
Ponca Public

*Ponca Public School / 3rd Grade – 12th Grade
505 3rd Street, Box 568
Ponca, NE 68770
(402)755-5700 (402)755-5773 (Fax)
Michelle Rinas, High School Principal*

*www.poncaschool.org
Joan M. Reznicek, Superintendent*

*Jackson Elementary / Preschool – 2nd Grade
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Jackson, NE 68743
(402)632-4276 (402)632-5014 (Fax)
Robert Hayes, Elementary Principal*

October 30, 2014

Dear Jackson and Ponca Elementary Parents and Guardians,

Jackson and Ponca Elementary schools were identified as being schools in needs of improvement by the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). The NDE identification of needs improvement is a federally mandated action that is part of the process of securing school improvement funds.

Title 1 schools are required to look at different subgroups when analyzing progress. One sub-group in grades 3-5 (students eligible for free and reduce lunch) did not meet the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 goal in reading. If a school does not meet the state goal two years in a row, in the same grade level and same subject, they are identified as "In Need of Improvement." Jackson Elementary and Ponca Elementary will be in School Improvement Status until all subgroups are able to meet the reading goal two years in a row. As a district, however, you will see that Ponca elementary students as a whole and in the subgroup are making great growth.

What does all this mean? This is a signal to the staff, the parents, and the students that we need to keep working together to help all students be successful. Because of the status, we will continue to help the subgroup meet the growth goals.

The District already has implemented several changes intended to help raise student achievement. These included implementing a new reading program in grades K-6. Students are placed in reading groups based upon their reading strengths at each grade level. Students who scored well below their grade level have been placed in smaller, accelerated groups. Individual reading goals have been set for each student to reach. This year *Saxon Phonics* will be used to supplement the elementary reading curriculum. The Student Assistant Team has identified for classroom teachers students in need of interventions in reading. It is the hope of the district that these changes, with others will help us to meet the goal this year.

We need to be ready and willing to try new, different and creative interventions and strategies that can make a difference. Jackson and Ponca elementary will continue to have high expectations for all students while developing and implementing improved instructional strategies to help our at-risk students.

Educating children today really does take a community. We will continue to explore and improve upon our parental involvement program. All students benefit greatly from parents being involved in many ways. Asking questions, having students read aloud, and setting aside a time and place for homework are only a few of the things that you can do. Your child's teacher can give you additional strategies to work on at home. Student achievement is a partnership between school and home, and a strong partnership has been proven to be effective in helping student achievement.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act requires each school identified for Title I School Improvement to offer Public School Choice to all students who attend the identified school. Our students do not have another choice of schools within our district and as a result our students do not qualify for Public School Choice.

Please look at the data presented in the accompanying sheets and the correspondence from Matthew L. Blomstedt, Nebraska Commissioner of Education. All data can also be found in detail at the Nebraska Department of Education website: www.education.ne.gov. We welcome suggestions and comments from students, parents, staff, *and* community members.

Sincerely,



Joan Reznicek, Superintendent

**Federal Accountability: School Building
Students in Elementary School
2013-2014 Reading**

Student Groups	2012-2013		2013-2014		
	Performance	Participation	Performance	Participation	
All students	MET	MET	MET	MET	100.0%
Hispanic	*	*	*	*	
American Indian/Alaska Native	*	*	*	*	
Asian	*	*	*	*	
Black or African American	*	*	*	*	
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	*	*	*	*	
White	MET	MET	MET	MET	100.0%
Two or More Races	*	*	*	*	
Students eligible for free and reduced lunch	NOT MET	MET	NOT MET	MET	100.0%
Special Education Students	~	~	~	~	
English Language Learners	*	*	*	*	

Two consecutive years of not meeting the state goals in the same subject area considering all the eligible groups in all grade levels in the district identifies it as being in need of improvement.

**Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) – Reading
Ponca Elementary All Students Grades 3-5
Percent Proficient By Year**

	Nebraska	Ponca Elementary	Ponca Free and Reduced Lunch
2009-2010	69 %	68 %	54 %
2010-2011	72 %	68 %	54 %
2011-2012	74 %	71 %	56 %
2012-2013	77 %	78 %	71 %
2013-2014	78 %	84 %	78 %

**Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) - Reading
Ponca Elementary All Students Grades 3-5
Percent Proficient By Grade**

	Grade 03	Grade 04	Grade 05
2009-2010	68 %	70 %	67 %
2010-2011	70 %	74 %	61 %
2011-2012	77 %	79 %	57 %
2012-2013	69 %	76 %	89 %
2013-2014	87 %	82 %	83 %

**Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) - Reading
Ponca Elementary All Students Grades 3-5 Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch
Percent Proficient By Grade**

	Grade 03	Grade 04	Grade 05
2009-2010	53 %	56 %	53 %
2010-2011	50 %	71 %	42 %
2011-2012	57 %	56 %	56 %
2012-2013	77 %	56 %	80 %
2013-2014	90 %	75 %	70 %



Matthew L. Blomstedt, Ph.D., Commissioner
Scott Swisher, Ed.D., Deputy Commissioner

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To: Parents and Caregivers
From: Matthew Blomstedt, Commissioner of Education
Subject: Nebraska's Commitment to Every Student, Every Day
Date: September 30, 2014

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), was passed in 1965 during the Lyndon B. Johnson administration as part of the War on Poverty. The act emphasized equal access to education, established high standards and accountability, and authorized federally funded education programs administered by individual states. Congress amended ESEA in 2002 and reauthorized it as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The law was scheduled to be reauthorized in 2007; to date Congress has not taken the necessary steps to update this law.

When states and districts agree to accept federal funds, there are strings attached. Attached to NCLB Title I funding is the stipulation to have statewide assessments and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) decisions for every public school in the state. Under NCLB, the proficiency goal for school year 2013-14 for Reading and Mathematics assessments was set at 100%. According to the NCLB rules, every student-- regardless of disabilities, English language proficiency, or other life-impacting circumstances--must be proficient in reading and math as measured by state assessments. Because of this unrealistic goal, a number of Nebraska schools will be mislabeled as *Not Met* or *In Need of Improvement*.

The Nebraska Department of Education does not agree with the current federal policy. I do not believe that all of our schools are low performing. In fact, the U.S. Department of Education has granted waivers from the unrealistic expectations of NCLB. Common sense tells us that one child in one grade in one subject area scoring just below a "proficiency cut score" should not brand an entire school community as failing. Yet that is exactly what has happened under NCLB. As a result of this faulty logic, some schools or districts in Nebraska have not met the NCLB requirement for the 2013-14 school year.

Nebraska educators are committed to each and every young person reaching his or her full potential and we are proud of the significant academic progress of our students. While not all students have reached proficiency, the use of targeted resources to assist struggling students and schools has had an impact which is seen in performance data not taken into account by NCLB. Our students, staff members, and schools are not failures. By many measures, they are demonstrating unprecedented levels of achievement. We continue to strive for improvement and excellence in our public schools.

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

We are committed to continuous improvement. Gains in student achievement are due to the collaborative efforts of teachers, staff, parents, and community members through high-quality instruction, effective leadership, and partnerships. We know that tests are an important part of teaching and learning, but we also understand that basing a student's achievement on a single assessment does not capture everything that is important for our children's learning journey.

As a state, our biggest challenge is finding better ways to engage and support the learning of every student, every day. Nebraska is developing a system for Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow (AQuESTT). The State Board of Education believes that Nebraska citizens—through the Constitution, the Nebraska Legislature, the State Board of Education, the Commissioner of Education, and other policy makers—are responsible for the total design of this education system. While acknowledging that this education system will be influenced by others, (federal government, other state leaders, and local policy makers) this system will be dependent on and driven by local boards of education, administrators, teachers, parents, communities, and students. This belief requires that we listen well, communicate better, and engage leaders and stakeholders across the state. The goal is to build a quality accountability system that is meaningful to Nebraska.

As a parent or caregiver, we encourage you to look at your own child's individual growth and learning, along with evidence your school provides related to your child's progress instead of an outdated mislabeling requirement imposed by the federal government. We also encourage you to work with your local educators to ensure that every child is challenged and supported, learning, and thriving. Schools prosper when parents and caregivers are involved as the first teachers of their children.