



## **Nebraska State Accountability Tests (NeSA)**

### **Understanding the Nebraska State Accountability Tests (NeSA)**

Nebraska students are assessed on an annual basis using the Nebraska State Accountability, or NeSA, Tests. Students in grades 3-8 and 11 are assessed yearly in Reading and Mathematics. In grades 5, 8 and 11 students take the NeSA Test in Science. Students in grades 4, 8 and 11 also will take the NeSA Writing Assessment.

These tests are designed to be in alignment with the curricular standards developed by the State of Nebraska Department of Education. These Academic Standards provide the framework for teaching and learning in the subject areas. They are organized in a way that specifies what skills and knowledge a student needs to develop in the content area in order to become proficient.

The assessments show if students are reaching standards of proficiency, if teachers need to increase instruction in certain areas of the curriculum and if schools are making progress at educating all students to a level of proficiency in their academic subjects. They provide usable data that helps educators, policymakers, students and families understand the progress and ability of every child.

These assessments are required by both state and federal law. One of the goals of the federal No Child Left Behind Act is that schools are educating 100% of student to a proficient level, and the NeSA assessments help monitor that progress. Additionally, because the tests are aligned to the standards of learning, a student's assessment results will show areas of particular proficiency or areas where remedial instruction might be necessary.

Nebraska also uses a system for monitoring progress in the lead-up to the NeSA assessments. The Check4Learning system offers educators a bank of test questions that may be generated into interim assessments useful to classroom teachers preparing students for these exams.

### **Format of the Nebraska State Accountability Tests (NeSA)**

In grades 3-8 students take the NeSA Tests in Reading and Mathematics. These assessments ask questions in a multiple-choice format. The assessments can be administered either online or in a paper-and-pencil based format; that decision is determined by the districts. Students who require a paper-and-pencil version due to an accommodation will receive it if the assessment is administered online.

Students in grades 5 and 8 will also take the NeSA in Science, which is also in a multiple-choice format. In grades 4 and 8 students are given the NeSA in Writing which calls upon the student to write an essay style response. Students in grade 4 will be asked to write in a narrative style. In grade 8 students write the essay in a descriptive style. In grade 11 students write the essay in a persuasive style.

In grade 11 students will take the NeSA Tests in Reading, Writing, Mathematics and Science. The questions are also in a multiple-choice format and the Writing Assessment requires a full essay.

The Check4Learning interim assessments are given in multiple-choice formats; teachers use a state-developed database of questions to obtain the questions they will use on these tests. These tests are for use as an instructional tool, they do not constitute high-stakes tests.

For all assessments, students who require a testing accommodation per their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will receive it. There is also an Alternate Assessment developed for students with more severe disabilities.

The NeSA Reading, Mathematics and Science Tests are given during a testing window that begins in late March and runs through early May. The NeSA Writing Test is given in late January/early February. The Check4Learning interim assessments may be given at any time.

### **Taking the Nebraska State Accountability Tests (NeSA)**

The Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) Tests are developed so that student achievement at reaching the standards and objectives expected to be learned in each core subject can be seen clearly. Students will be tested in the following areas of the subjects:

- Reading – the questions on this assessment will cover vocabulary skills and reading comprehension ability.
- Mathematics – the questions on this assessment will cover numbers and number operations, geometric/measurement concepts, algebraic concepts, and data analysis and probability.
- Science – the questions on this assessment will cover scientific inquiry, the nature of science and technology, physical science, life science, and earth and space science.
- Writing – the essay calls upon students to show an ability to convey ideas effectively and in different formats. The rubric used to score the essay assesses a student on: sentence fluency/conventions, voice/word choice, organization, and ideas/content.

Students will receive a scaled score and a proficiency level indicator. The proficiency levels that a student may reach on the NeSA Tests are Exceeds the Standards, Meets the Standards, or Below the Standards. Students who fall into the Below the Standards category will require some remedial instruction in appropriate areas.

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