

**DRAFT Assessment Vision and Plan**  
**Prepared by the Assessment Tenet Committee**  
**March 3, 2016**

**Introduction and Purpose**

The challenge to build a meaningful policy around a balanced assessment system has long been elusive. However, the same is true nationally. For instance, Richard Stiggins opens his recent book, Revolutionize Assessment: Empower Students, Inspire Learning, suggesting that we have “A Hidden Crisis in American Education.” Stiggins states, “While annual accountability standardized testing has raised awareness of some of the problems schools face, it has done little to help us solve those problems. In that sense, it has let us down as a *school improvement* strategy.” (Stiggins, 2014). This is a challenge to us as educational leaders. However, he continues, “This does not mean we should stop annual testing. Schools are public institutions and the public is entitled to evidence of student achievement. It merely means we must stop believing that this particular application of assessment can promote much by way of greater student learning.” (Stiggins, 2014). Nebraska’s history suggests that we have the capacity and will to build a balanced assessment system in partnership with policy makers, school leaders, teachers, parents and students.

The State Board and Department of Education have developed a new accountability framework titled Accountability for a Quality Education System Today and Tomorrow (AQuESTT) and have set a target to fully develop a system of accountability, support, and improvement for the whole education system. There is a responsibility to take an in-depth look at the role of assessment in this new accountability framework and to take advantage of the changes in national and state policy landscape. There is a sense of urgency to shape the system from the Department and there is a sense of urgency to build a system of supports for our school districts and Nebraska’s students that they deserve. Because students, parents, educators, and schools deserve so much better, we outline the following plan to begin this next step of the journey to improve AQuESTT.

**What is the catalyst for setting a new path for assessment in Nebraska?**

The landscape of educational assessment and accountability has shifted dramatically with the passage of new Federal policy and the same can be said of the Nebraska specific landscape. The following bullets allow the Nebraska Department of Education and the State Board of Education to partner with Nebraska school districts, Educational Service Units, and a multitude of potential stakeholders in the development of a new vision and direction for assessment to effectively support assessment for learning. The need to review assessment has developed over the last two years including the following events and efforts:

- The development of AQuESTT as not only an accountability system but also as a system of school improvement
- The focus on Teaching and Learning in AQuESTT
- The Board’s purposes and focus on the Assessment tenet in AQuESTT
- State Board of Education Strategic Plan development

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- A new vision from Congress—Every Student Succeeds Act—ESSA—less regulatory and less intrusive, along with the acknowledgement at the Federal level that more assessment is not effective assessment
- Nebraska State Statute and Proposed Legislation –
  - LB 930 proposes the use of a college entrance exam as the high school statewide assessment for reporting and accountability
  - LB 1066 Technical cleanup would allow changes in approach to assessment within state statute
- Technology issues that occurred on the NeSA-Writing test that further highlight general concerns with the time and energy used in assessment by schools, teachers and students.

**What should be included in this Vision for Assessment?**

At a minimum, the following considerations are important to include in Nebraska's future assessment system:

- Balanced assessment systems which take into account the following provisions of the AQuESTT Assessment Tenet:
  - Individualized/Adaptive Assessments
    - Formative and interim assessment systems that provide the opportunity for teachers to check individual student progress toward mastery of Nebraska's College and Career Ready standards in order to adjust instruction
    - Adaptive systems that support instruction and insure a framework to support personalized learning strategies including, but not limited to, competency-based education
  - Classroom-Based Assessment
    - Professional learning to promote effective instructional practices and strategies for student learning of Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards (supported by school responses on the AQuESTT Evidence-Based Analysis)
  - State Assessments and National/International Assessments
    - State assessments that are valid and reliable measures of Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards for state accountability per the Quality Education Accountability Act and for consistent data for AQuESTT
    - Support to assist school districts in transitioning to a high school college entrance exam for state accountability
- Evaluation of the amount of time used for assessment in relationship to instructional time and improvement of student learning
- Quality delivery of assessments to maximize effective use of instructional time

**What are the next steps in the development of an assessment vision and implementation plan?**

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The Department of Education will organize a process to engage stakeholders and organize information to shape this plan. Further details will develop over the next weeks, but the following actions outline the preliminary effort.

- Conduct an educator survey
- Gather input from:
  - NDE internal Assessment Tenet Committee
  - State Board of Education assessment tenet committee
  - Nebraska School Districts
  - ESUs
  - Policy Partners
  - Post-secondary representatives
  - Students
  - Parents
- Partner with the Brian Gong from the Center for Assessment and Chad Buckendahl for comprehensive plan moving forward. Dr. Gong serves as Chair of the Nebraska Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and Dr. Buckendahl also serves as a national expert on the committee
- Define the facets and the scope of possible components of a comprehensive system of assessment that:
  - Measures Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards
  - Balances the efficient use of time used for assessment with the need for high quality items that measure CCR standards with rigor
  - Provides valid and reliable assessments
  - Meets state and federal requirements
  - Has a high success rate of online delivery system
  - Supports a formative assessment system that provides the opportunity for teachers to check individual student learning on Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards in order to adjust instruction
  - Provides adaptive assessment to support instruction
  - Provides state assessments that are valid and reliable measures of Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards for state accountability per the Nebraska Quality Education and Accountability Act and for consistent data for AQuESTT
  - Provides informed transition for school districts to a high school college entrance exam for state accountability
  - Provides comprehensive systems of support to promote effective assessment practices for student learning based on school/district responses on the AQuESTT Evidence-Based Analysis
  - Provides for the effective and efficient interaction between multiple assessment systems including the possible use of a national assessments and/or an augmented state standardized assessment.
- Release a Request for Proposal that meets this vision and the framework of AQuESTT

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**Timeline**

March-May 2016	Educator Survey Gather Input from various stakeholders Dialogue with national experts
May-July 2016	Develop scope of assessment needs and possibilities based on the vision for use in developing the Request for Proposal
July 2016-Fall 2016	Write the Request for Proposal
Fall 2016	Release Request for Proposal
October 2016-January 2017	Review proposals submitted in response to RFP
January-February 2017	Conduct oral interviews, presentations or demonstrations as needed
January-May 2017	Administer interim/bridge assessment
Late winter/spring 2017	Approve assessment contract(s)--State Board of Education