**Principals Toolkit: Presenting Needs Improvement & Needs Improvement/Comprehensive Support & Improvement to Stakeholders**

**Letter/Email to Parents (schools eligible for Comprehensive Support and Improvement)**

Dear [name of school] parent:

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) now classifies all schools as Excellent, Great, Good and Needs Improvement. This new system of accountability will help to ensure educational equity—that means that all Nebraska students will have equal opportunities to grow and succeed, regardless of where they live or where they go to school. NDE is using this new accountability system to target funds and resources to schools that need them most.

Our school has been classified as Needs Improvement. Because [we are one of the lower performing Title I schools OR our graduation rate is below 67 percent OR some groups of students at our school have been consistently trailing behind], the good news is, we are eligible for Comprehensive Support and Improvement. This means we are now eligible for additional funding and support. I want to tell you how we—parents, teachers, school staff, and community members—will work together to create a strong and effective [name of school].

We will take some specific steps, and I invite you to join us in this effort.

We will conduct a comprehensive needs assessment. This will allow us to clearly identify what our school does well and what we need to improve. Then, we will create a detailed improvement plan that will be reviewed and approved by our district and NDE. As a result of this improvement plan, we may be able to get additional funds. This could mean professional development for some of our teachers and staff, instructional coaches in our classrooms, and new instructional materials.

Please look for additional information about how you can be involved as we move forward. In the meantime, if you want to learn more about the NDE classification system, visit [www.aquestt.com](http://www.aquestt.com). And to keep up to date on our plans at [name of school], keep an eye on [link to school website].

Thank you for your support of [name of school].

Sincerely,

**Letter/Email to Parents (schools identified as Needs Improvement [not eligible for CSI])**

Dear [name of school] parent:

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) now classifies all schools as Excellent, Great, Good and Needs Improvement. This new system of accountability will help to ensure educational equity—that means that all Nebraska students will have equal opportunities to grow and succeed, regardless of where they live or where they go to school. NDE is using this new accountability system to target funds and resources to schools that need them most.

The new accountability system uses a combination of indicators to classify schools. Test scores are part of the classification. But so are many other measures of student success, [include what is relevant to your school] such as graduation rates, progress for English learners, and reduction in absenteeism. Our school is trailing behind most other schools in Nebraska.

But this is not a bad news story. We will take some specific steps to strengthen [name of school], and I invite you to join us in this effort.

Every school in Nebraska has the opportunity to work with an Educational Services Unit, or ESU. These organizations are expert at creating strong schools. As a school designated as Needs Improvement, we will work with our ESU and the NDE on a priority basis. We will receive technical support and expertise in specific content areas, resources on instructional materials, and special education supports.

Please look for additional information about how you can be involved as we move forward. In the meantime, if you want to learn more about the NDE classification system, visit [www.aquestt.com](http://www.aquestt.com). And to keep up to date on our plans at [name of school], keep an eye on [link to school website].

Thank you for your support of [name of school].

Sincerely,

**Suggested Website Copy (Schools eligible for CSI)**

[Name of school] to Launch New Steps to Strengthen School

[Name of school] has been classified as a “Needs Improvement” school, under the Nebraska Department of Education’s AQuESTT system. AQuESTT stands for Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow, and it classifies all schools into four categories: Excellent, Great, Good and Needs Improvement. NDE is using this new accountability system to target funds and resources to schools that need them most.

We are eligible for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI). This will allow us to take new and additional actions to strengthen our school.

We will build upon the work that school staff, teachers, parents and community members have undertaken to improve our school, efforts such as [insert two to three examples of current school-improvement efforts]. Now, we will add to that work. This will include developing a needs assessment—determining what is working well and what is not working well—and creating a very specific improvement plan.

[Name of school] may be able to receive more funds and support. This could include professional development for teachers and principals, instructional coaches in classrooms, and new instructional materials.

Continue to check our website to learn how you can be part of this important, new approach to building a stronger [name of school]. In the meantime, if you have questions, please contact [include school-specific contact].

**Suggested Website Copy (schools identified as Needs Improvement [not eligible for CSI])**

[Name of school] to Launch New Steps to Strengthen School

[Name of school] has been classified as a “Needs Improvement” school, under the Nebraska Department of Education’s AQuESTT system. AQuESTT stands for Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow, and it classifies all schools into four categories: Excellent, Great, Good and Needs Improvement. NDE is using this new accountability system to target funds and resources to schools that need them most.

This classification will allow us to take new and additional actions to strengthen our school.

We will build upon the work that school staff, teachers, parents and community members have undertaken to strengthen our school, efforts such as [insert two to three examples of current school-improvement efforts]. Now, we will add to that work.

Every school in Nebraska has the opportunity to work with an Educational Services Unit, or ESU. These organizations are expert at creating strong schools. As a school designated as Needs Improvement, we will work with our ESU and the NDE on a priority basis. We will receive technical support and expertise in specific content areas, resources on instructional materials, and special education supports.

Continue to check our website to learn how you can be part of this important, new approach to building a stronger [name of school]. In the meantime, if you have questions, please contact [include school-specific contact].

**Principal Talking Points – Engaging Parents, Community Members (Schools Eligible for CSI)**

* The state board of education and the Nebraska Department of Education have created a system for classifying schools. It is called AQuESTT, which stands for Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow.
* AQuESTT classifies schools as Excellent, Great, Good and Needs Improvement.
* A wide variety of indicators go into the classification. These include test scores, graduation rates, progress for students learning English, and reduction in absenteeism. It also includes the progress a school is making toward achieving these indicators.
* Our school has been classified as Needs Improvement. It is eligible for Comprehensive Support and Improvement.
  + This is because we are one of the lower performing Title I schools OR our graduation rate is below 67 percent OR some groups of students at our school have been consistently trailing behind.
* Working with parents and community members, we have taken steps to improve [name of school]. These steps include [insert two to three steps currently under way to strengthen the educational experience of students].
* There is a silver lining to a Needs Improvement classification.
  + Being eligible for Comprehensive Support and Improvement gives us the opportunity to build on the work we are already doing and to turbo charge our efforts.
  + For example, we will conduct a complete needs assessment. This will allow us to identify what we are doing well and what we need to improve.
  + Then, we will create a detailed improvement plan—it will build upon and strengthen, not replace, our current continuous improvement plan.
  + Once our improvement plan is reviewed and approved by the district and the state, we may be eligible for additional funding.
  + This could support changes such as:
    - Professional development for teachers and staff
    - Instructional coaches in the classroom
    - New instructional materials
* We want to move quickly but thoughtfully. Our hope is to have the improvement plan developed by the end of February.
  + We need the help of parents [community leaders, business owners] as we conduct our needs assessment and create our improvement plan. I encourage you to join us in this effort.

**Principal Talking Points—Engaging Parents, Community Members (Needs Improvement Schools Not Eligible for CSI)**

* The state board of education and the Nebraska Department of Education have created a system for classifying schools. It is called AQuESTT, which stands for Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow.
* AQuESTT classifies schools as Excellent, Great, Good and Needs Improvement.
* A wide variety of indicators go into the classification. These include test scores, graduation rates, progress for students learning English, and reduction in absenteeism. It also includes the progress a school is making toward achieving these indicators.
* Our school has been classified as a Needs Improvement school. That is because it trails behind most other Nebraska schools on several of these indicators.
* But this is not a bad news story. Working with parents and community members, we have taken steps to improve [name of school]. These steps include [insert two to three steps currently under way to strengthen the educational experience of students].
* There is a silver lining to a Needs Improvement classification.
  + We will build upon our current continuous improvement plan
  + We will have the opportunity to work closely with Educational Service Units, or ESUs and the Nebraska Department of Education
    - ESUs are organizations expert at creating strong schools. So we may access:
      * Technical support tailored for our school
      * Content area expertise
      * Resources on instructional materials
      * Special education supports
* We need the help of parents [community leaders, business owners] as we move forward. I encourage you to join us in this effort.

**Principal Talking Points—Engaging Teachers, School Staff (Schools Eligible for CSI)**

* We’re all familiar with AQuESTT—Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow—the new accountability system created by the state board of education and the Nebraska Department of Education.
* AQuESTT classifies schools as Excellent, Great, Good and Needs Improvement.
* A wide variety of indicators go into the classification. These include test scores, graduation rates, progress for students learning English, and reduction in absenteeism. It also includes the progress a school is making toward achieving these indicators.
* Our school has been classified as Needs Improvement. It is eligible for Comprehensive Support and Improvement.
  + This is because we are one of the lower performing Title I schools OR our graduation rate is below 67 percent OR some groups of students at our school have been consistently trailing behind.
* I recognize, we all recognize, that our school confronts significant challenges, [insert relevant examples, such as poverty and crime].
* This new designation—as a Needs Improvement school, one eligible for Comprehensive Support and Improvement—will help to ensure our school gets the resources we need to continue our efforts to strengthen [name of school]. It will help us, help ensure all of our students have meaningful access to the educational resources they need at the right moment, at the right level, and with the right intensity.
* Working with parents and community members, we have taken steps to improve [name of school]. These steps include [insert two to three steps currently under way to strengthen the educational experience of students].
* There is a silver lining to a Needs Improvement classification.
  + Being eligible for Comprehensive Support and Improvement gives us the opportunity to build on the work we are already doing and to turbo charge our efforts.
  + For example, we will conduct a complete needs assessment. This will allow us to identify what we are doing well and what we need to improve.
  + Then, we will create a detailed improvement plan—it will build upon and strengthen, not replace, our current continuous improvement plan.
  + Once our improvement plan is reviewed and approved by the district and the state, we may be eligible for additional funding.
  + This could support changes such as:
    - Professional development for teachers and staff
    - Instructional coaches in the classroom
    - New instructional materials
* We want to move quickly but thoughtfully. Our hope is to have the improvement plan developed by the end of February.
  + We will need the help of parents, community leaders, and business owners as we conduct our needs assessment and create our improvement plan.
  + Be open, be transparent with parents and other stakeholders. Recognize that this designation—as a Needs Improvement school eligible for Comprehensive Support and Improvement—is the next step in the work all of us have been engaged in, to build an even stronger [name of school].
  + Most importantly, I need the continued commitment and assistance of each of you, as we conduct our needs assessment and develop our improvement plan.

**Principal Talking Points—Engaging Teachers, School Staff (Needs Improvement Schools Not Eligible for CSI)**

* We’re all familiar with AQuESTT—Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow—the new accountability system created by the state board of education and the Nebraska Department of Education.
* AQuESTT classifies schools as Excellent, Great, Good and Needs Improvement.
* A wide variety of indicators go into the classification. These include test scores, graduation rates, progress for students learning English, and reduction in absenteeism. It also includes the progress a school is making toward achieving these indicators.
* Our school has been classified as a Needs Improvement school. That is because it trails behind most other Nebraska schools on several of these indicators.
* I recognize, we all recognize, that our school confronts significant challenges, such as [insert relevant examples, such as poverty and crime.]
* This new designation—as a Needs Improvement school—will help to ensure our school gets the resources we need to continue our efforts to strengthen [name of school]. It will help us, help ensure all of our students have meaningful access to the educational resources they need at the right moment, at the right level, and with the right intensity.
* Working with parents and community members, we have taken steps to improve [name of school]. These steps include [insert two to three steps currently under way to strengthen the educational experience of students].
* There is a silver lining to a Needs Improvement classification.
  + We will build upon our current continuous improvement plan
  + We will have the opportunity to work closely with Educational Service Units, or ESUs and the Nebraska Department of Education
    - ESUs are organizations expert at creating strong schools. So we may access:
      * Technical support tailored for our school
      * Content area expertise
      * Resources on instructional materials
      * Special education supports
* We will need the help of parents, community leaders, and business owners as we conduct our needs assessment and create our improvement plan.
  + Be open, be transparent with parents and other stakeholders. Recognize that this designation—as a Needs Improvement school—is the next step in the work all of us have been engaged in, to build an even stronger [name of school].
* Most importantly, I need the continued commitment and assistance of each of you, as we work to ensure educational opportunity for all of our students.

**Suggested Social Media Posts (include visuals such as school logo, photo of school, photo of students)[[1]](#footnote-1)\***

**Twitter:**

[name of school] has been named a Needs Improvement school. We have a plan for strengthening [name of school]. Visit [www.[school](http://www.[school) link] to learn about our plans and how you can be involved.

**(for CSI schools)** The [name of school] community is building a better school. We’re a “Needs Improvement” school with a strategy. We’ll figure what’s working well and what’s not and create an improvement plan. Visit [www.[school](http://www.[school) link] to learn more.

**(for CSI schools)** How are we responding to being named a Needs Improvement school? First, a needs assessment. Then, a plan for improvement. Then changes, such as professional development and new materials. Visit [www.[school](http://www.[school) link] to keep up to date.

We are pursuing the six tenets of quality education spelled out by the state board and NDE in [AQuESTT.com](https://aquestt.com/) Join us as we continue to work to strengthen our school. Visit [www.[school](http://www.[school) link] to keep up to date.

On [insert date] we will hold a special parents meeting: What does it mean to be a Needs Improvement school? What new steps will we take to strengthen our school? Visit [www.[school](http://www.[school) link] for more details.

**Facebook:**

**(for CSI schools)** Our school has been classified as Needs Improvement. What does that mean? What are we doing to improve? The state board of education and Nebraska Dept. of Education have created [AQuESTT.com](https://aquestt.com/). It classifies schools as Excellent, Great, Good and Needs Improvement. This is based on a number of indicators, from test scores to absenteeism to progress made year-to-year. Our school is eligible for new supports, such as professional development, and additional funding. Visit [www.[school](http://www.[school) link] to keep up to date.

**(for Needs Improvement schools, not eligible for CSI)** Our school has been classified as Needs Improvement. What does that mean? What are we doing to improve? The state board of education and Nebraska Dept. of Education have created [AQuESTT.com](https://aquestt.com/). It classifies schools as Excellent, Great, Good and Needs Improvement. This is based on a number of indicators, from test scores to absenteeism to progress made year-to-year. We will be joining with experts in the field to strengthen our students’ experience, accessing technical support tailored for our school, content area expertise, resources on instructional materials, and special education supports.

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1. \* See the attached document, “Social Media Response Guidelines” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)