

**DATE:**

**TO:** ESU #1 Board of Directors

**FROM:** Bill Heimann, Administrator

**RE:** Tuesday, February 10, 2026 Board Meeting

There will be a meeting of the ESU #1 Board of Directors, on Tuesday, February 10, 2026, at 5:30 PM in the

Virtual

Consideration, discussion and any action necessary will be taken on the following items.

- A. Notification of Open Meetings Law
- B. Roll Call\*
- C. Consent Agenda\*
  - C.1. Previous Minutes (copy attached)
  - C.2. Financial Reports\*
    - C.2.a. Revenue Report/Treasurer's Report
    - C.2.b. Cash Summary/Expenditure Report
  - C.3. Bills for February
  - C.4. Administrator's Monthly Report
    - C.4.a. ESU #1 All-Staff Day
    - C.4.b. ESU #1 Quarterly Superintendent and Principal Meeting
    - C.4.c. Teacher Vacancy Report
    - C.4.d. NDE Commissioner Advisory Meeting
    - C.4.e. Legislative Update
- D. Public Comment
- E. ESU1 Financial Audit
- F. Board Election Timeline
- G. 2026-27 Compensation for Core Service, Licensed, Specialty and Professional Staff
- H. Administration Compensation for 2026-27
- I. Personnel\*
  - I.1. Consider, discuss, and take necessary action on employee contracts and personnel changes.
    - I.1.a. Resignation(s)
    - I.1.b. New Hire(s)
    - I.1.c. Contract Change(s)
    - I.1.d. Termination(s)
- J. Adjournment

This agenda contains a list of subjects known at the time of its distribution on . A copy of the agenda reflecting any changes will be kept in the ESU #1 Administrative office and will be readily available for public inspection during normal office hours. Except for items of emergency nature, the agenda will not be enlarged later than twenty-four hours before the scheduled commencement of the meeting. The Board reserves the right to change the order of business discussed.

\*Action Items

# Nebraska Open Meetings Act

**84-1407. Act, how cited.** Sections 84-1407 to 84-1414 shall be known and may be cited as the Open Meetings Act.

**84-1408. Declaration of intent; meetings open to public.** It is hereby declared to be the policy of this state that the formation of public policy is public business and may not be conducted in secret.

Every meeting of a public body shall be open to the public in order that citizens may exercise their democratic privilege of attending and speaking at meetings of public bodies, except as otherwise provided by the Constitution of Nebraska, federal statutes, and the Open Meetings Act.

**84-1409. Terms, defined.** For purposes of the Open Meetings Act, unless the context otherwise requires:

(1)(a) Public body means (i) governing bodies of all political subdivisions of the State of Nebraska, (ii) governing bodies of all agencies, created by the Constitution of Nebraska, statute, or otherwise pursuant to law, of the executive department of the State of Nebraska, (iii) all independent boards, commissions, bureaus, committees, councils, subunits, or any other bodies created by the Constitution of Nebraska, statute, or otherwise pursuant to law, (iv) all study or advisory committees of the executive department of the State of Nebraska whether having continuing existence or appointed as special committees with limited existence, (v) advisory committees of the bodies referred to in subdivisions (i), (ii), and (iii) of this subdivision, and (vi) instrumentalities exercising essentially public functions; and

(b) Public body does not include (i) subcommittees of such bodies unless a quorum of the public body attends a subcommittee meeting or unless such subcommittees are holding hearings, making policy, or taking formal action on behalf of their parent body, except that all meetings of any subcommittee established under section 81-15,175 are subject to the Open Meetings Act, (ii) entities conducting judicial proceedings unless a court or other judicial body is exercising rulemaking authority, deliberating, or deciding upon the issuance of administrative orders, and (iii) the Judicial Resources Commission or subcommittees or subgroups of the commission;

(2) Meeting means all regular, special, or called meetings, formal or informal, of any public body for the purposes of briefing, discussion of public business, formation of tentative policy, or the taking of any action of the public body; and

(3) Virtual conferencing means conducting or participating in a meeting electronically or telephonically with interaction among the participants subject to subsection (2) of section 84-1412.

**84-1410. Closed session; when; purpose; reasons listed; procedure; right to challenge; prohibited acts; chance meetings, conventions, or workshops.**

(1) Any public body may hold a closed session by the affirmative vote of a majority of its voting members if a closed session is clearly necessary for the protection of the public interest or for the prevention of needless injury to the reputation of an individual and if such individual has not requested a public meeting. The subject matter and the reason necessitating the closed session shall be identified in the motion to close. Closed sessions may be held for, but shall not be limited to, such reasons as:

- Strategy sessions with respect to collective bargaining, real estate purchases, pending litigation, or litigation which is imminent as evidenced by communication of a claim or threat of litigation to or by the public body;
- Discussion regarding deployment of security personnel or devices;
- Investigative proceedings regarding allegations of criminal misconduct;
- Evaluation of the job performance of a person when necessary to prevent needless injury to the reputation of a person and if such person has not requested a public meeting;
- For the Community Trust created under section 81-1801.02, discussion regarding the amounts to be paid to individuals who have suffered from a tragedy of violence or natural disaster; or
- For public hospitals, governing board peer review activities, professional review activities, review and discussion of medical staff investigations or disciplinary actions, and any strategy session concerning transactional negotiations with any referral source that is required by federal law to be conducted at arms length.

Nothing in this section shall permit a closed meeting for discussion of the appointment or election of a new member to any public body.

(2) The vote to hold a closed session shall be taken in open session. The entire motion, the vote of each member on the question of holding a closed session, and the time when the closed session commenced and concluded shall be recorded in the minutes. If the motion to close passes, then the presiding officer immediately prior to the closed session shall restate on the record the limitation of the subject matter of the closed session. The public body holding such a closed session shall restrict its consideration of matters during the closed portions to only those purposes set forth in the motion to close as the reason for the closed session. The meeting shall be reconvened in open session before any formal action may be taken. For purposes of this section, formal action shall mean a collective decision or a collective commitment or promise to make a decision on any question, motion, proposal, resolution, order, or ordinance or formation of a position or policy but shall not include negotiating guidance given by members of the public body to legal counsel or other negotiators in closed sessions authorized under subdivision (1)(a) of this section.

(3) Any member of any public body shall have the right to challenge the continuation of a closed session if the member determines that the session has exceeded the reason stated in the original motion to hold a closed session or if the member contends that the closed session is neither clearly necessary for (a) the protection of the public interest or (b) the prevention of needless injury to the reputation of an individual. Such challenge shall be overruled only by a majority vote of the members of the public body. Such challenge and its disposition shall be recorded in the minutes.

(4) Nothing in this section shall be construed to require that any meeting be closed to the public. No person or public body shall fail to invite a portion of its members to a meeting, and no public body shall designate itself a subcommittee of the whole body for the purpose of circumventing the Open Meetings Act. No closed session, informal meeting, chance meeting, social gathering, email, fax, or other electronic communication shall be used for the purpose of circumventing the requirements of the act.

(5) The act does not apply to chance meetings or to attendance at or travel to conventions or workshops of members of a public body at which there is no meeting of the body then intentionally convened, if there is no vote or other action taken regarding any matter over which the public body has supervision, control, jurisdiction, or advisory power.

**84-1411. Meetings of public body; notice; method; contents; when available; right to modify; duties concerning notice; virtual conferencing authorized; requirements; emergency meeting without notice; appearance before public body.**

(1)(a) Except as provided in subsection (9) of this section, each public body shall give reasonable advance publicized notice of the time and place of each meeting as provided in this subsection. Such notice shall be transmitted to all members of the public body and to the public.

(b)(i) Except as provided in subdivision (1)(b)(ii) of this section, in the case of a public body described in subdivision (1)(a)(i) of section 84-1409 or such body's advisory committees, such notice shall be given by:

(A)(I) Publication in a newspaper of general circulation within the public body's jurisdiction that is finalized for printing prior to the time and date of the meeting, (II) posting on such newspaper's website, if available, and (III) posting on a statewide website, if available, established and maintained as a repository for such notices by a majority of Nebraska newspapers. Such notice shall be placed in the newspaper and on the websites by the newspaper; or

(B)(I) Posting to the newspaper's website, if available, and (II) posting to a statewide website, if available, established and maintained as a repository for such notices by a majority of Nebraska newspapers if no edition of a newspaper of general circulation within the public body's jurisdiction is to be finalized for printing prior to the time and date of the meeting. Such notice shall be placed in the newspaper and on the websites by the newspaper.

(ii) In the case of the governing body of a city of the second class or village, any advisory committee of such governing body, or the governing body of a rural or suburban fire protection district, such notice shall be given by:

(A)(I) Publication in a newspaper of general circulation within the public body's jurisdiction that is finalized for printing prior to the time and date of the meeting, (II) posting on such newspaper's website, if available, and (III) posting on a statewide website, if available, established and maintained as a repository for such notices by a majority of Nebraska newspapers. Such notice shall be placed in the newspaper and on the websites by the newspaper;

(B)(I) Posting to the newspaper's website, if available, and (II) posting on a statewide website, if available, established and maintained as a repository for such notices by a majority of Nebraska newspapers if no edition of a newspaper of general circulation within the public body's jurisdiction is to be

finalized for printing prior to the time and date of the meeting. Such notice shall be placed in the newspaper and on the websites by the newspaper; or (C) Posting written notice in three conspicuous public places in such city, village, or district. Such notice shall be posted by the public body in the same three places for each meeting.

(iii) In the case of a public body not described in subdivision (1)(b)(i) or (ii) of this section, such notice shall be given by a method designated by the public body.

(iv) In case of refusal, neglect, or inability of the newspaper to publish the notice, the public body shall (A) post such notice on its website, if available, (B) request the newspaper submit a post on a statewide website, if available, established and maintained as a repository for such notices by a majority of Nebraska newspapers, and (C) post such notice in a conspicuous public place in such public body's jurisdiction. The public body shall keep a written record of such posting pursuant to subdivision (1)(b)(iv)(A) and (C) of this section and a written record of the request to the newspaper pursuant to subdivision (1)(b)(iv)(B) of this section. The record of such posting shall be evidence that such posting was done as required and shall be sufficient to fulfill the requirement of publication.

(c) In addition to a method of notice required by subdivision (1)(b)(i) or (ii) of this section, such notice may also be provided by any other appropriate method designated by such public body or such advisory committee.

(d) Each public body shall record the methods and dates of such notice in its minutes.

(e) Such notice shall contain an agenda of subjects known at the time of the publicized notice or a statement that the agenda, which shall be kept continually current, shall be readily available for public inspection at the principal office of the public body during normal business hours. Agenda items shall be sufficiently descriptive to give the public reasonable notice of the matters to be considered at the meeting. Except for items of an emergency nature, the agenda shall not be altered later than (i) twenty-four hours before the scheduled commencement of the meeting or (ii) forty-eight hours before the scheduled commencement of a meeting of a city council or village board scheduled outside the corporate limits of the municipality. The public body shall have the right to modify the agenda to include items of an emergency nature only at such public meeting.

(2)(a) The following entities may hold a meeting by means of virtual conferencing if the requirements of subdivision (2)(b) of this section are met:

- A state agency, state board, state commission, state council, or state committee, or an advisory committee of any such state entity;
- An organization, including the governing body, created under the Interlocal Cooperation Act, the Joint Public Agency Act, or the Municipal Cooperative Financing Act;
- The governing body of a public power district having a chartered territory of more than one county in this state;
- The governing body of a public power and irrigation district having a chartered territory of more than one county in this state;
- An educational service unit;
- The Educational Service Unit Coordinating Council;
- An organization, including the governing body, of a risk management pool or its advisory committees organized in accordance with the Intergovernmental Risk Management Act;
- A community college board of governors;
- The Nebraska Brand Committee;
- A local public health department;
- A metropolitan utilities district;
- A regional metropolitan transit authority; and
- A natural resources district.

(b) The requirements for holding a meeting by means of virtual conferencing are as follows:

(i) Reasonable advance publicized notice is given as provided in subsection (1) of this section, including providing access to a dial-in number or link to the virtual conference;

(ii) In addition to the public's right to participate by virtual conferencing, reasonable arrangements are made to accommodate the public's right to attend at a physical site and participate as provided in section 84-1412, including reasonable seating, in at least one designated site in a building open to the public and identified in the notice, with: At least one member of the entity holding such meeting, or his or her designee, present at each site; a recording of the hearing by audio or visual recording devices; and a reasonable opportunity for input, such as public comment or questions, is provided to at least the same extent as would be provided if virtual conferencing was not used;

(iii) At least one copy of all documents being considered at the meeting is available at any physical site open to the public where individuals may attend the virtual conference. The public body shall also provide links to an electronic copy of the agenda, all documents being considered at the meeting, and the current version of the Open Meetings Act; and

(iv) Except as otherwise provided in this subdivision or subsection (4) of section 79-2204, no more than one-half of the meetings of the state entities, advisory committees, boards, councils, organizations, or governing bodies are held by virtual conferencing in a calendar year. In the case of (a) an organization created under the Interlocal Cooperation Act that sells electricity or natural gas, (b) an organization created under the Municipal Cooperative Financing Act, (C) a governing body of a risk management pool and any advisory committee of such governing body, or (D) any advisory committee of any state entity created in response to the Opioid Prevention and Treatment Act, such organization, governing body, or committee may hold more than one-half of its meetings by virtual conferencing if such organization holds at least one meeting each calendar year that is not by virtual conferencing.

(3) Virtual conferencing, emails, faxes, or other electronic communication shall not be used to circumvent any of the public government purposes established in the Open Meetings Act.

(4) The secretary or other designee of each public body shall maintain a list of the news media requesting notification of meetings and shall make reasonable efforts to provide advance notification to them of the time and place of each meeting and the subjects to be discussed at that meeting.

(5) When it is necessary to hold an emergency meeting without reasonable advance public notice, the nature of the emergency shall be stated in the minutes and any formal action taken in such meeting shall pertain only to the emergency. Such emergency meetings may be held by virtual conferencing. The provisions of subsection (4) of this section shall be complied with in conducting emergency meetings. Complete minutes of such emergency meetings specifying the nature of the emergency and any formal action taken at the meeting shall be made available to the public by no later than the end of the next regular business day.

(6) A public body may allow a member of the public or any other witness to appear before the public body by means of virtual conferencing.

(7)(a) Notwithstanding subsections (2) and (5) of this section, if an emergency is declared by the Governor pursuant to the Emergency Management Act as defined in section 81-829.39, a public body the territorial jurisdiction of which is included in the emergency declaration, in whole or in part, may hold a meeting by virtual conferencing during such emergency if the public body gives reasonable advance publicized notice as described in subsection (1) of this section. The notice shall include information regarding access for the public and news media. In addition to any formal action taken pertaining to the emergency, the public body may hold such meeting for the purpose of briefing, discussion of public business, formation of tentative policy, or the taking of any action by the public body.

(b) The public body shall provide access by providing a dial-in number or a link to the virtual conference. The public body shall also provide links to an electronic copy of the agenda, all documents being considered at the meeting, and the current version of the Open Meetings Act. Reasonable arrangements shall be made to accommodate the public's right to hear and speak at the meeting and record the meeting. Subsection (4) of this section shall be complied with in conducting such meetings.

(c) The nature of the emergency shall be stated in the minutes. Complete minutes of such meeting specifying the nature of the emergency and any formal action taken at the meeting shall be made available for inspection as provided in subsection (5) of section 84-1413.

(8) In addition to any other statutory authorization for virtual conferencing, any public body not listed in subdivision (2)(a) of this section may hold a meeting by virtual conferencing if:

- The purpose of the virtual meeting is to discuss items that are scheduled to be discussed or acted upon at a subsequent non-virtual open meeting of the public body;
- No action is taken by the public body at the virtual meeting; and
- The public body complies with subdivisions (2)(b)(i) and (ii) of this section.

**84-1412. Meetings of public body; rights of public; public body; powers and duties.**

(1) Subject to the Open Meetings Act, the public has the right to attend and the right to speak at meetings of public bodies, and all or any part of a meeting of a public body, except for closed sessions called pursuant to section 84-1410, may be videotaped, televised, photographed, broadcast, or recorded by any person in attendance by means of a tape recorder, a camera, video equipment, or any other means of pictorial or sonic reproduction or in writing. Except for closed sessions called pursuant to section 84-1410, a public body shall allow members of the public an opportunity to speak at each meeting.

(2) It shall not be a violation of subsection (1) of this section for any public body to make and enforce reasonable rules and regulations regarding the conduct of persons attending, speaking at, videotaping, televising, photographing, broadcasting, or recording its meetings, including meetings held by virtual conferencing.

(3) No public body shall require members of the public to identify themselves as a condition for admission to the meeting nor shall such body require that the name of any member of the public be placed on the agenda prior to such meeting in order to speak about items on the agenda. The body shall require any member of the public desiring to address the body to identify himself or herself, including an address and the name of any organization represented by such person unless the address requirement is waived to protect the security of the individual.

(4) No public body shall, for the purpose of circumventing the Open Meetings Act, hold a meeting in a place known by the body to be too small to accommodate the anticipated audience.

(5) No public body shall be deemed in violation of this section if it holds its meeting in its traditional meeting place which is located in this state.

(6) No public body shall be deemed in violation of this section if it holds a meeting outside of this state if, but only if:

- A member entity of the public body is located outside of this state and the meeting is in that member's jurisdiction;
- All out-of-state locations identified in the notice are located within public buildings used by members of the entity or at a place which will accommodate the anticipated audience;
- Reasonable arrangements are made to accommodate the public's right to attend, hear, and speak at the meeting, including making virtual conferencing available at an in-state location to members, the public, or the press, if requested twenty-four hours in advance;
- No more than twenty-five percent of the public body's meetings in a calendar year are held out-of-state;
- Out-of-state meetings are not used to circumvent any of the public government purposes established in the Open Meetings Act; and
- The public body publishes notice of the out-of-state meeting at least twenty-one days before the date of the meeting in a legal newspaper of statewide circulation.

(7) Each public body shall, upon request, make a reasonable effort to accommodate the public's right to hear the discussion and testimony presented at a meeting.

(8) Public bodies shall make available at the meeting or the in-state location for virtual conferencing as required by subdivision (6)(c) of this section, for examination and copying by members of the public, at least one copy of all reproducible written material to be discussed at an open meeting, either in paper or electronic form. Public bodies shall make available at least one current copy of the Open Meetings Act posted in the meeting room at a location accessible to members of the public. At the beginning of the meeting, the public shall be informed about the location of the posted information.

**84-1413. Meetings; minutes; roll call vote; secret ballot; when; agenda and minutes; required on website; when.**

(1) Each public body shall keep minutes of all meetings showing the time, place, members present and absent, and the substance of all matters discussed.

(2) Any action taken on any question or motion duly moved and seconded shall be by roll call vote of the public body in open session, and the record shall state how each member voted or if the member was absent or not voting. The requirements of a roll call or viva voce vote shall be satisfied by a public body which utilizes an electronic voting device which allows the yeas and nays of each member of such public body to be readily seen by the public.

(3) The vote to elect leadership within a public body may be taken by secret ballot, but the total number of votes for each candidate shall be recorded in the minutes.

(4) The minutes of all meetings and evidence and documentation received or disclosed in open session shall be public records and open to public inspection during normal business hours.

(5) Minutes shall be written or kept as an electronic record and shall be available for inspection within ten working days or prior to the next convened meeting, whichever occurs earlier, except that cities of the second class and villages may have an additional ten working days if the employee responsible for writing or keeping the minutes is absent due to a serious illness or emergency.

(6) Beginning July 31, 2022, the governing body of a natural resources district, the city council of a city of the metropolitan class, the city council of a city of the primary class, the city council of a city of the first class, the county board of a county with a population greater than twenty-five thousand inhabitants, and the school board of a school district shall make available on such entity's public website the agenda and minutes of any meeting of the governing body. The agenda shall be placed on the website at least twenty-four hours before the meeting of the governing body. Minutes shall be placed on the website at such time as the minutes are available for inspection as provided in subsection (5) of this section. This information shall be available on the public website for at least six months.

**84-1414. Unlawful action by public body; declared void or voidable by district court; when; duty to enforce open meeting laws; citizen's suit; procedure; violations; penalties.**

(1) Any motion, resolution, rule, regulation, ordinance, or formal action of a public body made or taken in violation of the Open Meetings Act shall be declared void by the district court if the suit is commenced within one hundred twenty days of the meeting of the public body at which the alleged violation occurred. Any motion, resolution, rule, regulation, ordinance, or formal action of a public body made or taken in substantial violation of the Open Meetings Act shall be voidable by the district court if the suit is commenced more than one hundred twenty days after but within one year of the meeting of the public body in which the alleged violation occurred. A suit to void any final action shall be commenced within one year of the action.

(2) The Attorney General and the county attorney of the county in which the public body ordinarily meets shall enforce the Open Meetings Act.

(3) Any citizen of this state may commence a suit in the district court of the county in which the public body ordinarily meets or in which the plaintiff resides for the purpose of requiring compliance with or preventing violations of the Open Meetings Act, for the purpose of declaring an action of a public body void, or for the purpose of determining the applicability of the act to discussions or decisions of the public body. It shall not be a defense that the citizen attended the meeting and failed to object at such time. The court may order payment of reasonable attorney's fees and court costs to a successful plaintiff in a suit brought under this section.

(4) Any member of a public body who knowingly violates or conspires to violate or who attends or remains at a meeting knowing that the public body is in violation of any provision of the Open Meetings Act shall be guilty of a Class IV misdemeanor for a first offense and a Class III misdemeanor for a second or subsequent offense.

Revised 06/2025

**ESU #1 Board Meeting  
Tuesday, January 13, 2026**

A meeting of the ESU 01 Board of Directors convened in open and public session on Tuesday, January 13, 2026, at 5:30 PM, at ESU #1. **Present:** Josiah Boneschans, Amy Brand, AJ Johnson, Kimberly Snyder, Mrs Susan Strahm, **Absent:** Jean Dorcey, Tabitha Gilsdorf, Jim Gunsolley, Robert Hayes.

Notice of the meeting was given in advance by publication and/or posting, as shown below, in accordance with the Board approved method for giving notice of meetings. Notice of this meeting was given in advance to all members of the Board of Directors. The Recording Secretary maintains a list of news media requesting notification of meetings and advance notification to the listed media of the time and place of the meeting and the subjects to be discussed at this meeting was provided. Availability of the agenda was communicated in the publicized notice and current copy of the Agenda was maintained as stated in the publicized notice. All proceedings of the Board of Directors, except as may be hereinafter noted, were taken while the convened meeting was open to the attendance of the public.

Published and/or Posted Locations:

- Wayne Herald (Thursday before meeting date)
- Central Office Front Door (Friday before meeting date)
- Sparq (Friday before meeting date)

A. Notification of Open Meetings Law

At the beginning of the meeting, President AJ Johnson announced and informed the public that a current copy of the Open Meetings Act is available at the meeting site and included electronically in the E-Meeting agenda.

B. Roll Call\*

Motion by Amy Brand, seconded by Kimberly Snyder, to excuse the absence of members Jim Gunsolley, Tabitha Gilsdorf, Jean Dorcey and Robert Hayes. After discussion and on roll call vote, the Board voted as follows:

**Motion Carried:**

Jean Dorcey: Absent, Tabitha Gilsdorf: Absent, Jim Gunsolley: Absent, Robert Hayes: Absent, Josiah Boneschans: For, Amy Brand: For, AJ Johnson: For, Kimberly Snyder: For, Mrs Susan Strahm: For  
For: 5, Against: 0, Absent: 4

C. Board Re-Organization

Motion by Kimberly Snyder, seconded by Josiah Boneschans, to elect AJ Johnson to serve as the 2026 Board President. After discussion and on roll call vote, the Board voted as follows:

**Motion Carried:**

Jean Dorcey: Absent, Tabitha Gilsdorf: Absent, Jim Gunsolley: Absent, Robert Hayes: Absent, Josiah Boneschans: For, Amy Brand: For, AJ Johnson: For, Kimberly Snyder: For, Mrs Susan Strahm: For

For: 5, Against: 0, Absent: 4

Motion by Kimberly Snyder, seconded by Amy Brand, to elect Susan Strahm to serve as the 2026 Board Vice President. After discussion and on roll call vote, the Board voted as follows:

**Motion Carried:**

Jean Dorcey: Absent, Tabitha Gilsdorf: Absent, Jim Gunsolley: Absent, Robert Hayes: Absent, Josiah Boneschans: For, Amy Brand: For, AJ Johnson: For, Kimberly Snyder: For, Mrs Susan Strahm: For

For: 5, Against: 0, Absent: 4

Motion by Kimberly Snyder, seconded by Amy Brand, to elect Josiah Boneschans to serve as the 2026 Board Secretary. After discussion and on roll call vote, the Board voted as follows:

**Motion Carried:**

Jean Dorcey: Absent, Tabitha Gilsdorf: Absent, Jim Gunsolley: Absent, Robert Hayes: Absent, Josiah Boneschans: For, Amy Brand: For, AJ Johnson: For, Kimberly Snyder: For, Mrs Susan Strahm: For

For: 5, Against: 0, Absent: 4

D. Consent Agenda\*

Motion by Mrs Susan Strahm, seconded by Amy Brand, to approve all items on the consent agenda as provided, (December 9 Minutes, December Financial Reports, January bills of \$1,282,799.30 and the Administrator's Report). After discussion and on roll call vote, the Board voted as follows:

**Motion Carried:**

Jean Dorcey: Absent, Tabitha Gilsdorf: Absent, Jim Gunsolley: Absent, Robert Hayes: Absent, Josiah Boneschans: For, Amy Brand: For, AJ Johnson: For, Kimberly Snyder: For, Mrs Susan Strahm: For

For: 5, Against: 0, Absent: 4

D.1. Previous Minutes (copy attached)

D.2. Financial Reports\*

D.2.a. Revenue Report/Treasurer's Report

D.2.b. Cash Summary/Expenditure Report

D.3. Bills for January

D.4. Administrator's Monthly Report

D.4.a. Legislative Update

Administrator Heimann provided a legislative update.

D.4.b. Tower School Facility Project

Facility updates at Tower School have been completed and have been well received by staff.

D.4.c. ESU1 All Staff Day

Administrator Heimann invited the Board to attend All Staff Day on February 4th at WSC.

#### D.4.d. Rule 84 Meeting

On January 16, ESU administrators and NDE leadership will hold the required Rule 84 meeting to discuss statewide initiatives and partnership efforts.

#### D.5. Designate Newspapers of Record

Motion by Mrs Susan Strahm, seconded by Amy Brand, to approve the newspapers of record as presented. After discussion and on roll call vote, the Board voted as follows:

##### **Motion Carried:**

Jean Dorcey: Absent, Tabitha Gilsdorf: Absent, Jim Gunsolley: Absent, Robert Hayes: Absent, Josiah Boneschans: For, Amy Brand: For, AJ Johnson: For, Kimberly Snyder: For, Mrs Susan Strahm: For

For: 5, Against: 0, Absent: 4

#### E. Public Comment

#### F. Board Member Code of Ethics

Motion by Kimberly Snyder, seconded by Amy Brand, to reaffirm the ESU 1 Board member Code of Ethics. After discussion and on roll call vote, the Board voted as follows:

##### **Motion Carried:**

Jean Dorcey: Absent, Tabitha Gilsdorf: Absent, Jim Gunsolley: Absent, Robert Hayes: Absent, Josiah Boneschans: For, Amy Brand: For, AJ Johnson: For, Kimberly Snyder: For, Mrs Susan Strahm: For

For: 5, Against: 0, Absent: 4

#### G. ESU 1 Board Committees

The ESU 1 Board committee structure for 2026 did not change from the prior year. The three committees are: Building & Grounds, Finance/Personnel, and Policy/Legislative.

#### H. Position Appointments

Motion by Amy Brand, seconded by Mrs Susan Strahm, to approve the appointments of Treasurer, Recording Secretary, Attorney of Record and designated banks as presented. After discussion and on roll call vote, the Board voted as follows:

##### **Motion Carried:**

Jean Dorcey: Absent, Tabitha Gilsdorf: Absent, Jim Gunsolley: Absent, Robert Hayes: Absent, Josiah Boneschans: For, Amy Brand: For, AJ Johnson: For, Kimberly Snyder: For, Mrs Susan Strahm: For

For: 5, Against: 0, Absent: 4

#### I. Mileage Reimbursement Rate

Motion by Mrs Susan Strahm, seconded by Amy Brand, approve the ESU 1 mileage reimbursement rate for 2026 to coincide with the IRS standard mileage rate. After discussion and on roll call vote, the Board voted as follows:

##### **Motion Carried:**

Jean Dorcey: Absent, Tabitha Gilsdorf: Absent, Jim Gunsolley: Absent, Robert Hayes: Absent, Josiah Boneschans: For, Amy Brand: For, AJ Johnson: For, Kimberly Snyder: For, Mrs Susan

Strahm: For

For: 5, Against: 0, Absent: 4

J. ESU1 2024-25 Financial Audit

Administrator Heimann shared a status update about the 2024-25 audit.

K. Compensation for Administrators and Staff

This item will be moved to the February meeting.

L. Personnel\*

L.1. Consider, discuss, and take necessary action on employee contracts and personnel changes.

L.1.a. Resignation(s)

L.1.b. New Hire(s)

L.1.c. Contract Change(s)

L.1.d. Termination(s)

M. Adjournment

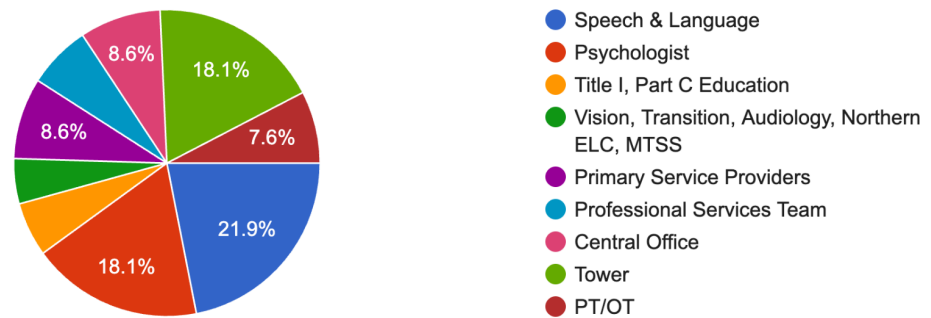
As there were no additional Agenda items, President AJ Johnson adjourned the meeting at 5:49 pm.

Brittney Hampl, Recording Secretary

Susan Strahm, Board Secretary

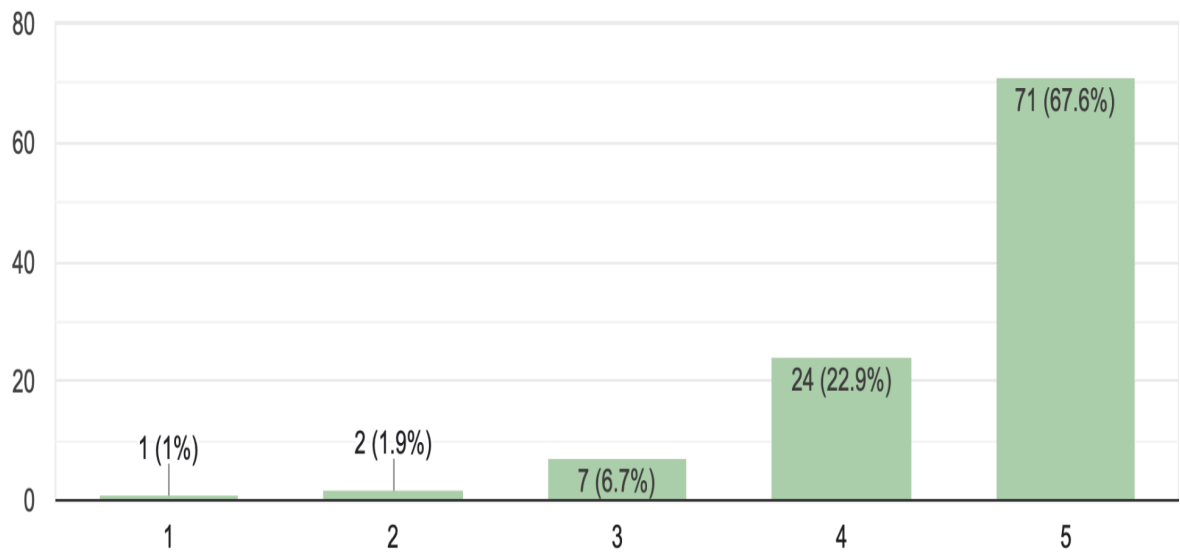
### Please identify your department

105 responses



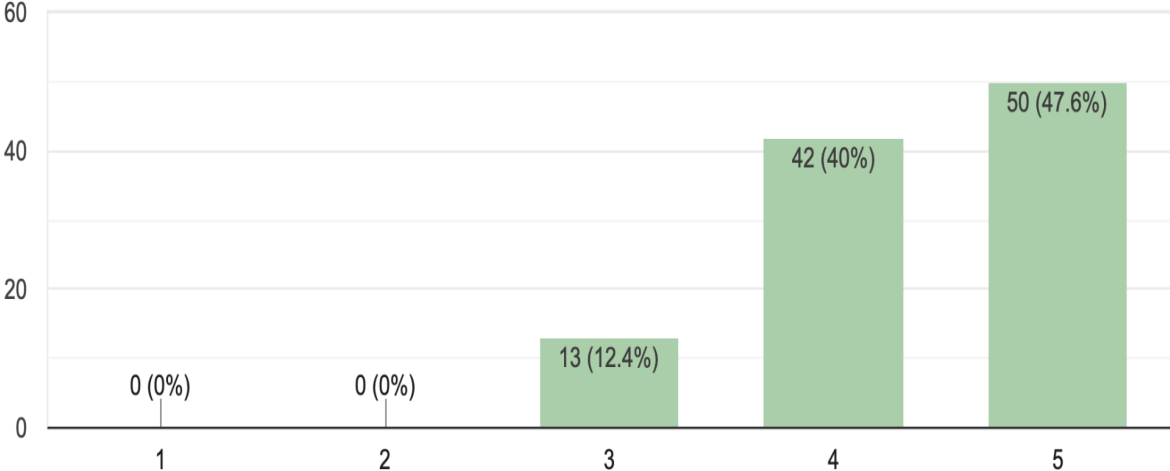
### Presentation by Guest Speaker, Juli Burney

105 responses



# The Power of One theme & morning activities...

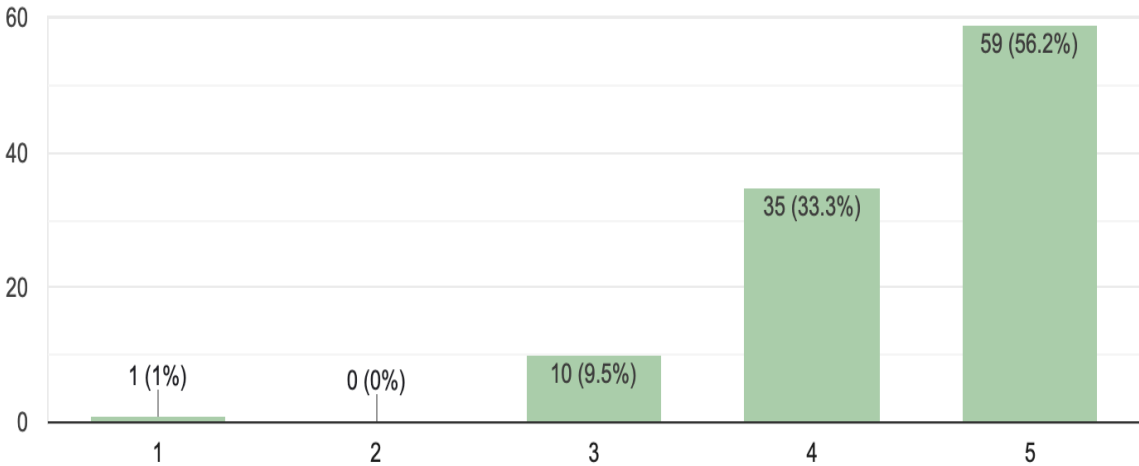
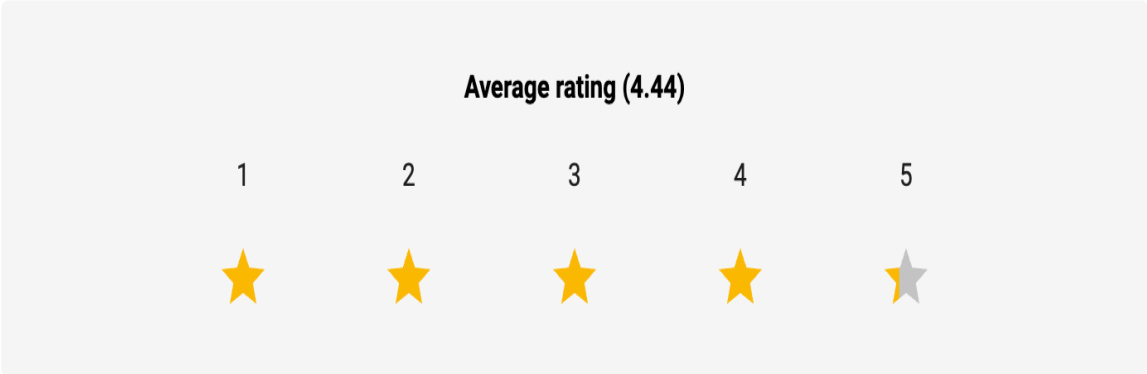
105 responses



Rate your overall level of satisfaction as an ESU1 employee (1 = poor 5 = excellent)

 [Copy chart](#)

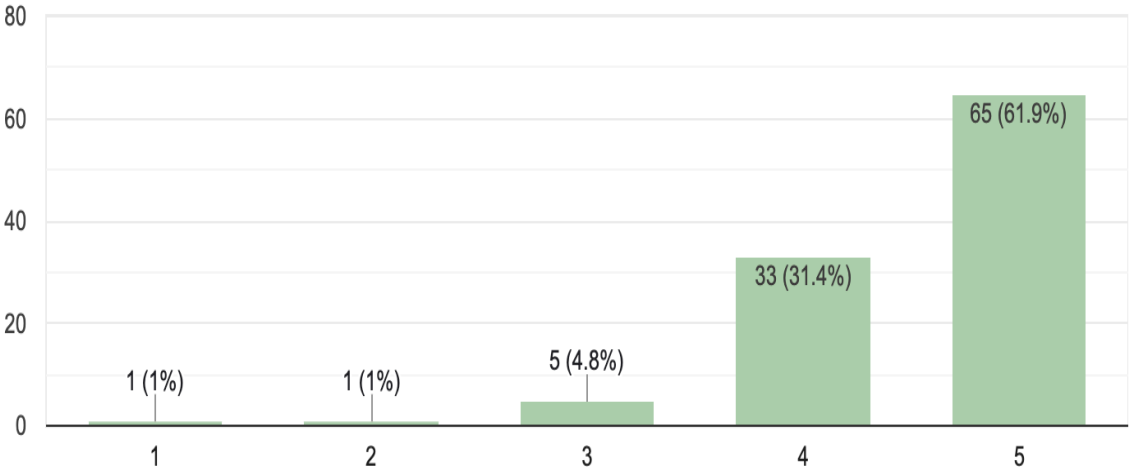
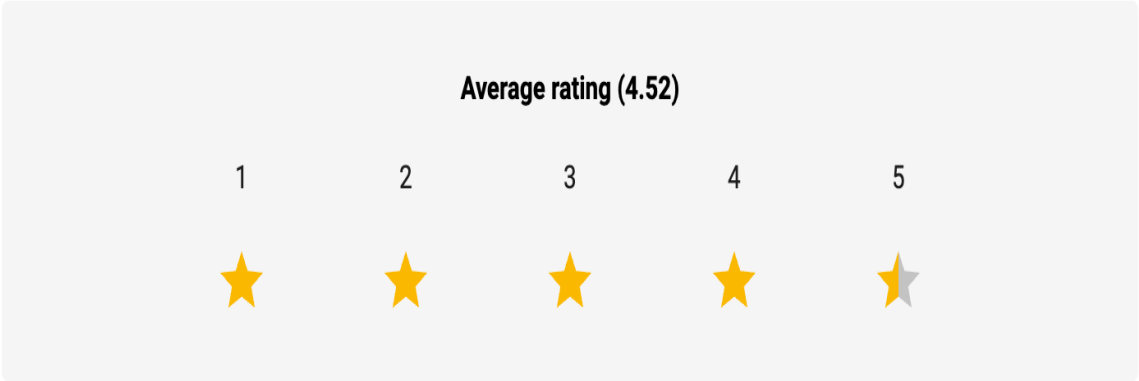
105 responses



Rate your level of enthusiasm to recommend someone seeking employment at ESU1 (1 = stay away; 5 = great place to be)

 [Copy chart](#)

105 responses



## 2025-26 Teacher Vacancy Survey Report Summary

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) conducted the 2025-26 Teacher Vacancy Survey in the fall of 2025. All public-school districts, nonpublic school systems and Educational Service Units (ESU) have been included in the collection of data. For purposes of this report, the ESU data has been combined with the public-school data (district) while the nonpublic data (system) is combined with them into the total counts. This summary shows the totals. For the separate district and system counts, see the full report.

The survey of all 434 Nebraska districts/systems (261 PK-12 public school districts and ESUs, and 173 nonpublic school systems) in the state requested the following information:

- The number of districts/systems that could not find fully qualified teachers\* to fill positions;
- The endorsement areas of the positions that were unfilled\*\*;
- The reasons why the applicant pool was not sufficient; and
- What the district/system did to address the unfilled positions.

The overall response rate climbed to **81.80%**, marking the strongest participation the survey has ever received. The district rate (public/ESU) was 255 of 261 responding for a 97.70% response rate, while the system rate (nonpublic) was 100 of 173 responding for a 57.80% response rate. Participation by public districts, ESUs, and nonpublic systems increased nearly 10% this year. Unfilled positions in descending order by endorsement area (excluding Other and Middle Level – include under content area) are as follows:

Endorsement Area	Unfilled**		Vacant***	Endorsement Area	Unfilled**		Vacant***
	#	%	#		#	%	#
Special Education	140.00	28.59%	42.50	School Counselor	18.00	3.68%	1.00
Elementary Education	61.75	12.61%	5.00	Art	15.50	3.17%	1.00
Career Education Areas	36.75	7.50%	10.00	School Psychologist	15.50	3.17%	7.50
Science	30.50	6.23%	6.00	Music Instrumental/Vocal	12.50	2.55%	4.00
Mathematics	27.25	5.56%	2.00	World Language	11.40	2.33%	2.00
Speech Language Pathology	23.40	4.78%	14.40	ESL/ELL*	9.00	1.84%	0
Language Arts	20.50	4.19%	1.00	School Library	7.00	1.43%	0
Early Childhood Education Areas	19.00	3.88%	7.00	Social Studies/Social Science	2.00	0.41%	0
Health and/or Physical Education	18.00	3.68%	2.00				

\*ESL/ELL are traditional shortage areas for federal consideration, so Nebraska recognizes them as well.

Overall, there were 135 districts/systems reporting unfilled positions, or 38.03% of the returned sample, at the beginning of the 2025-26 school year.

Districts/systems reported 489.70 positions as unfilled with fully qualified personnel, and 111.40 left vacant for 2025-26. Of the 489.70 unfilled positions, 123 positions (25.12%) were in districts/systems with **less than 500** students.

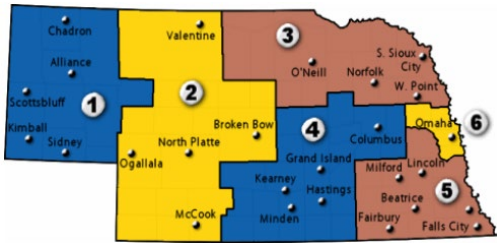
For the purposes of this survey:

**\*Fully qualified teacher** is an individual who holds an Initial, Standard, or Professional Nebraska teaching certificate with the appropriate endorsement for the assigned class and the professional attributes sought by the school district.

**\*\*Unfilled** refers to a position that was filled by someone other than a fully qualified teacher **or** a position that was left vacant.

**\*\*\*Vacant** refers to a position that was not filled at all – i.e., in Special Education of the 140.00 unfilled positions, 97.5 have teachers and 42.50 were left vacant.

2025-2026 Teacher Vacancy Survey Report Summary Continued



- 1 – Western
- 2 – West Central
- 3 – Northeast
- 4 – Central
- 5 – Southeast
- 6 – Metro

Region	Districts/Systems with Unfilled** Positions		Number of Unfilled** Positions		Vacant***	
	No. of Districts/Systems	%	No. of Unfilled	%	No. Vacant	% Unfilled Vacant for Region
Western	13	9.63%	28.35	5.79%	8.00	28.22%
West Central	20	14.81%	29.50	6.02%	5.00	16.95%
Northeast	23	17.04%	56.50	11.54%	26.00	46.02%
Central	33	24.44%	75.75	15.47%	18.50	24.42%
Southeast	23	17.04%	124.95	25.52%	36.90	29.53%
Metro	23	17.04%	174.65	35.66%	17.00	9.73%
<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>489.70</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>111.40</b>	<b>Avg. 25.81%</b>

Districts/systems were allowed to identify multiple reasons for unfilled\*\* positions. Of the 135 districts/systems reporting unfilled positions, the main reasons given were divided between “No applicants” (60%) and “No fully qualified applicants based on endorsement area” (18%).

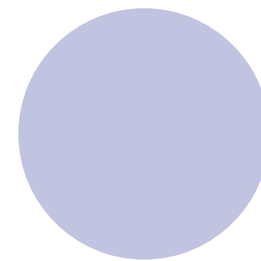
The survey offered solutions from which districts/systems could choose from when identifying how they solved the dilemma of unfilled\*\* positions. The most frequently reported solutions for unfilled positions include: “Position was not filled” (20%); “Hired a person who holds a provisional permit in the content area” (17%); “Hired a person NOT appropriately endorsed in the content area” (14%); and “Used substitute teachers” (11%). For further information, see Tables 10a-c in the full report.

Of the 17 endorsement shortage areas, six have been designated shortage areas each year for the last 15 years: Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Special Education, Speech-Language Pathology, and World Language. In addition to these, 8 others have been designated shortage areas each of the last five years: Career Education Areas; Art; Early Childhood Education; Health and/or Physical Education; School Counselor; School Library; School Psychologist; and Music/Instrumental/Vocal.

Find the full report at <https://www.education.ne.gov/educatorprep/teacher-shortage-survey/>. Tables included in the Report Summary combine public and nonpublic system responses. The full report provides an analysis of public and nonpublic in separate tables as well.

For the purposes of this survey:

- \*Fully qualified teacher is an individual who holds an Initial, Standard, or Professional Nebraska teaching certificate with the appropriate endorsement for the assigned class and the professional attributes sought by the school district.
- \*\*Unfilled refers to a position that was filled by someone other than a fully qualified teacher or a position that was left vacant.
- \*\*\*Vacant refers to a position that was not filled at all – i.e., in Special Education of the 140.00 unfilled positions, 97.5 have teachers and 42.50 were left vacant.



**Good Life | Great Schools | Excellent Education**

The Nebraska Department of Education Strategic Plan for 2026-2030





The Nebraska Department of Education engaged in a strategic planning process beginning in January 2025. After rigorous engagement with citizens, partners, clients, and staff, this document outlines our roadmap for the statewide education system in Nebraska. Through this process, members of the State Board of Education (State Board) and agency staff members received input and feedback from over 2,500 Nebraskans who represent students, families, and schools in our public, nonpublic, and exempt schools, as well as vocational rehabilitation clients. This roadmap, titled **Good Life | Great Schools | Excellent Education** embodies a vision to ensure all Nebraskans receive high-quality educational opportunities for success in learning and life.

**Good Life** is a nod to our state’s longtime state slogan, “The Good Life.” The slogan first appeared in the 1970s and has been widely used in marketing, on highway signs, and in tourism campaigns. Often when referring to “The Good Life,” Nebraskans are alluding to the quality of life in the state, deep connections to our communities, the natural environment, as well as agriculture, industry, and employment opportunities.

**Great Schools** highlights the importance we place on our local schools, public and nonpublic, as well as the educational opportunities afforded to students through exempt (home) school settings. Nebraskans are proud of their local schools and the learning that takes place in those spaces. Schools also provide learning opportunities outside the classroom through activities and athletics, and in many ways serve as a hub of community life.

**Excellent Education** promotes the desire for all Nebraskans to have access to high-quality educational opportunities and resources. Ultimately, the Nebraska Department of Education exists to serve students and our clients. While the NDE provides some direct services to students and clients, much of the work we do is dependent on our partners, such as teachers and school leaders. We aim to hold up the Nebraska education system as a beacon for educational excellence in our country and the world.

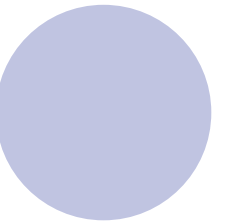
**Good Life | Great Schools | Excellent Education** is organized in four major areas:

- Who we are
- Who we serve
- What we do
- Where we are going

Key findings from the strategic planning process are embedded throughout this document, highlighting what we heard from people across the state. Additional information about the strategic planning process is found on page 15.

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What We Do.....	7
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Summary of the Strategic Planning Process...	15



# Who We Are

The Nebraska Department of Education is a state constitutional agency operating under the authority of an elected, non-partisan board of education. The State Board appoints the Commissioner of Education (Commissioner), who oversees the administration of the state school system. The state constitution provides an overarching description of the authority of the NDE.

## Article VII, Section 1

*The Legislature shall provide for the free instruction in the common schools of this state of all persons between the ages of five and twenty-one years. The Legislature may provide for the education of other persons in educational institutions owned and controlled by the state or a political subdivision thereof.*

## Article VII, Section II

*The State Department of Education shall be comprised of a State Board of Education and a Commissioner of Education. The State Department of Education shall have general supervision and administration of the school system of the state and of such other activities as the Legislature may direct.*

## Article VII, Section III

*The State Board of Education shall be composed of eight members, who shall be elected from eight districts of substantially equal population as provided by the Legislature. Their term of office shall be for four years each. Their duties and powers shall be prescribed by the Legislature, and they shall receive no compensation, but shall be reimbursed their actual expense incurred in the performance of their duties. The members of the State Board of Education shall not be actively engaged in the educational profession and they shall be elected on a nonpartisan ballot.*

## Article VII, Section IV

*The State Board of Education shall appoint and fix the compensation of the Commissioner of Education, who shall be the executive officer of the State Board of Education and the administrative head of the State Department of Education, and who shall have such powers and duties as the Legislature may direct. The board shall appoint all employees of the State Department of Education on the recommendation of the Commissioner of Education.*

The NDE employees carry out the mission of the agency on behalf of Nebraska students and clients in public and nonpublic schools, as well as exempt school settings. The NDE staff interact with schools and institutions of higher education to develop, coordinate, and improve educational programs.

Over 500 employees carry out the myriad duties assigned by state and federal statutes and the policy direction of the State Board. In broad terms, the work of NDE may be categorized into four main areas:

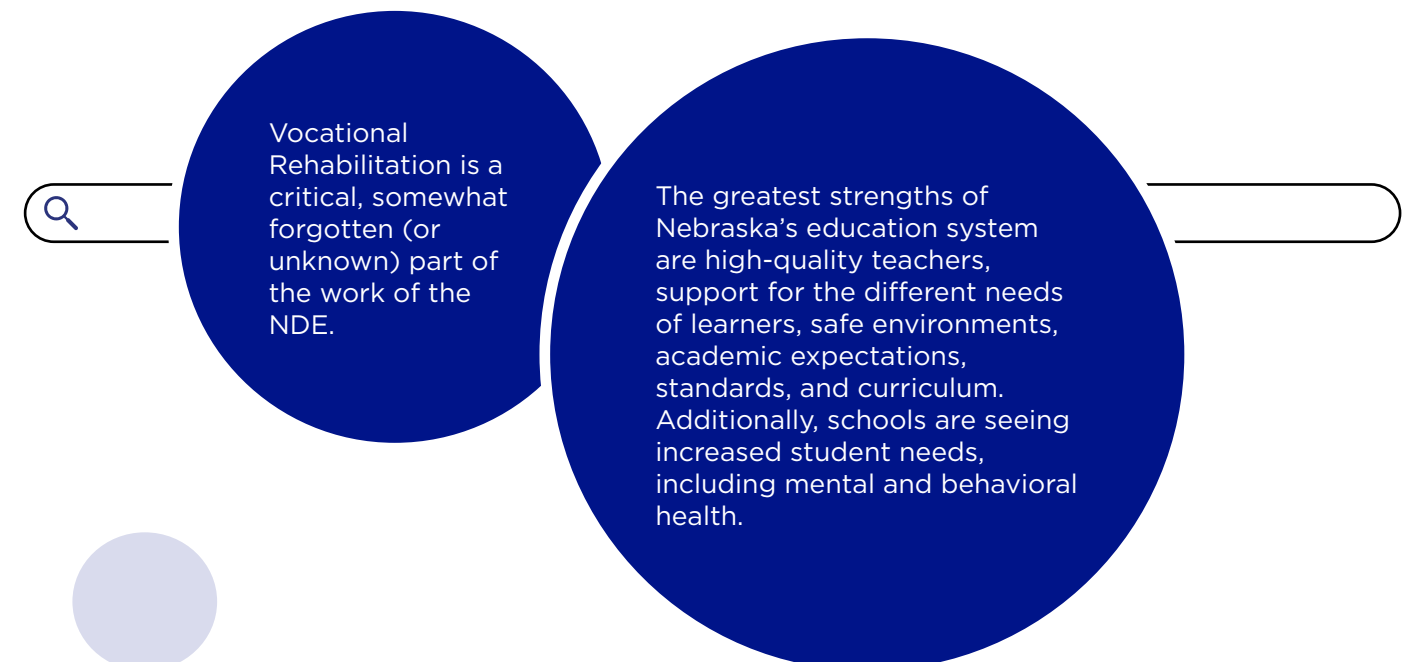
- 1) Education programs and services – serving public and nonpublic schools, educators, and students

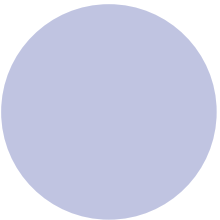
- 2) Vocational Rehabilitation (Nebraska VR) - assisting people with disabilities to join the workforce
- 3) Disability Determination Services (DDS) - adjudication of claims for disability benefits under Social Security or Supplemental Security Income
- 4) Agency operations – areas like human resources, accounting, legal services, and information technology

The NDE provides a broad range of consultative and support services for Nebraska public, nonpublic, and exempt schools. Services are provided in areas such as:

- Adult education and GED®
- After-school programs
- Career and technical education
- Data management
- Early childhood
- Family and community engagement
- Federal programs
- Student support services
- School accreditation
- School improvement
- Special education
- School finance
- Teaching, learning, and assessment

While the above list relates mostly to the statewide education system, most of the agency employees work in Nebraska VR and DDS. In many ways, the NDE ensures success for all learners from early-childhood to career.





## Values

The NDE grounds its work on the following core values:

- » **Communication**  
The NDE prioritizes accessible, consistent, transparent communication that informs the public and our partners of key priorities and activities and allows our partners to have a voice in the work of the state agency. Valuing communication enables the NDE and its partners to implement best practices at scale with efficiency, thereby accelerating learners’ achievement and outcomes.
- » **Accountability**  
The NDE is accountable to our partners when we use resources wisely, follow through and show integrity, take responsibility for our actions and outcomes, and uphold high standards. Valuing accountability will lead the NDE to support our partners, thereby improving outcomes and opportunities for all learners.
- » **Respect**  
Nebraska is a state with diverse geographies, demographics, languages, backgrounds, cultures, and needs, and the NDE will engage in open-minded, intentional, and consistent listening and decision-making processes. Valuing respect, the NDE will operate similarly to Nebraska’s classrooms where respect builds a positive learning environment; the NDE will model respect in all processes, allowing partners to contribute to the statewide education system.
- » **Excellence**  
The NDE will be a model for educational and workplace excellence in Nebraska, guided by evidence-based, data-informed research. The NDE will strive for operational excellence in our services, serving as a model for actively identifying problems, implementing solutions, and evaluating impact. Similarly, the NDE will expect excellence of external partners serving learners throughout Nebraska. Valuing excellence will elevate the level of performance across the education system.
- » **Service**  
The work of the NDE depends upon the service we provide to students, educators, families, communities, and external partners. A service mindset recognizes that we, as an entity of state government, serve the citizens of Nebraska. Valuing service will allow the NDE to strengthen partnerships and achieve greater results.

These five values form an acronym, CARES. This acronym serves as an easy-to-remember structure for communicating about our core values, implementing the values in decision-making processes, and providing a common set of expectations for employees.

## Mission Statement

The **mission** of the Nebraska Department of Education is ***to lead and support the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living.***

These five values were identified and defined throughout the strategic planning process with partners, the public, and NDE staff.

The NDE’s mission resonated with survey respondents who recommended no changes be made.

# Who We Serve

Nebraska schools educate over 365,000 students in public and nonpublic school districts and systems. There are nearly 330,000 students who attend public schools in the state. School districts range in size from serving 50 to 60 students to the largest district serving over 51,000 students. Nonpublic schools serve over 36,000 students in schools that range with student counts from three to over 1,000. Additionally, there are nearly 14,000 students educated through exempt (home) schools. Our schools are served by over 41,000 certificated staff, of which, 26,000 are teachers. In terms of Nebraska VR, nearly 3,000 individuals are served each year.

The state laws of Nebraska further detail the responsibilities of the Nebraska Department of Education. Nebraska Revised Statute § 79-301 provides a general, overall view of the statutory duties of the NDE:

- (1) The State Department of Education provided for in Article VII, section 2, of the Constitution of Nebraska shall consist of a State Board of Education and a Commissioner of Education. The State Department of Education shall have general supervision and administration of the school system of the state and of such other activities as the Legislature may direct.
- (2) The State Board of Education, acting as a unit, shall be the policy-forming, planning, and evaluative body for the state school program. Except in the appointment of a Commissioner of Education, the board shall deliberate and take action with the professional advice and counsel of the Commissioner of Education.
- (3) The Commissioner of Education shall be the executive officer of the State Board of Education and the administrative head of the professional, technical, and clerical staff of the State Department of Education. The commissioner shall act under the authority of the State Board of Education. The commissioner shall have the responsibility for carrying out the requirements of law and of board policies, standards, rules, and regulations and for providing the educational leadership and services deemed necessary by the board for the proper conduct of the state school program. In the event of vacancy in office or the absence or incapacity of the Commissioner of Education, a deputy commissioner shall carry out any duties imposed by law upon the commissioner.

# Partners

To meet these responsibilities, the NDE serves our partners differently in both direct and indirect ways. The individuals and entities in the direct service list represent those partners with whom the NDE has direct and regular interactions. The individuals and entities in the indirect service list represent those partners with whom the NDE serves by working with the partners in the direct service list. Note that the NDE staff are not teaching in the classrooms; rather, they are supporting the teachers, school leaders, and schools who have direct interactions with students every day in classrooms. This distinction is important, as it highlights the scope and reach of the work of the NDE, and it serves as a reminder that the NDE exists to serve students through partnership with our schools. In another example, Nebraska VR staff are, in many cases, working directly with students in schools.

## Direct Service Partners

- PK-12 schools
- Early childhood education programs
- Nebraska VR clients
- Business partners
- Educators (e.g., school leaders, teachers)
- Applicants for certifications
- Postsecondary educational institutions
- Educational Service Units
- Students (e.g. students participating in career and technical student organization)
- Families and citizens (e.g., families seeking exempt school opportunities)
- Nonprofit organizations serving the education system

## Indirect Service Partners

- Students
- Families
- Businesses - the current and future workforce



# What We Do

## Services

The services describe the work of the NDE and are derived from state and federal statutory authority, as well as initiatives and priorities set by the State Board. In order to set a strategic roadmap, the “work” of the NDE must be clear. This list of 10 services provides a relatively comprehensive description of the work of the Nebraska Department of Education, cutting across all of its component offices. These services are rooted in quality assurance.

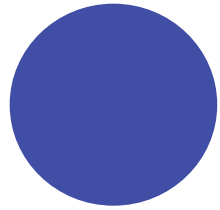
- **Certification:** The NDE is tasked, by statute, to set the rules and regulations that dictate requirements for educator certification.
- **Coordination with other government/non-governmental agencies:** The NDE is the state education agency and, as such, represents the educational system in cross-agency collaborations such as the Governor’s efforts to decrease the teacher shortage with other state agencies. Additionally, the NDE is responsible for administrative management of several statewide commissions and councils.
- **Direct services to students/learners/clients:** Nebraska VR provides direct services to clients and the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education provides learning opportunities for students in career and technical student organizations.
- **Grant funding opportunities to education entities and third parties:** The NDE plays a role in pass-through funding made available from the United States federal government. Additionally, the NDE stewards state and non-governmental funds, when available, to advance the priorities of the State Board.
- **Program and fiscal compliance and monitoring:** The NDE is statutorily required to regulate schools and school districts and direct compliance activities.
- **Program accreditation and approval:** The NDE is required, by statute, to serve as the accreditation and approval authority for public and nonpublic schools, educational service units, and educator preparation programs.
- **Professional development:** The NDE provides high-quality professional development activities for educators that align with the content area standards of the state, and other programmatic activities.
- **School and continuous improvement:** Through a required evaluation process, Nebraska’s schools and districts report leading and lagging indicators of success. The NDE responds to these evaluations with hands-on support to ensure that each student is afforded the opportunities and support necessary to achieve success.
- **School accountability:** The NDE is statutorily required to lead the state school accountability system, including setting statewide content standards for and administering statewide proficiency assessments. The agency is also responsible for determining state classifications and federal designations of public schools and districts.
- **Technical assistance:** The NDE provides resources for all schools, public and nonpublic, as well as parents, families, and citizens in support of the education system.

## Strategic Levers

The Nebraska Department of Education, as the state education agency, has the opportunity to create change, drive improvement, and cultivate innovation through several strategic levers. Strategic levers are tools and frameworks used to drive transformation and improve learning outcomes. These seven strategic levers are designed to address specific challenges and goals within the education system. The purpose of these strategic levers is to create a more effective and efficient educational system that meets the needs of all students and contributes to the overall development of society.



Political change and uncertainty at the federal level specifically seem to be on the minds of partners. NDE could be an important “leveler” to help manage and stabilize the disruption.



## Where We Are Going

In response to what we heard from citizens, educators, school leaders, clients, students, parents, and others, as well as examining statewide data, the Nebraska Department of Education is committed to four strategic priorities. **Strategic priorities** are the clearly defined areas of focus for the NDE essential to achieving our long-term mission; they act as guiding principles for decision-making, resource allocation, and daily actions. These are the top-level goals of the strategic plan; in other words, what we focus on.

Strategic priorities are further defined by strategic outcomes. **Strategic outcomes** are the specific results or impacts the NDE aims to achieve by pursuing our strategic priorities. Strategic outcomes are the measurable results or changes that demonstrate progress toward our long-term mission. Strategic outcomes tell us what success looks like; they are our desired results.

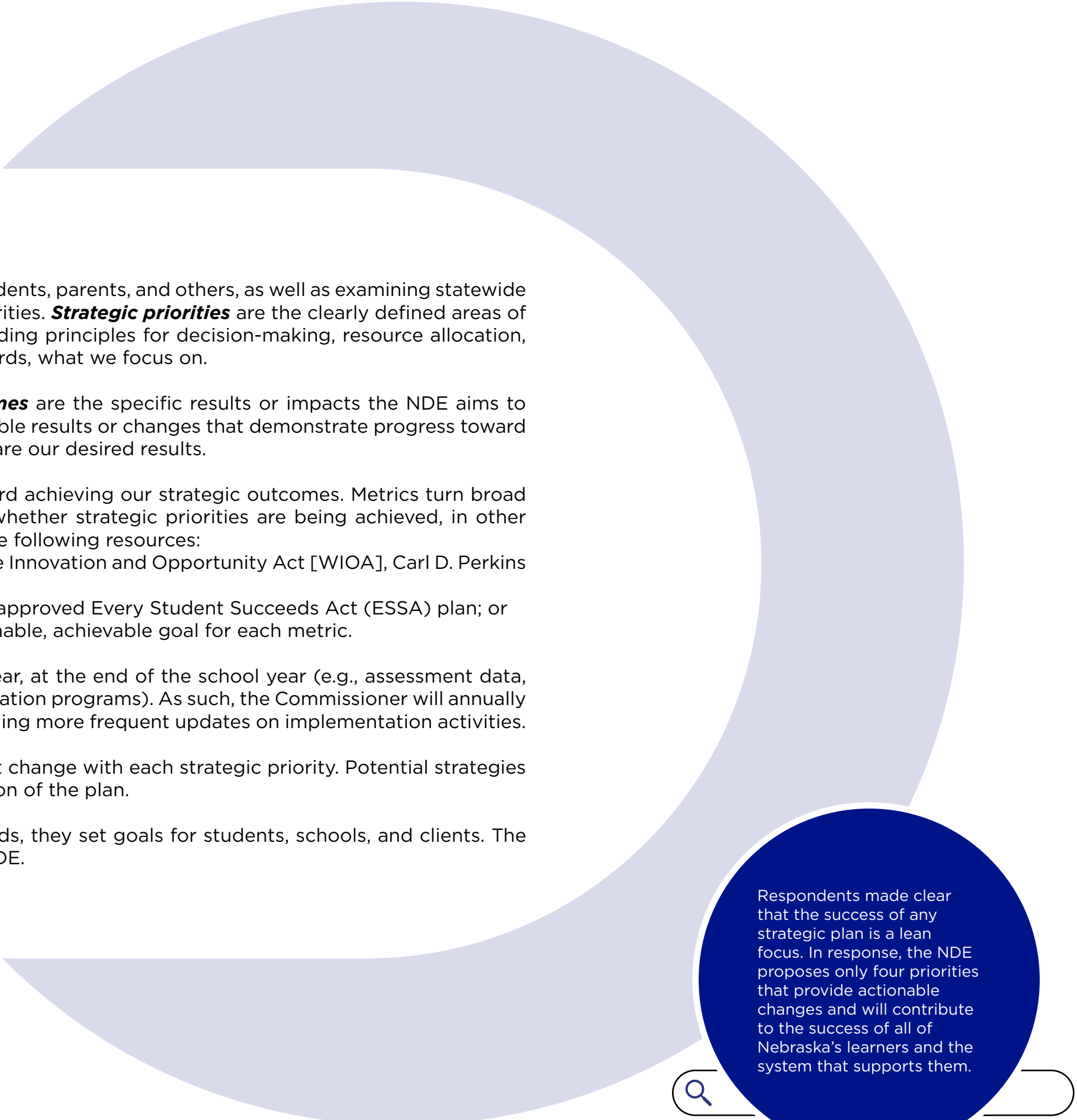
**Metrics** are the specific measures or indicators used to track our progress toward achieving our strategic outcomes. Metrics turn broad goals into observable, quantifiable evidence of success. Metrics demonstrate whether strategic priorities are being achieved, in other words, the evidence. The metrics below were calculated using one or more of the following resources:

- leveraging pre-existing metrics in other approved state plans (e.g., Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act [WIOA], Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act [Perkins]);
- adapting the 50% reduction in non-proficiency goals outlined in the state's approved Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan; or
- consulting with relevant internal and external partners to determine a reasonable, achievable goal for each metric.

Many metrics are “lagging indicators,” meaning the data are available once a year, at the end of the school year (e.g., assessment data, graduation rates, teacher vacancy data, participation in career and technical education programs). As such, the Commissioner will annually report metrics to the State Board through the Executive Committee, while providing more frequent updates on implementation activities.

All of the strategic levers identified above may be used to some degree to effect change with each strategic priority. Potential strategies are identified as suggested actions with each strategic priority for implementation of the plan.

Three of the strategic priorities are outward facing in their impact. In other words, they set goals for students, schools, and clients. The fourth strategic priority is inward facing and focused on the operations of the NDE.



Respondents made clear that the success of any strategic plan is a lean focus. In response, the NDE proposes only four priorities that provide actionable changes and will contribute to the success of all of Nebraska's learners and the system that supports them.

# Strategic Priority 1: Accelerate Student Achievement

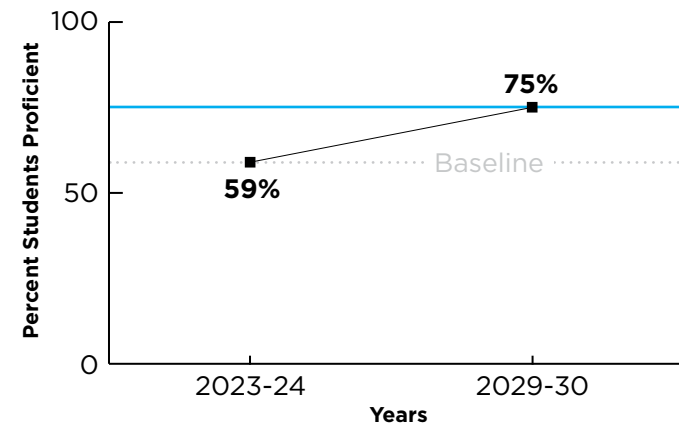
Students and clients thrive when they are met with high expectations and gain the knowledge, skills, and mindsets to engage and contribute to their communities. While all content areas are important to prepare students, the NDE will focus this plan on English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, recognizing the immediate achievement needs of students in these two areas.

Achieving this priority and outcomes will only be possible when the NDE focuses specific attention on improvement within student groups. The identified student groups are those reported in the ESSA plan. More information on performance of student groups across metrics is found on pages 13 through 14.

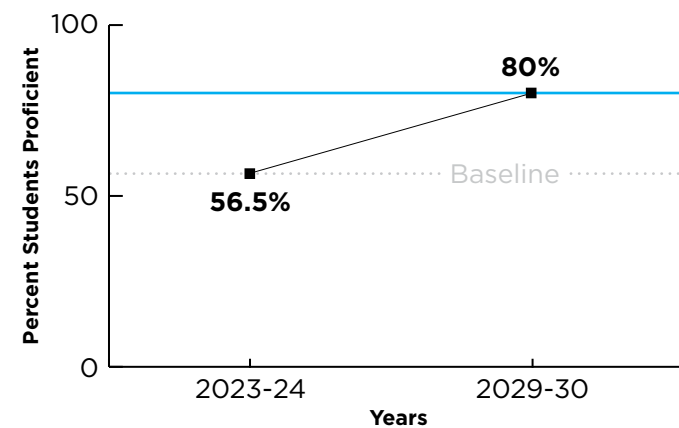
## » Strategic Outcome 1.1: Improved Student Achievement

### Metrics:

- ◇ **1.1.1.** 75% of 3rd grade students will score proficient in English language arts as measured by the NSCAS statewide assessment by 2030.



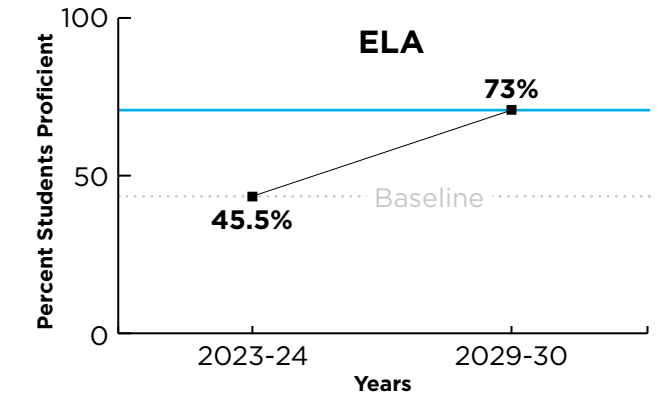
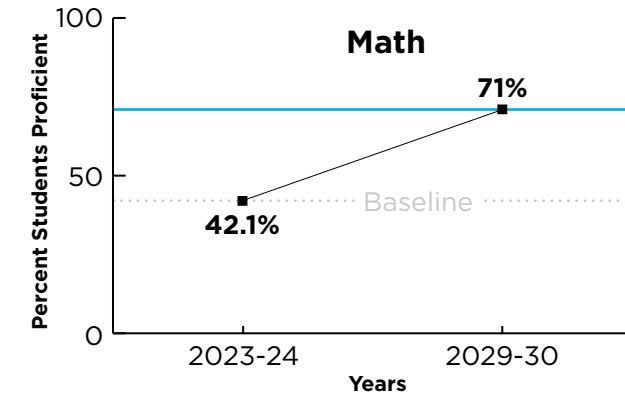
- ◇ **1.1.2.** 80% of 8th grade students will score proficient in mathematics as measured by the NSCAS statewide assessment by 2030.



There is a strong call for better support for students with disabilities, English learners, and those in poverty. Respondents of the survey emphasized the importance of early intervention and access to resources.

Students noted concerns with a focus on college entrance exams, and called for deeper engagement with course content "rather than test prep."

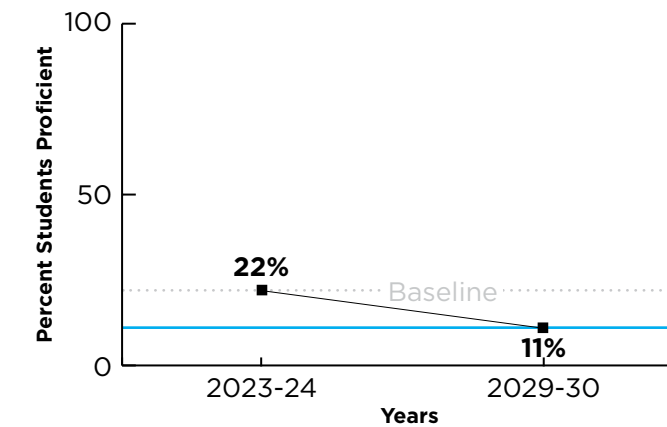
- ◇ **1.1.3.** 71% of 11th grade students will score proficient in math and 73% will score proficient in ELA as measured by the ACT assessment by 2030.



## » Strategic Outcome 1.2: Reduced Chronic Absenteeism

### Metric:

- ◇ **1.2.1.** Reduce chronic absenteeism by 50% by 2030.



Chronic absenteeism is seen as a growing issue, especially post-COVID. Survey respondents and public focus groups linked attendance to broader social issues like poverty, mental health, and family engagement.

### Potential Strategies:

- » Focus discretionary or unrestricted funds to ELA and mathematics achievement, and chronic absenteeism efforts.
- » Support schools through targeted school improvement and continuous improvement activities leading to increased student achievement.
- » Provide statewide resources supporting ELA and mathematics achievement, and student engagement strategies.
- » Partner with community organizations, healthcare providers, families, and students to identify and address non-academic barriers to attendance.
- » Deepen and expand summer and afterschool programming.
- » Promote safe and welcoming school environments.

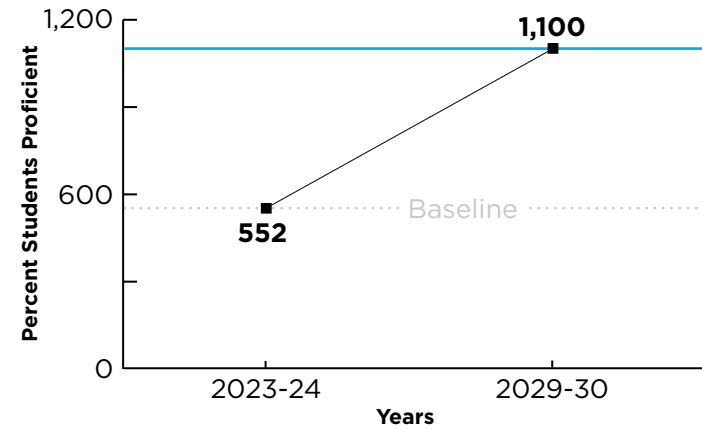
## Strategic Priority 2: Grow the Educator Pipeline

The single most important in-school factor associated with student achievement is the quality of the educator a student engages with daily. Every child deserves access to high-quality educators, supported by high-quality leaders and support staff. (Note: The NDE recognizes the importance of all educators and school personnel; this plan focuses squarely on teachers, recognizing the current classroom teacher needs in the state.)

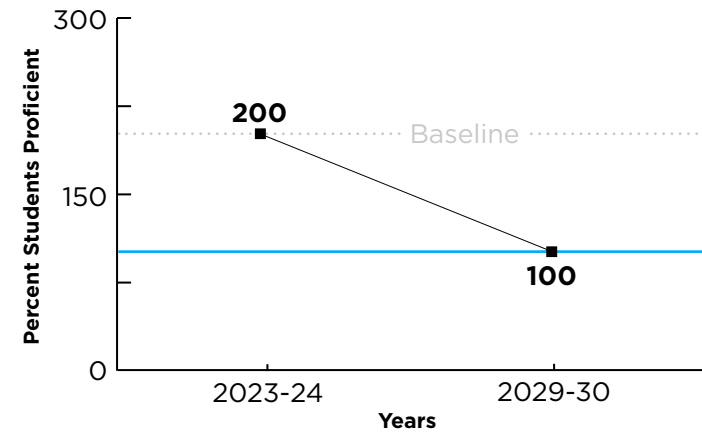
### » Strategic Outcome 2.1: Increased Supply of Teachers

#### Metrics:

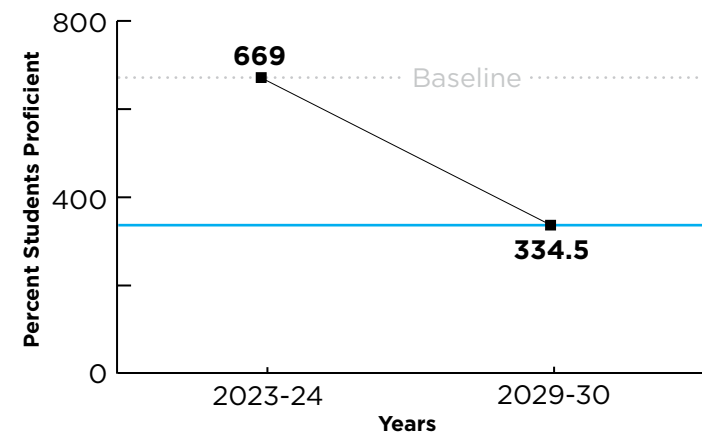
- ◇ **2.1.1.** 1,100 students per year will concentrate in the education and training program of study by 2030.



- ◇ **2.1.2.** Decrease by half the number of vacant teacher positions by 2030.



- ◇ **2.1.3.** Decrease by half the number of unfilled teacher positions by 2030.



#### Potential Strategies:

- » Support schools in the implementation of education and training programs of study.
- » Direct resources to incentivize teaching as a career.
- » Explore rules and regulations revisions related to teacher certification.



Throughout the NDE's strategic planning process, partners escalated teacher shortages and retention as one of the state's most significant challenges in education. Survey respondents and focus group participants cited low pay, lack of respect, and burnout as major factors.

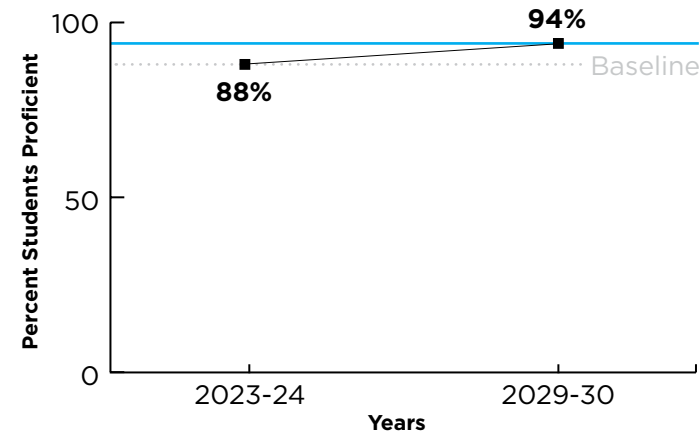
# Strategic Priority 3: Equip Learners for the Workforce

Nebraskans are best prepared to participate in the workforce when they are ready for what is next after high school, whether a career or postsecondary training or education. In 2022, the Nebraska Legislature, by way of LR 335, adopted a goal for 70% of Nebraskans aged 25 to 34 to have a degree, certificate, diploma, or other postsecondary or industry-recognized credential of economic value by 2030. This is often referred to as an “attainment goal.” The State Board adopted the same goal, affirming this effort in 2022. To achieve this strategic priority, learners must have transferable career-readiness skills like critical thinking, communication, and empathy, and the foundational knowledge to become economically, self-sufficient. The NDE will support the preparation of life-long learners who are engaged, productive members of their communities, state, and nation.

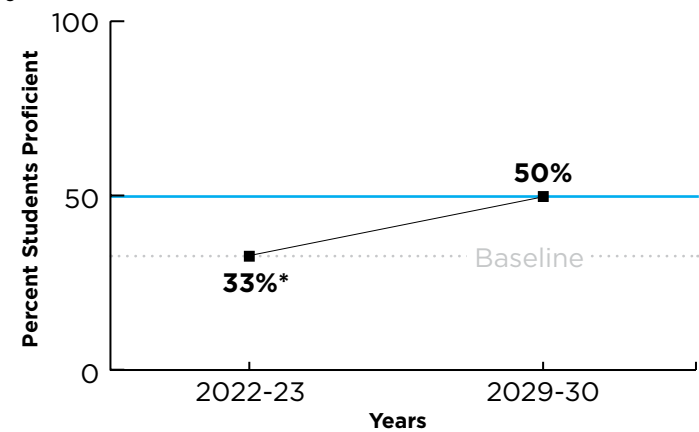
» **Strategic Outcome 3.1: Increased Postsecondary Access and Attainment**

**Metrics:**

◇ **3.1.1.** 94% of students will graduate by 2030.

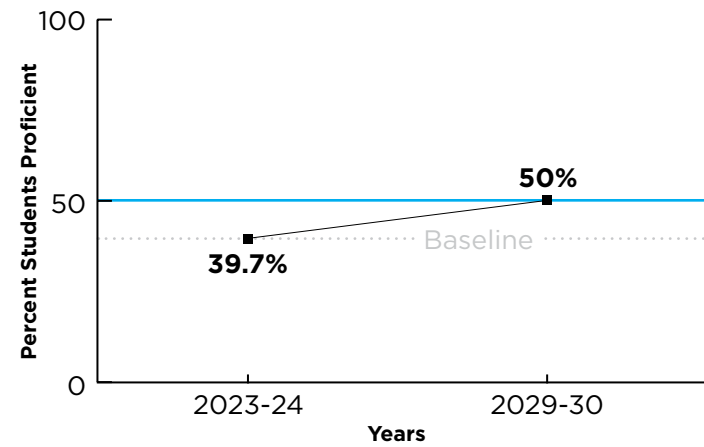


◇ **3.1.2.** 50% of students will engage in dual enrollment by 2030.



\*Note: The baseline data year is from the 2022-23 year as these are the most recent statewide data for this metric.

◇ **3.1.3.** 50% of students will concentrate in a CTE career cluster by 2030.

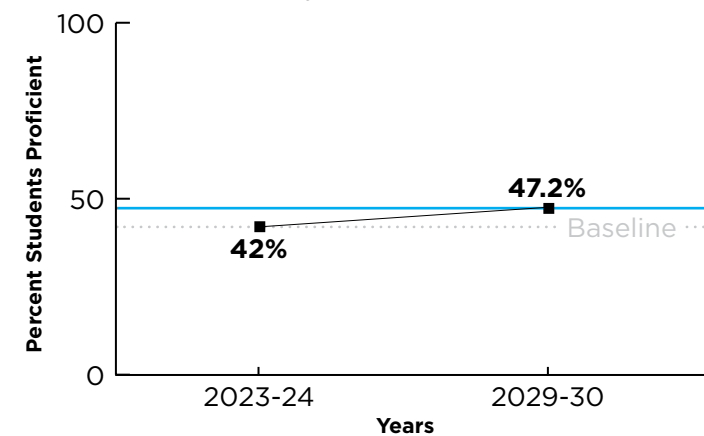


◇ **3.1.4.** Partner in the creation of a system to capture the number of industry recognized credentials obtained by Nebraska graduates.

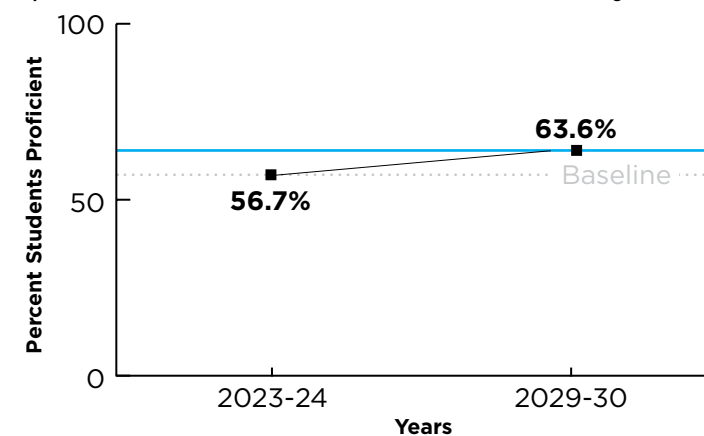
» **Strategic Outcome 3.2: Improved Skill Attainment for Clients and Learners**

**Metrics:**

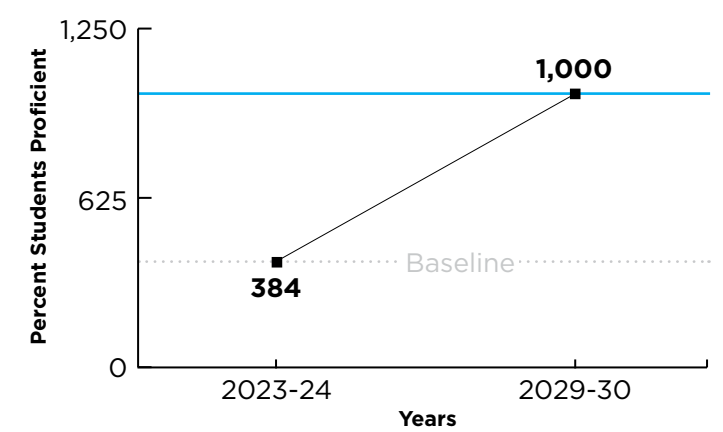
◇ **3.2.1.** 47.2% of Nebraska VR clients will receive a credential of value by 2030.



◇ **3.2.2.** 63.6% of Nebraska VR clients will be employed in quarter four after exit from services by 2030.



◇ **3.2.3.** 1,000 students per year will achieve the Seal of Biliteracy by 2030.



**Potential Strategies:**

- » Coordinate with schools and other education partners to provide resources and support to attain each metric.
- » Partner with institutions of higher education and other organizations to increase access to dual enrollment and other early postsecondary opportunities.
- » Coordinate with partner state agencies and the business community to ensure workforce needs are addressed.
- » Direct financial and human resources to support the strategic outcomes.

Workforce shortages across the state are especially evident in education, and even more acute in specific areas.

Students expressed a desire to learn and experience greater opportunities to problem-solve and develop a sense of lifelong learning.

## Strategic Priority 4: Provide Exceptional Service

The NDE will improve efficiencies and systems to serve our agency and the state with a high-quality, exceptional service mindset, while upholding our constitutional and statutory duties. (Note: For this strategic priority, example metrics are offered for illustration, as each office within the NDE will be responsible for operationalizing how the respective office reports on each strategic outcome.)

» **Strategic Outcome 4.1: Improved Agency-Wide Efficiency**

◇ *Example metrics: average number of days for invoice processing; average number of days to complete the contract routing process; average number of days for educator certification approvals.*

» **Strategic Outcome 4.2: Increased Responsiveness and Communication**

◇ *Example metrics: average number of hours/days to respond to emails and calls; average number of days to respond to help desk tickets.*

» **Strategic Outcome 4.3: Improved Capacity Building**

◇ *Example metrics: number of cross-training opportunities; number of identified succession planning opportunities.*

**Potential Strategies:**

- » Implement a customer service model based on the organizational values.
- » Implement an employee goal model based on the organizational values.
- » Provide training and support for employees based on the organizational values.

## Implementing the Plan

The Commissioner is responsible for implementing the vision set by this plan. Upon approval of the plan by the State Board, the Commissioner is charged with implementation and reporting on achievement, leading to measurable success.

The first three Strategic Priorities will be implemented through **Action Teams** appointed by the Commissioner. Each action team will have a designated leader and will consist of cross-agency representatives, given the task of addressing one of the identified strategic priorities. Each action team will inherit the metrics identified in the strategic plan and will set strategies and timelines necessary to accomplish the outcomes by way of a Commissioner-approved **Action Plan**. Action teams will ensure alignment of agency resources and engage with external partners. Additional responsibilities will include data management, reporting, and regular updates to the Commissioner, who will, in turn, report to the State Board through the Executive Committee. The Commissioner's Office and Office of Policy and Strategic Initiatives will provide administrative support and coordination to the action teams.

The fourth Strategic Priority will be implemented through **Operational Plans** with assigned responsibility to each office administrator within the agency. Each office administrator in the agency will be tasked to lead their respective staff teams in identifying relevant metrics and strategies in support of the strategic outcomes. The Commissioner's Office and Office of Policy and Strategic Initiatives will provide administrative support and coordination to office administrators in the development of their respective operational plans. Office administrators will report on key metrics to the Commissioner, who in turn will report summary highlights to the State Board. The State Board will regularly receive updates on agency operations and efficiencies that reflect the strategic outcomes outline in the fourth strategic priority.



# Metric Benchmarks by Student Group

**Metric 1.1.1.** 75% of 3rd grade students will score proficient in English language arts as measured by the NSCAS statewide assessment by 2030. (2023-24 baseline: 59% of 3rd grade students are proficient.)

Student Group	2023-24 Baseline (Percent Proficient)	2029-30 Goal (Percent Proficient)
American Indian / Alaska Native	35.0	67.5
Asian	61.0	80.5
Black or African American	36.0	68.0
Hispanic or Latino	41.0	70.5
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	48.0	74.0
Two or More Races	56.0	78.0
White	69.0	84.5
Students with Disabilities	33.0	66.5
Economically Disadvantaged	45.0	72.5
English Learners	24.0	62.0

**Metric 1.1.2.** 80% of 8th grade students will score proficient in mathematics as measured by the NSCAS statewide assessment by 2030. (2023-24 baseline: 56.5% of 8th grade students are proficient.)

Student Group	2023-24 Baseline (Percent Proficient)	2029-30 Goal (Percent Proficient)
American Indian / Alaska Native	29.0	64.5
Asian	60.0	80.0
Black or African American	24.0	62.0
Hispanic or Latino	37.0	68.5
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	49.0	74.5
Two or More Races	48.0	74.0
White	68.0	84.0
Students with Disabilities	23.0	61.5
Economically Disadvantaged	40.0	70.0
English Learners	20.0	60.0

**Metric 1.1.3.** 71% of 11th grade students will score proficient in math and 73% will score proficient in ELA as measured by the ACT assessment by 2030. (2023-24 baseline: ACT scores for Math and ELA are 42.1% and 45.5% proficient respectively.)

Student Group	2023-24 Baseline (Percent Proficient - ELA)	2029-30 Goal (Percent Proficient - ELA)	2023-24 Baseline (Percent Proficient - Math)	2029-30 Goal (Percent Proficient - Math)
American Indian / Alaska Native	24.0	62.0	**	**
Asian	52.0	76.0	51.0	75.5
Black or African American	18.0	59.0	13.0	56.5
Hispanic or Latino	25.0	62.5	22.0	61.0
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	35.0	67.5	**	**
Two or More Races	44.0	72.0	38.0	69.0
White	56.0	78.0	53.0	76.5
Students with Disabilities	10.0	55.0	8.0	54.0
Economically Disadvantaged	27.0	63.5	23.0	61.5
English Learners	4.0	52.0	4.0	52.0

\*\*NDE masks or hides some student data to protect confidential information about students as required by federal law.

**Metric 1.2.1.** Reduce chronic absenteeism by 50% by 2030. (2023-24 baseline: Current rate of chronic absenteeism is 22% of students)

Student Group	2023-24 Baseline (Percent Proficient)	2029-30 Goal (Percent Proficient)
American Indian / Alaska Native	50.0	25.0
Asian	16.0	8.0
Black or African American	46.0	23.0
Hispanic or Latino	31.0	15.5
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	32.0	16.0
Two or More Races	30.0	15.0
White	15.0	7.5
Students with Disabilities	31.0	15.5
Economically Disadvantaged	31.0	15.5
English Learners	31.0	15.5

**Metric 3.1.2.** 50% of students will engage in dual enrollment by 2030. (2022-23 baseline: 33% of students are engaged in dual enrollment)

Student Group	2022-23 Baseline (Percent Proficient)	2029-30 Goal (Percent Proficient)
American Indian / Alaska Native	5.5	9.1
Asian	28.2	46.8
Black or African American	11.3	18.8
Hispanic or Latino	19.3	32.0
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	8.7	14.4
Two or More Races	34.0	56.4
White	35.6	59.1
Students with Disabilities	*	*
Economically Disadvantaged	*	*
English Learners	*	*

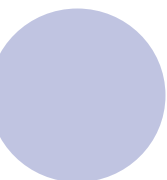
\*Data are currently unavailable for this student group

**Metric 3.1.1.** 94% of students will graduate by 2030. (2023-24 baseline: 88% graduation rate)

Student Group	2023-24 Baseline (Percent Proficient)	2029-30 Goal (Percent Proficient)
American Indian / Alaska Native	74.0	87.0
Asian	90.0	95.0
Black or African American	76.0	88.0
Hispanic or Latino	80.0	90.0
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	73.0	86.5
Two or More Races	84.0	92.0
White	93.0	96.5
Students with Disabilities	69.0	84.5
Economically Disadvantaged	82.0	91.0
English Learners	61.0	80.5

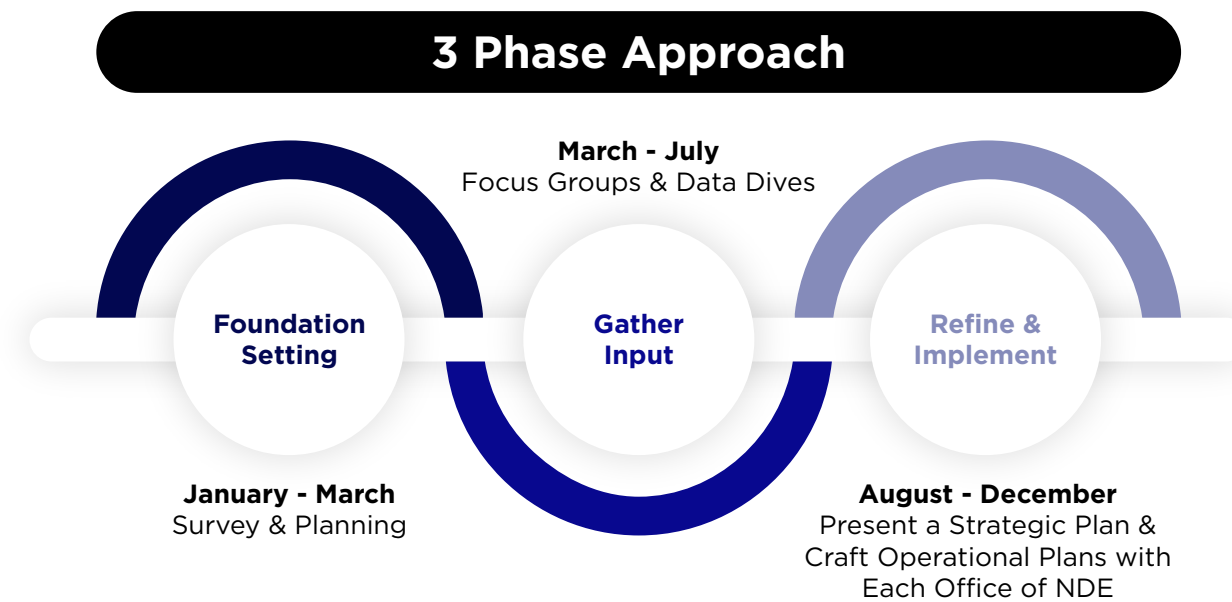
**Metric 3.1.3.** 50% of students will concentrate in a CTE career cluster by 2030. (2023-24 baseline: 39.7% of students are CTE concentrators)

Student Group	2023-24 Baseline (Percent Proficient)	2029-30 Goal (Percent Proficient)
American Indian / Alaska Native	37.9	43.9
Asian	33.3	41.7
Black or African American	36.6	43.3
Hispanic or Latino	34.8	42.4
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	30.3	40.2
Two or More Races	35.0	42.5
White	42.3	46.1
Students with Disabilities	32.1	41.1
Economically Disadvantaged	39.3	44.6
English Learners	21.1	35.6



# Summary of the Strategic Planning Process

The Nebraska Department of Education followed a three-phase approach to strategic planning: Phase I Foundation Setting, Phase II Gather Input, and Phase III Refine and Implement. Among these three phases, the staff of the NDE gathered data from five sources to inform the future strategic plan. These three phases and five data sources are summarized below, with additional information available at [education.ne.gov/commissioner/2026-strategic-plan](https://education.ne.gov/commissioner/2026-strategic-plan).



## Phase I

**Foundation Setting** occurred between January and March 2025. During this time, NDE staff created and distributed surveys. While open to the public, the NDE coordinated the logistics needed to meet citizens and partners in a regional approach. Phase I ended with the closing of the public survey and nearly 2,000 responses from staff, teachers, administrators, community partners, and citizens of Nebraska. This survey is the first of five data sources that guide the work of the strategic plan, and is summarized at this link: [education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Strat-Plan-Survey-Summary\\_4.14.25.pdf](https://education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Strat-Plan-Survey-Summary_4.14.25.pdf).

## Phase II

**Gather Input** through regional and public focus groups, and analyze the data collected during Phase I. Between March and July 2025, the NDE staff studied the data collected from the public survey and used the gaps to solicit future feedback opportunities. For example, the public reached near consensus that the education system should have these three values: communication, respect, and accountability. With additional time and modes of communication, the NDE was able to ask for standard definitions of those values as they relate to our state, our students, and our work.

Phase II also allowed the NDE staff to meet with more than 200 partners in 10 communities. These **community focus groups**, the second of five data sources, allowed public input on the NDE's strategic planning process. Additionally, the NDE staff and Commissioner were able to secure valuable time with and feedback from students in four communities during **student focus groups**, the third of five data sources. The NDE staff then met with partners of the education system to discuss the work currently underway at the NDE through SWOT analyses. SWOT analysis includes examining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the work of the NDE and our partners. First, the NDE staff leading these efforts met with each of the 16 offices of the NDE. These **Internal SWOT Analyses** were the fourth of five data sources. Next, NDE staff asked for feedback from partners. These **External SWOT Analyses** were the final of five data sources.

## Phase III

**Refine and Implement** is the final phase of work, executed from August to December 2025. The NDE's staff drafted the outline of the strategic plan under the guidance of Commissioner Maher. This framework was taken to the State Board at an August work session. Feedback was collected from board members with additional insight from employers, philanthropic partners, and school leaders. With additional context from these partners and the feedback collected in Phases I and II, the NDE staff drafted a strategic plan.

Final approval is expected from the State Board prior to implementation. In preparation for implementation, staff began creating operational plan templates that will be utilized by each office of the NDE and cross-agency teams. These templates are being developed to address each strategic priority and are intended to aid each NDE employee to see their work tied to the mission of the organization and the strategic priorities of Nebraska's education system. The public can expect to see the results of this work online at [education.ne.gov/commissioner/2026-strategic-plan](https://education.ne.gov/commissioner/2026-strategic-plan) and during State Board meetings.



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