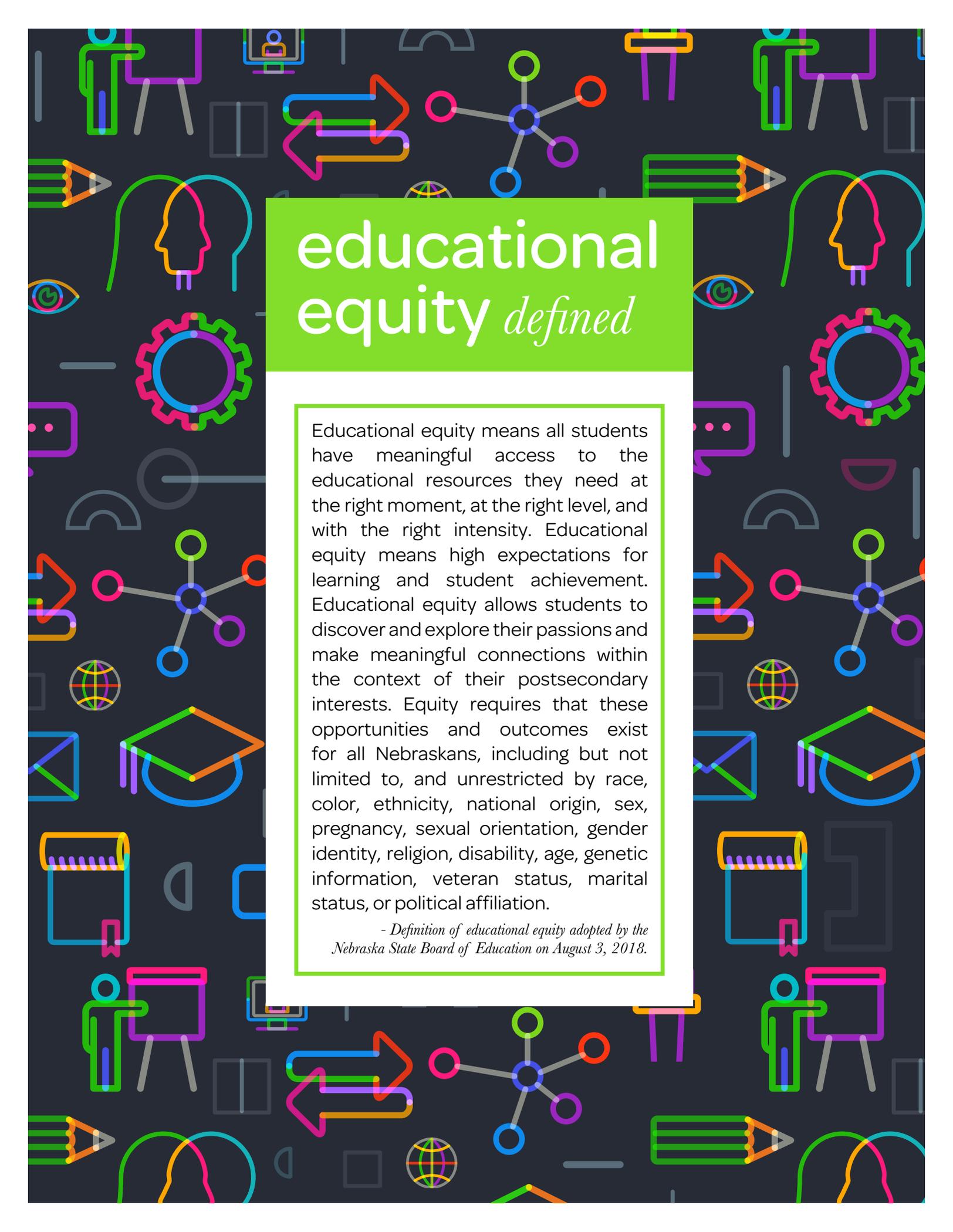


AGENTS OF
CHANGE FOR

EQUITY

playbook





educational equity *defined*

Educational equity means all students have meaningful access to the educational resources they need at the right moment, at the right level, and with the right intensity. Educational equity means high expectations for learning and student achievement. Educational equity allows students to discover and explore their passions and make meaningful connections within the context of their postsecondary interests. Equity requires that these opportunities and outcomes exist for all Nebraskans, including but not limited to, and unrestricted by race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, marital status, or political affiliation.

*- Definition of educational equity adopted by the
Nebraska State Board of Education on August 3, 2018.*

a message *from the commissioner*



Equity is at the forefront of our work at the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). With a revised Strategic Vision and Direction that elevates educational equity as a cross-cutting strategy, implementing the Commitments for Equity we outlined last year, and the continual implementation of AQuESTT and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the NDE staff have rolled up their sleeves to be more intentional and focused on educational equity.

This year, we are advancing the equity conversation as “Agents of Change for Equity.” As we embark on this year’s theme, we will continue to explore and support promising new innovations that advance educational equity. Last year, we noted that “all means all” when referring to students. We now recognize that it is important to clarify that educational equity means that **each** student has access to the educational resources they need at the right moment, at the right level, and with the right intensity. Join us this year as we raise the conversations on equity to make a difference in the lives of **each** Nebraskan we serve through our mission statement.

A change agent for equity works to eliminate achievement gaps and ensure success for all students by identifying and addressing bias and barriers and implementing strategies to ensure all students have equitable access to:

- college, career, and civic readiness opportunities
- rigorous and engaging academic opportunities
- effective educators
- quality instructional materials
- community support and partnerships
- active and involved education leaders

This playbook was created to support school and district leaders who are committed to providing equitable outcomes for **each** and every student, every day. The equity commitment actions listed are possible strategies that can be used in your school or district to build and sustain educational equity.

Matthew L. Blomstedt, Ph.D.
Commissioner of Education

strategic *plan*

The Strategic Plan guides the State Board of Education and the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) in addressing some of the most urgent priorities within Nebraska. With an intentional and comprehensive focus on ensuring a reduction in educational inequities for the most vulnerable populations, the Strategic Plan directs focus on student- or client-centered outcomes, high quality opportunities, and a strong system of support for **each** and every student, every day. The State Board, in consultation with the Commissioner of Education and the NDE staff, adopted revisions to the Strategic Plan on June 7, 2019. The revisions were the result of an internal review of the Strategic Plan after two years of implementation. Major revisions include changes to the structure of the plan as well as added strategies around stakeholder engagement and equity.

nebraskaeducationvision.com

MISSION

To lead and support the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

NDE will:

- Create a dynamic vision that drives change through proactive leadership, to support learning
 - Build connections amongst stakeholders, to take action in support of success for all learners
 - Provide all Nebraskans significant opportunity to receive fair, equitable, and high quality education, and services to close achievement gaps
 - Allow all learners to achieve their fullest potential in transitioning through phases of school, and into civic life
 - Ensure all educators are effective in instructional outcomes, and monitoring student progress using multiple measures of proficiency
 - Prepare all learners to be college, career, and civic ready
-

GOALS

1. Ensure the education system, including the Nebraska Department of Education, is taking charge of its roles and responsibilities to provide leadership and enhance support systems in the state (Leadership)
2. Ensure that all Nebraskans, regardless of background or circumstances, have equitable access to opportunities for success (Success, Access, and Support)
3. Increase the number of Nebraskans who are ready for success in postsecondary education, career, and civic life (Teaching, Learning, and Serving)

STRATEGIES

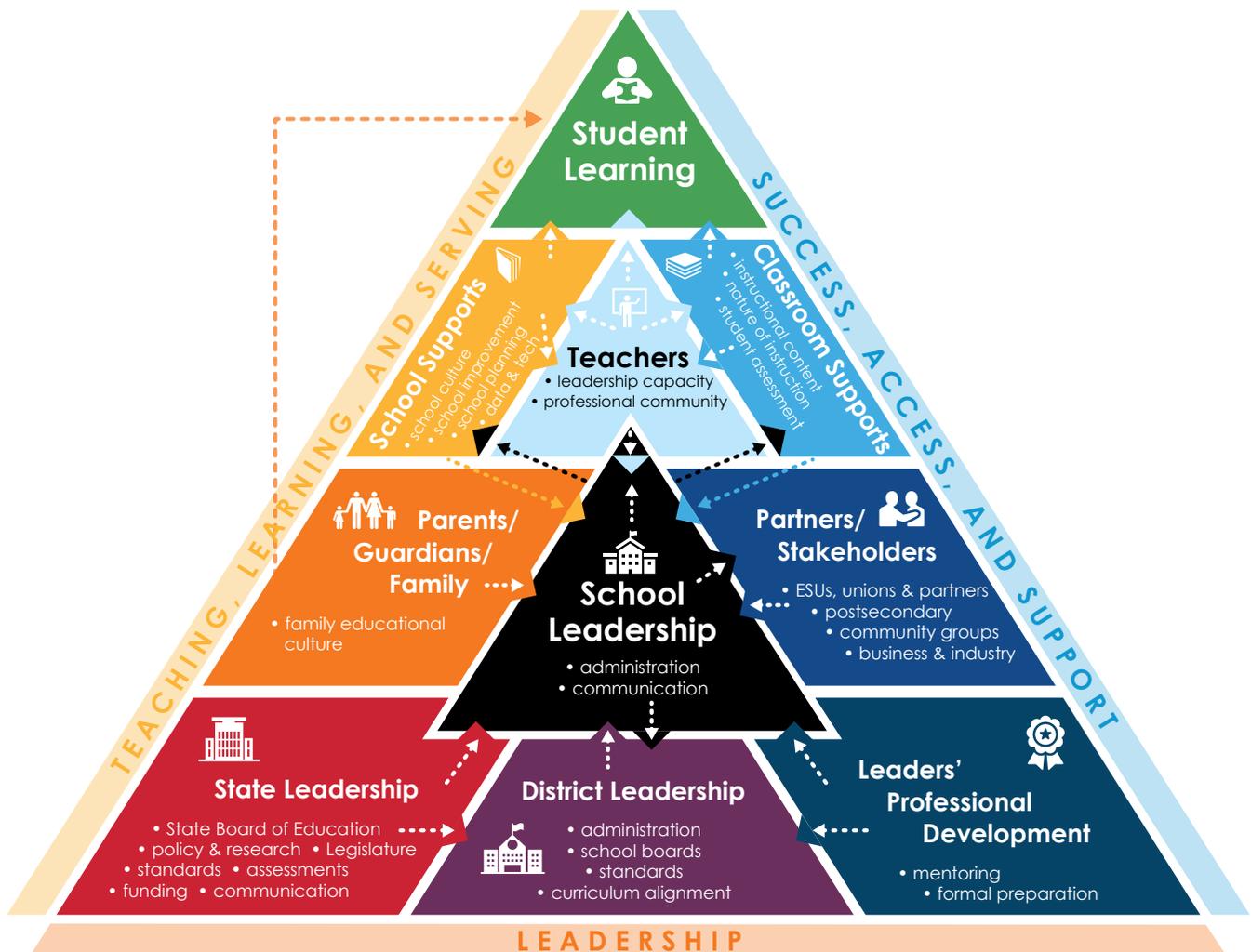
1. Ensure the education system, including the Nebraska Department of Education, is taking charge of its roles and responsibilities to provide leadership and enhance support systems in the state (Leadership)
 -  A. Provide leadership and high quality services in processes, regulations, interagency collaboration, data systems, fiscal responsibility and evaluation that enhance the success of educational systems in Nebraska
 -  B. Provide educational equity through the intentional allocation of resources and opportunities according to need which requires that discriminatory practices, prejudices, and beliefs be identified and eradicated
 -  C. Engage policy partners and stakeholders in the development of policies, regulations, and practices to ensure equitable opportunities for all Nebraskans

2. Ensure that all Nebraskans, regardless of background or circumstances, have equitable access to opportunities for success (Success, Access, and Support)
 -  A. Increase student, family and community engagement to enhance educational experiences and opportunities (Positive Partnerships, Relationships, and Success)
 -  B. Provide quality educational opportunities for student success, beginning with early childhood education and continuing through transitions between grade levels, programs, schools, postsecondary institutions, and careers (Transitions)
 -  C. Ensure that all students have access to comprehensive instructional opportunities, beginning with early childhood education, to be prepared for postsecondary education and career (Educational Opportunities and Access)

3. Increase the number of Nebraskans who are ready for success in postsecondary education, career, and civic life (Teaching, Learning, and Serving)
 -  A. Ensure every student upon completion of secondary education is prepared for postsecondary education, career, and civic opportunities (College, Career, and Civic Ready)
 -  B. Use assessments to measure and to improve student achievement and to inform instruction (Assessment)
 -  C. Assure that students are supported by qualified/credentialed, effective teachers and leaders throughout their learning experiences (Educator Effectiveness)

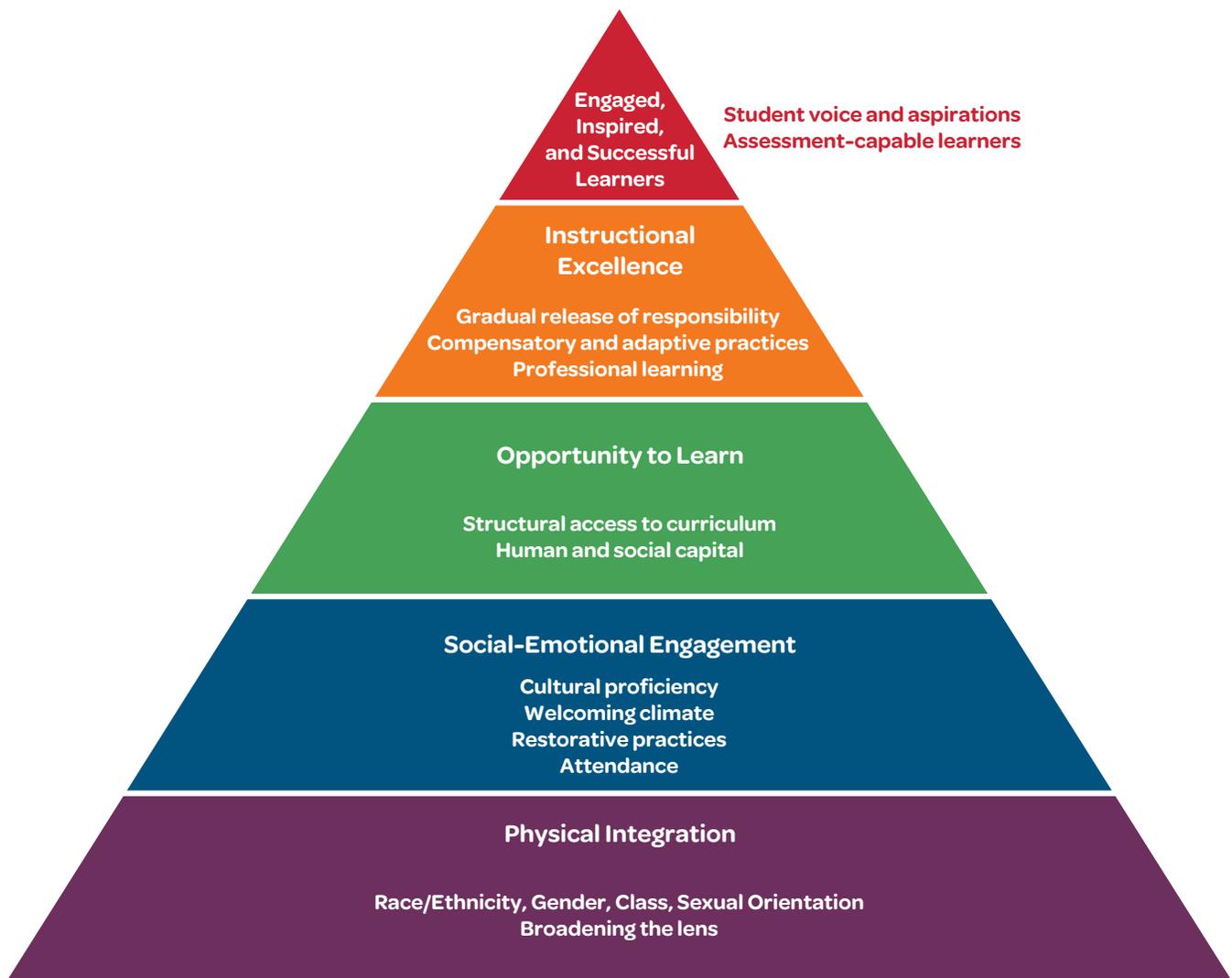
nebraska educational leadership *model*

The Nebraska Educational Leadership Model represents the many influences exerted by, and on, educational leadership. This model can be used to consider the various paths of influence that result in improved student outcomes. In the Nebraska Educational Leadership Model, teachers have the most direct influence on student outcomes, and school leaders indirectly impact student outcomes through influencing teachers, school and classroom supports, and family, community, and partner engagement. Based on the paths of influence outlined in the Model, any activity that positively influences the effectiveness of teachers and school leadership should, by extension, positively influence student learning and outcomes.



equity *taxonomy*

Efforts that advance educational equity help to ensure that all students have the resources they need to graduate prepared for success in college, career, and civic life. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) gives greater responsibility to states and districts to advance equity at the local level. The Equity Taxonomy depicts the ultimate goal: that all students are engaged, inspired, and successful learners. Each level is an integral component of an equitable school experience. This comprehensive approach to equity, including instructional excellence, opportunities to learn, social-emotional engagement, and physical integration, allow each student to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to pursue his or her dreams.



college, career, & civic readiness *commitment to equity*

District and School Equity Actions

- Partner with businesses, out-of-school programs, and community organizations to create a more comprehensive approach to equity in education.
- Provide input for the development of Nebraska's new four-year Career and Technical Education (CTE) State Plan to ensure every student has access to high-quality, equitable CTE experiences.
- Increase access to computer science at all K-12 levels and employ existing, high-quality professional development programs, such as Code.org, to allow teachers to become trained/certified in computer science instruction.
- Ensure that teachers and staff provide engaging learning experiences connected to the community and leverage civic and service learning opportunities.
- Set expectations among staff that personal learning plans and career pathway information be communicated clearly, early, and often with all students and families.
- Monitor course options and prerequisites to determine whether low-income students and students of color are being provided a college- and career-ready program of study.
- Align career and technical education with local business and industry needs and Nebraska Career Readiness Standards.

equity spotlight

NebraskaREADS

NebraskaREADS provides tools and resources to support high-quality literacy instruction for all Nebraska students. The initiative highlights policies, procedures, and practices that guide the selection and implementation of literacy practices and evidence-based interventions, and assists districts as they build family, community, and school partnerships to help students become successful readers, setting them up to learn, graduate, and succeed.

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

equity spotlight

Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH provides real-life work experience to help youth with significant disabilities make successful transitions from school to adult life. This one-year, school-to-work program is a partnership between Nebraska VR, a business, area school systems, the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Assistive Technology Partnership, and Division of Developmental Disabilities. The experience is business led and takes place entirely in the workplace, including a combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through worksite rotations.

www.vr.nebraska.gov/partners/project_search.html

equity spotlight

Career and Technical Education State Plan

Over the past decade, Career and Technical Education (CTE) in Nebraska has been transformed to integrate academic, workplace, and technical skills into customized programs of study. With the reauthorization of the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V), the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is leveraging its opportunity to devise a new CTE State Plan to be an unyielding agent of change for equity. Along with strategic engagement of key stakeholders and members of special populations in the planning process, the NDE will consider a number of key policy elements to ensure every student has access to, and can fully participate in, high-quality CTE programs in their communities. The new comprehensive local needs assessment required of all Perkins V recipients will provide for the necessary student, program, and labor market data needed to identify and address equity gaps, establish consistent feedback loops, identify and remove systemic barriers, implicit and overt biases, and address resource inequities. The NDE is currently gathering information from Nebraska educators, parents, students, businesses, community members, and organizations about the quality of and access to CTE programs and resources available in Nebraska schools.

To provide valuable input for the development of Nebraska's new five-year CTE State Plan please visit: www.bit.ly/PerkinsVSurvey.

academic progress

commitment to equity

District and School Equity Actions

- Review curriculum and instructional materials for bias and adopt changes that lead to equitable outcomes for **each** and every student.
- Analyze and share student growth data as a way to show improvement and progress in your school and district.
- Ensure parents understand the student expectations for each grade level, how teachers will help students reach them, and how the summative assessments measure student proficiency on those expectations.
- Set ambitious and achievable goals for English learners and ensure they are making progress in achieving English language proficiency.
- Analyze special education services identification and provide training in appropriately identifying and supporting students with disabilities.
- Measure and improve school culture as one important aspect of closing achievement gaps.
- Review exclusionary discipline policies and explore alternative strategies.

equity spotlight

Social Studies Standards Equity Review

Over the past year, a team of educators has been working to revise the Nebraska Social Studies Standards. Because the Standards create the framework for teaching and learning, it is imperative that they reflect the diverse backgrounds, histories, and narratives of all Nebraska students. The proposed draft of the Standards will undergo a bias review prior to approval by the State Board of Education. NDE staff and key stakeholders will receive training around equity-centered standards and curriculum design and an introduction to the “Assessing Bias in Standards and Curricular Materials” equity tool. This training precedes an examination of the draft Social Studies Standards using the equity tool previously mentioned. These efforts help to ensure that the Standards reflect educational equity and are free of bias.

To learn more about Social Studies
in Nebraska visit:
www.education.ne.gov/socialstudies/

equity spotlight

Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI)

School improvement conversations start with students at the center. Success in continuous improvement means considering the differing needs of each student, and identifying themes or trends among student groups. Beginning in 2019, NDE will strengthen their support to schools with lower performing student groups. Schools may be designated for Targeted Support and Improvement, a cohort of schools that will intentionally focus on more intensive strategies to reach student groups. This support will help in narrowing academic achievement gaps among student groups.

For more information on TSI schools visit aquestt.com/resources.

equity spotlight

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

MTSS is a framework that promotes an integrated system connecting general education and special education, along with all components of teaching and learning, into a high quality, standards-based instruction and intervention system that is matched to a student's academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs. MTSS is an essential component of the Continuous Improvement Process. Local school districts and Educational Service Units (ESUs) are a critical part of the Nebraska MTSS network. Each school district and ESU is charged with multiple improvement efforts, have a variety of local expertise, and possess unique context.

www.education.ne.gov/nemtss

equity spotlight

Nebraska Education Profile (NEP)

The NEP is a web tool designed and developed by the Nebraska Department of Education, presenting Nebraska education data in multiple ways to help all administrators and educators make data-informed decisions. The NEP provides an overall picture of every school and district as well as comparisons to peers and the state, making it easier to pinpoint where schools are doing well, and where there is room for improvement.

nep.education.ne.gov

educator effectiveness

commitment to equity

District and School Equity Actions

- Develop a recruitment strategy to attract and retain teachers that match the racial and ethnic diversity of the student population.
- Provide high-quality leadership opportunities for teachers of color.
- Find support and connect with other education leaders by participating in Nebraska education member organizations and associations.
- Develop a new teacher support program to induct and retain highly-effective new and early-career teachers.
- Provide teacher leader and career ladder opportunities and reward teachers who take on these roles.
- Use data to place highly-effective teachers with lower-performing students.
- Provide training and support for all teachers in cultural competency and working with diverse student populations.
- Provide necessary guidance and information to train educators in mental health supports and intervention strategies.
- Provide training opportunities on restorative justice.

equity spotlight

Nebraska Leadership and Learning Network (NLLN)

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) and its partners acknowledge school principals as important levers for impacting student outcomes. A new opportunity exists for Nebraska schools receiving Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI)—an opportunity for principals and principal supervisors—called the Nebraska Leadership and Learning Network (NLLN). The NDE and its partners created the NLLN which focuses on a statewide process of ensuring equity-driven school leadership support aligned to the Nebraska Performance Framework for Principals, beginning with principals in schools with the greatest need. This opportunity is also extended to principal supervisors to support them in strengthening their practice to deepen their impact on those they supervise.

[www.education.ne.gov/educatoreffectiveness/
nebraska-leadership-and-learning-network-nlln](http://www.education.ne.gov/educatoreffectiveness/nebraska-leadership-and-learning-network-nlln)

equity spotlight

Early Learning Guidelines (ELGs)

The Early Learning Guidelines (ELGs): Nebraska's Birth to Five Learning and Development Standards provide information about young children's learning and development. The Guidelines are intended to assist early childhood professionals in planning and providing meaningful learning experiences and environments for children in their care. The ELGs place emphasis on meeting the diverse needs of children, understanding the birth to five continuum of development, current research-based recommendations, and updated strategies to support teaching with intent throughout the day. The document is useful in better understanding how positive relationships, interactions, routines, and understanding of early childhood support the learning and development of children from the very beginning.

www.education.ne.gov/oec/early-learning-guidelines/

equity spotlight

Teach in Nebraska

Supporting the recruitment of excellent educators from a variety of backgrounds is a priority for the state of Nebraska in ensuring a quality education workforce. The Teach in Nebraska website was developed as a method to assist school systems in Nebraska with recruitment of educational personnel. The website currently has 600 active Nebraska jobs posted by over 400 public and private schools and districts. Since the June 2018 launch, the website has received over one million views. The website provides assistance to new and veteran teachers as they identify available positions that might best fit their strengths for the teaching profession. The website also aids teacher preparation programs seeking to offer counsel to their pre-service teachers in securing a permanent position. The website is a free service open to all approved educational agencies within Nebraska.

www.nebraskaeducationjobs.ne.gov

quality instructional materials *commitment to equity*

District and School Equity Actions

- Ensure delivery of high-quality, equitable education and services, beyond compliance with state and federal regulations.
- Address key infrastructure needs in the community, increasing access to high-quality broadband both in and out of school.
- Explore and select culturally-relevant instructional materials and pedagogy that aligns to state content area standards.
- Check for bias in curriculum as part of a district-wide review of instructional materials.
- Analyze the quality of assignments against state standards and identify gaps in the equitable implementation of standards and curriculum.
- Invest in technological infrastructure to give students access to high-quality distance and virtual learning options.
- Encourage teachers to attend state-supported professional development to ensure they are coached in the latest science of reading instruction and other research-based approaches to teaching and learning.

equity spotlight

Nebraska Instructional Materials Collaborative (NIMC)

The Nebraska Instructional Materials Collaborative, or NIMC, highlights high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials and offers Nebraska-specific guidance documents to ensure materials meet the expectations of Nebraska's Content Area Standards. Through the NIMC, the NDE and key partners are committed to providing equitable statewide leadership that informs and supports the decisions made locally related to curriculum and instructional materials.

nematerialsmatter.org

equity spotlight

Step Up to Quality

High-quality early childhood programs can have a lifelong, positive impact on young children and their families. Step Up to Quality helps early child care providers and educators recognize and improve quality. Programs enrolled in Step Up to Quality have access to coaching and resources that help them on their path to higher quality. These resources enable any provider or educator – big or small – to take quality to the next level.

www.education.ne.gov/StepUpToQuality

equity spotlight

Nebraska OER Hub

The Open Educational Resources (OER) Commons is a public digital library designed to explore, create, and collaborate with educators around the world to improve curriculum. The Nebraska OER Hub provides statewide OER awareness, resources, support, and training to educators and education staff. The Hub is a statewide collaboration between the Nebraska Department of Education, Educational Service Units, school districts, and educators with the goal of curating and creating quality openly-licensed educational resources that are aligned to Nebraska curriculum. The Nebraska OER Hub provides equal access to educational resources at no cost.

www.education.ne.gov/educational-technology/oer

engaging nebraskans & partnering with the community *commitment to equity*

District and School Equity Actions

- Proactively initiate and lead conversations about equity with a diverse group of stakeholders including educators, district leaders, business and industry, community leaders, parents, and students.
- Adopt the Nebraska Human Dignity Statement of Principle in your district.
- Collect, analyze, and share school and district data on successes with education partners and the media.
- Develop an equity advisory council with education staff and key community partners.
- Engage key stakeholders through focus groups and surveys to assess communication needs and identify resources that can help students.
- Focus on directly engaging low-income families to become key partners in improving the quality of education.

equity spotlight

Human Dignity Statement of Principle

As educational leaders of Nebraska's school system, we firmly support Nebraska schools and communities in proactively involving teachers, boards, administrators, students, parents, and community members in developing and maintaining a positive school and community culture that supports learning opportunities for all, and ensures that respect and courtesy are shown to every student, every day. The Human Dignity Statement of Principle was developed and supported by nine education leader organizations and their members. The Statement encourages leaders to foster procedures that provide a wholesome atmosphere, an attitude of sportsmanship at activities, and a safe experience for all students, athletes, and spectators at its activity events free of negative, harassing, and bullying conduct.

<http://bit.ly/ndehumandignity>

equity spotlight

Farm to Child Nutrition

Access to healthy food is a challenge for most families and more pronounced in low-income communities of color. Disparity exists in the quality, variety, quantity, and price of available food. Farm to Child Nutrition is a strategy to overcome these disparities by providing local foods through the National School Lunch Program and Early Childhood Education settings. Introducing local foods in these settings is a win-win situation for children, farmers, and communities. Obtaining local foods in Child Nutrition Programs provides access to healthier meals for Nebraska students and generates revenue for the communities where they live. School gardens develop a student's sense of responsibility and connection to their community while providing experiential learning opportunities about food. Students involved with school garden programs develop skills and knowledge to help their families overcome food insecurity by growing, harvesting, and consuming foods from their garden. The educational opportunities offered through Farm to Child Nutrition include information about where food comes from, how it is grown, who raises local food, and farming, which helps to promote agriculture and careers in agriculture. Farm to Child Nutrition efforts provide access to fresh foods to help children thrive and be successful, learn new skills that may reduce food insecurity, and build community.

**Visit www.education.ne.gov/ns/cacfp/farm-to-preschool and
www.education.ne.gov/ns/farm-to-school.**

leading equity

commitment to equity

District and School Equity Actions

- Create an equitable school or district strategic plan or adopt the Nebraska Strategic Vision and Direction at a local level to support learning, earning, and living for all students.
- Adopt the state educational equity definition at the local level or define one for your district based on partner feedback.
- Advocate for your school and district by attending and participating in State Board of Education meetings and state Rule hearings.
- Model persistent and insistent leadership that delivers on the promise of equity.
- Engage key stakeholders and partners in data-informed discussions and action planning focused on emerging needs in the educational equity landscape.
- Promote best practices for leadership and utilize data and resources to ensure effective continuous improvement that advances educational equity.
- Provide technical assistance and professional development opportunities for educators and staff that advance educational equity and opportunities to learn for all students.
- Develop, maintain, and leverage strong working relationships with education and community partners to extend and enhance capacity across the district to advance educational equity.
- Research, promote, and provide support for promising data-informed and equity-advancing initiatives and innovations in education (e.g., promising activities in rural areas, blended learning, personalized learning, adult basic education).

equity spotlight

Rule 10

All public school systems are required by Nebraska state statute to be accredited. Accreditation is a designation earned by complying with all provisions of Rule 10: Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Schools. These regulations and procedures are intended to establish equity of educational opportunity for all students in public elementary and secondary schools. Approved private or parochial schools are also eligible to apply for and maintain accreditation under Rule 10. The Nebraska Department of Education continues to revise Rule 10, working to ensure educational equity for all Nebraskans.

www.education.ne.gov/apac/accreditation-rule-10

equity spotlight

Future Ready Nebraska

Future Ready Nebraska is dedicated to ensuring that all students, particularly those who are traditionally underserved, graduate from high school ready for success in college, career, and civic life. The research-based Future Ready framework is based on a vision-oriented, pedagogy-driven, and children-focused approach. To assist in the implementation of the Strategic Vision and Direction, the Nebraska Department of Education reached out to leaders, education advocates, and experts in Nebraska to develop the Future Ready Nebraska Council (FRNC). Members of this council represent strategic partner groups and are committed to using their expertise and knowledge to shape and communicate the vision, strategic objectives, and actions intended to transform the digital education and education systems of Nebraska schools. The FRNC developed Nebraska's first ever statewide Digital Learning and Ed Tech Plan, found on the Future Ready Nebraska website.

www.education.ne.gov/future-ready-nebraska.

equity spotlight

Data Systems Study

In 2014, the Nebraska Legislature passed Legislative Resolution 264, commissioning a study to examine Nebraska's education data systems across school districts, Education Service Units, the Education Service Unit Coordinating Council (ESUCC), and the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). The study assessed the current state of teaching and learning, administrative, and back office systems as well as the cost and effort associated with data and accountability submissions. Based upon a cohesive vision for the system of education, the study provided a set of recommendations, a five-year roadmap, and a recommended set of investments and projected returns. This year, a retrospective against the initial study was completed and provides a set of recommendations for the next five years. The retrospective was informed by a broad set of stakeholders including superintendents, administrators, educators, the Nebraska State Education Association, Nebraska Council of School Administrators, the ESUCC, and NDE leaders. Significant progress was made in the last five years. Overall the district data burden was reduced from six full time employees in 2014 to 4.6 full time employees in 2019. Across the state, district data burden was reduced by \$17M per year.



It is the policy of the Nebraska Department of Education not to discriminate on the basis of sex, disability, race, color, religion, marital status, age, national origin, or genetic information in its educational programs, admission policies, employment, or other agency programs.