics such as race and ethnicity, English proficiency status, disability, and socioeconomic status. This analysis informs the evidence-based intervention strategies needed to ensure the narrowing of academic achievement gaps between student groups.

## 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.

# THE SYSTEM IN ACTION

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.

For the 2018-19 school year, the metrics to be used for classification are seen in the table below:

ESSA Indicator Categories	Academic Achievement	Academic Progress	English Language Proficiency and Progress	Graduation Rate	School Quality or Student Success
<b>AQuESTT Indicators</b>	Status	Growth, Improvement, Non-Proficiency	Progress Towards English Language Proficiency	4- and 7-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	Chronic Absenteeism, Science, Evidence-based Analysis

The next and newest step in the continuation of the AQuESTT system allows the NDE to use those classifications to 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. These different levels of support are as follows:

LEVELS OF SUPPORT					
			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>.

