

The AQuESTT accountability system was designed to implement a broader, bolder, and better system of school improvement. In an effort to tell the story of schools, more fully capture the work happening inside a school's walls, and align accountability and improvement practices, AQuESTT is poised to expand indicators to align closer to the six tenets of AQuESTT.

The purpose of this document is to provide a high-level overview of each indicator and its purpose, how the indicators combine to create the accountability system, and how the system sets up expansion of indicators in the future.

Indicators

Status

Status is a rating based on the percent of students proficient on NSCAS tests of English language arts and math for grades 3-8, and ELA and math performance on ACT for high school.

How it's calculated:

Each NSCAS test has three performance levels, Developing, On Track, and College and Career Ready Benchmark. Students meeting the top two levels (On Track, and CCR Benchmark) are considered "proficient." The percentage of students who are proficient in math is combined with the percent of students who are proficient in ELA. This combined proficiency indicates a schools initial performance level of Excellent, Great, Good, or Needs Improvement.

What Status tells us:

Through immense stakeholder feedback and approval, Nebraska has implemented robust college and career readiness standards in both mathematics and English language arts. As the name implies, Status indicates how schools are doing towards meeting these new standards. Students who are deemed proficient are likely to succeed in college and career, leading to improved outcomes for themselves and our state.

Growth

Growth is an adjustment to the Status rating based on the percent of students that showed improvement compared to their performance the previous year.

How it's calculated:

For all Growth-eligible NSCAS assessments, the following table is used to determine whether or not that assessment is assigned a Growth point by comparing the current year NSCAS performance level and score against the previous year for the same subject area. An "X" indicates when an assessment qualifies for a Growth point:

	Current Year				
	Performance Levels	College & Career Ready	On Track		Developing
Previous Year	College & Career Ready	X	-		-
	On Track	X	Score Gain ≥ 0	Score Gain < 0	-
			X	-	
	Developing	X	X		Score Gain > 0
				X	-

Since high schoolers only take the ACT once, no Growth calculation is possible for high schools at this time.

What Growth tells us:

Accountability systems often lead to unintended consequences. For example, schools often only focus on "bubble kids," those students that can be moved from one proficiency status to another. This is harmful to students, and not what systems are meant to accomplish. Our Growth indicator takes into account ALL student growth, incentivizing schools to work with ALL students.

Growth answers the questions, "Is this school improving student achievement outcomes for all students from year to year?"

Improvement

Improvement is based on a school's average statewide assessment scores over a three year period of time. If there is an upward trend of a certain amount then the school receives credit.

How it's calculated:

A complex tool called a linear regression is used to determine a school's upward trend on NSCAS scores for ELA and math. If the calculated trend line (representing the change in average NSCAS scores per year) is greater than or equal to the calculated cut score, then the school receives credit for improving student achievement over time.

What Improvement tells us:

Often, a single year of poor or strong academic performance can skew the school's accountability results. Using a trend measure like Improvement helps to smooth out these differences, and puts a premium on schools continuously improving results for students.

Reduction in Non-Proficiency

Similar to Improvement, the Non-Proficiency indicator is based on the decreasing or increasing three-year trend of the percentage of NSCAS assessment scores defined as non-proficient (Developing).

How it's calculated:

A school's two-year or three-year performance on ELA and math NSCAS tests is used in this calculation. The non-proficiency rate is calculated by dividing the number of ELA / math assessments with scores in the Developing range by the total number of ELA/math assessments. This rate is calculated for the current year as well as the two previous years, and combined into a trend line using a linear regression.

What Non-Proficiency tells us:

The Non-Proficiency Indicator is a way to measure a school's progress towards reducing the achievement gap between proficient and non-proficient students. This indicator insures schools are focusing time and resources on improving outcomes for all students.

Graduation Rate

The Graduation Rate indicator takes into account the 4-year and 7-year graduation rates for high schools.

How it's calculated:

Nebraska uses the adjusted cohort model, meaning a student is allowed several months beyond traditional graduation to achieve a diploma. The model is calculated by dividing the number of cohort members who earn a regular high school diploma by the end of the school year by the number of first time 9th graders in the fall four years previous (starting cohort). This ninth grade cohort also includes students who transferred in, and does not include students who transferred out, emigrated, or passed away during the school years.

The Nebraska Constitution provides for the "free instruction in the common schools of this state of all persons between the ages of five and twenty-one years." [Nebraska Constitution, Article VII (1)]. As such, the developers of AQuESTT suggested that 7-year cohort graduation rate should be allowed to give schools/districts credit for students with whom they continue to work, especially students with disabilities that may require services until they are 21 years-old.

Four-year graduation rate will be weighted at 51% while seven-year will be 49%.

What Graduation tells us:

This indicator shows that each student graduating has met the district-determined graduation requirements and is college and/or career ready.

Chronic Absenteeism

A student who is chronically absent is missing an academically-detrimental amount of school. Research shows that students who miss 10% or more of their school days perform worse academically, and have worsened life outcomes (jail time, unemployment, etc).

How it's calculated:

A student is identified as chronically absent when they have not been present for 10 percent or more of the days in membership. Membership is defined as the number of school days a student is enrolled and registered during the annual reporting period.

Nebraska will use a reduction in chronic absenteeism approach. The Department of Education will analyze three years of chronic absence data to determine a baseline for each school. Targets will be set for each school in reducing chronic

absenteeism by half in 10 years. This goal will then be broken into yearly benchmarks that must be met in order to reach the 10-year goal. Schools meeting the yearly reduction benchmarks, i.e. those on track to reach their goal in 10 years, will receive credit.

What Chronic Absenteeism tells us:

Students who are chronically absent are at greater risk of drop out, experience lower student achievement, and tend to have increased adverse adult outcomes. Many factors contribute to chronic absenteeism including student-specific concerns like teenage motherhood, poor health, low academic performance, peer influence, and bullying; family-specific issues like low family income, low parental involvement, unstable housing, stressful family events, and language differences; school-specific factors including poor conditions, teacher shortages, and geographic access to school or transportation challenges.

The first steps for school teams is to better understand the problem. Only by tracking data and conducting a root cause analysis can schools choose the evidence-based methods for addressing student chronic absenteeism. Community and family partnerships are key to reducing chronic absenteeism. More information and resources can be found at

www.attendanceworks.org.

Progress toward English Language Proficiency

The Progress toward English Language Proficiency indicator is a metric for determining a school’s success in improving the proficiency of English learners in the acquisition of speaking, reading, writing, and listening English.

How it’s calculated:

The initial data point on the first administration of the state’s annual required English language proficiency assessment will determine the timeline to proficiency. For example, students scoring initially at the lowest proficiency levels will be on a trajectory to achieve proficiency in six years. Students scoring initially at higher levels of proficiency will have a reduced number of years to reach the goal. A state-determined timeline has been developed with the intent that the trajectory to proficiency will be understandable to stakeholders, meaningful, and achievable.

Table 1. Expected ELP levels to be on track to proficiency in six years.

Baseline Level	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Emerging Low	Emerging High	Progressing Low	Progressing Medium	Progressing High	Proficient
Emerging High	Progressing Low	Progressing Medium	Progressing High	Proficient	
Progressing Low	Progressing Medium	Progressing High	Proficient		
Progressing Medium	Progressing High	Proficient			
Progressing High	Proficient				

Table 2 shows the definitions for the three proficiency levels used in Nebraska. The Progressing and Emerging levels are split into high and low sublevels to provide sufficient precision to differentiate schools.

Table 2. Policy Definition for Proficiency

Proficient	Students are Proficient when they attain a level of English language skill necessary to independently produce, interpret, collaborate on, and succeed in grade-level content-related academic tasks in English. This is indicated on ELPA21 by attaining a profile of Level 4 or higher in all domains. Once Proficient on ELPA21, students can be considered for reclassification.
Progressing	Students are Progressing when, with support, they approach a level of English language skill necessary to produce, interpret, and collaborate, on grade-level content-related academic tasks in English. This is indicated on ELPA21 by attaining a profile with one or more domain scores above Level 2 that does not

	meet the requirements to be Proficient. Students scoring Progressing on ELPA21 are eligible for ongoing program support.
Emerging	Students are Emerging when they have not yet attained a level of English language skill necessary to produce, interpret, and collaborate on grade-level content-related academic tasks in English. This is indicated on ELPA21 by attaining a profile of Levels 1 and 2 in all four domains. Students scoring Emerging on ELPA21 are eligible for ongoing program support.

To calculate the percent of students who made progress to proficiency, the number of students for whom we have matching scores will be the denominator, and the number of students who met or exceeded their expected level (from Table 1) will be the numerator.

What Progress towards English language Proficiency tells us:

Over the past several years, the number of English learner students has increased. Almost 6 percent or 18,000 students in the state are English learners. This measure indicates a school’s level of preparedness and success in meeting the unique needs of English learners toward proficiency in English.

Science Status and Science Improvement

Similar to the ELA and math Status and Improvement Indicators described above, Science Status and Science Improvement measure a school’s overall proficiency in science and progress in science over a three-year trend.

How it’s calculated:

Cut scores are set by a committee to determine the three levels of proficiency for science. Science Status is then calculated by looking at the school’s performance in science, i.e. the number of students proficient. Science Improvement calculates a school’s three-year trend in proficiency.

What Science Status and Science Improvement tell us:

Nebraska has invested significant time and resources to implement highly rigorous college and career ready standards and assessments. These standards indicate that students possess the skills, mindsets, and knowledge necessary to carry out tasks within college and careers. Science Status indicates the overall proficiency of students inside its walls, while Science Improvement recognizes how schools are improving their students’ science proficiency.

Evidence-Based Analysis

The Evidence-Based Analysis (EBA) tool is a survey that every school fills out indicating the policies, procedures, practices, and protocols in place to move student success. The EBA is aligned to the six tenets and contains a series of questions and a rubric on which the schools rate themselves.

How it’s calculated:

The EBA totals scores across responses to each of the five questions used to measure the six AQuESTT tenets. There are 30 total areas or items. A scale of 0 to 4 is used for schools to reflect their performance. If a school’s EBA meets or exceeds specified percentiles relative to other schools in the same classification, the school may be eligible to receive an upward adjustment in their classification.

In order for a school to receive an EBA adjustment to their AQuESTT classification, schools eligible for an EBA “bump” will be asked to submit documented evidence of their responses. This evidence will be examined by a panel of reviewers comprised of staff from school districts, Educational Service Units, and the Nebraska Department of Education. In effect, reviewers will complete the EBA for eligible schools independently based on the documentation provided by the school. In order to actually receive an AQuESTT EBA adjustment, sufficiently strong strength of agreement (inter-rater reliability) between school-provided EBA responses and those of the reviewers will be required.

What the EBA tells us:

While most of the AQuESTT classification system is about student achievement outcomes, the EBA is about inputs. The EBA tells us what promising practices a school has in place that may eventually result in student achievement gains, but may not be reflected in other indicators.

Data from the EBA allows the Department of Education to better focus specific supports statewide, regionally, and to specific schools. Schools also indicate whether they are exemplary in a given tenet or question, allowing for replication by other schools.

Classification Calculations: How the indicators come together

The indicators described above come together to classify all schools as Excellent, Great, Good, and Needs Improvement. The aggregation of these indicators is described at a high level below. For more details, please see the AQuESTT Business Rules.

Each school begins with a Status score of 1-2-3-4, representing Needs Improvement, Good, Great, and Excellent respectively.

Next, each of the indicators above is nestled into respective tenets. Scores on each indicator are combined to a tenet-level score using the suggested weightings below. Schools then receive a bump up, do not receive the bump, or in the case of Assessment, receive a bump down a classification level.

Elementary and Middle Schools											
Proficiency Status (4,3,2,1)											
Positive Partnerships (0)		Transitions (0)		Educational Opportunities & Access (+1,0)		College and Career Readiness		Assessment (+1,0, -1)		Educator Effectiveness	
Indicator	Weighting	Indicator	Weighting	Indicator	Weighting	Indicator	Weighting	Indicator	Weighting	Indicator	Weighting
				Chronic Absenteeism	50%			Individual Score Growth	40%		
				Progress towards English language proficiency	50%			Score Improvement	30%		
								Non-Proficiency Reduction	15%		
								Science Proficiency Status	5%		
								Science Score Improvement	10%		
EBA (+1, 0)											
Final Classification -- Max 4 (Excellent)											
High Schools											
STATUS (4, 3, 2, 1)											
Positive Partnerships (0)		Transitions (0, -1)		Educational Opportunities & Access (+1,0)		College and Career Readiness		Assessment (+1,0, -1)		Educator Effectiveness	
Indicator	Weighting	Indicator	Weighting	Indicator	Weighting	Indicator	Weighting	Indicator	Weighting	Indicator	Weighting
		4 Year Graduation	51%	Chronic Absenteeism	50%			Score Improvement	50%		
		Extended Graduation	49%	Progress towards English language proficiency	50%			Non-Proficiency Reduction	35%		
								Science Proficiency Status	5%		
								Science Score Improvement	10%		
EBA (+1, 0)											
Final Classification -- Max 4 (Excellent)											

Schools that do not have at least 10 English learners do not have an applicable progress towards English language proficiency score, so the Educational Opportunities and Access tenet will be based solely on reduction in chronic absenteeism. Similarly, elementary and middle schools do not have graduation rates, and therefore will not receive a bump in transitions.

Each +1, 0, or -1 is strategic. For example, since Nebraska has a high graduation rate, schools will either receive the 0 or if they have lower graduation rates, be moved down a classification rate. This follows the previous AQuESTT system, which employed both bumps and “caps.” Additionally, the NDE acknowledges the challenges associated with chronic absenteeism, and the newness of the English language proficiency indicator. As such, this indicator will not count against schools, but can only help them.

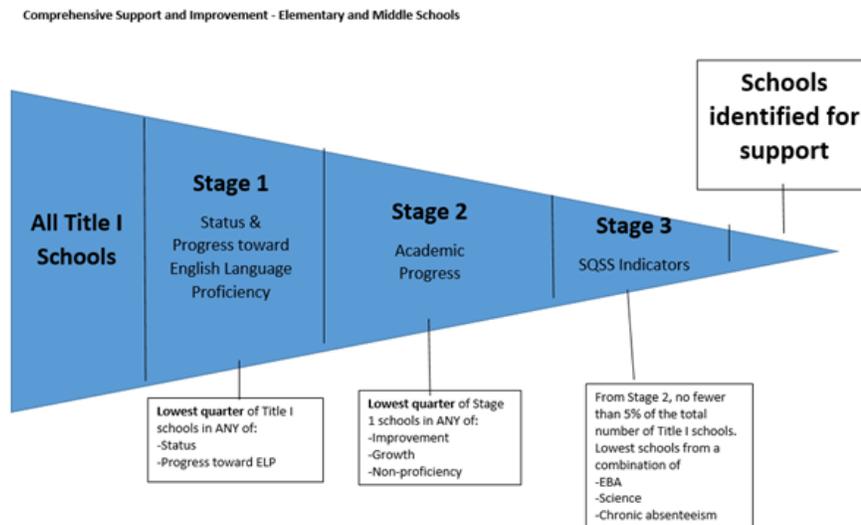
A school completes its Raw Classification after it receives its Status score, and classification adjustments based on the tenets of AQuESTT. The final stage is for each school’s EBA score to be compared to similar scores in the same Raw Classification level. Schools eligible for an upward EBA adjustment must submit evidence validating the school’s responses to the EBA survey. A review panel evaluates the evidence and determines if a bump should be awarded or not. This leads to the final classification of schools.

Designation Process: Identifying Schools in Need of Support

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires each state to determine a process for designation of schools most needing support. These supports fall into three categories seen below:

- *Comprehensive Support and Improvement* – Lowest performing five percent of Title I schools, public high schools with a four-year adjusted cohort grad rate of 67 percent or below, and/or schools participating in Targeted Support and Improvement that did not improve over a state-determined number of years.
- *Targeted Support and Improvement* – Schools with consistently underperforming subgroup(s) or low-performing subgroup(s) over a state-designated period of time. (Designation beginning 2019)
- *Additional Targeted Support and Improvement* – Any school in which one or more subgroups of students is performing at or below the performance of all students in the lowest performing schools.

The indicators detailed above will be used to determine schools for these three designations. However, since AQuESTT, by design, does not allow for the ranking of schools, a system similar to the one below will be used to identify the schools most needing support:



Note: Some differences exist in the determination of schools for the designations of ATSI, TSI, and CSI. However, in general, this “filter” system will be used to maintain the integrity of AQuESTT while identifying schools needing support.

Expanding the Accountability System

An additional reason to orient the accountability system by tenet way is to set the system up for additional indicators. During stakeholder feedback sessions, it became clear that Nebraskans want more from a system than simply test scores. As such, the NDE is exploring further indicators including, but not limited to, the following:

- Climate and safety surveys
- College and career readiness index (industry certification, early postsecondary success, completion of programs of study)
- Growth on the MAP assessment given three times per year
- Teacher absenteeism
- Measures beyond ELA and math, including access to and success in PE, the arts, and social studies
- Discipline (suspension and expulsion) reduction
- College matriculation and persistence

For more information:

www.AQuESTT.com

<http://www.education.ne.gov/essa>