

Hay Springs Public School District #3

P.O. Box 280 * 407 N. Baker Street * Hay Springs, NE 69347

Mr. Jason Cline
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Mrs. Kim Marx
Assistant Principal PK-12

October 30, 2015

Dear Parent/Guardians,

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) requires that all states create high academic standards for the core areas of reading, writing and math. The goal of NCLB is for every student to meet or exceed these standards by the school year 2014. The measure of annual progress toward these standards is called Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP is based primarily on the results of the Nebraska state assessments given to students in grades 3 through 8 and grade 11. Schools must meet the state's academic proficiency benchmarks, as well as other indicators such as test participation and attendance/dropout rate, to make AYP.

In addition to measuring each school, NCLB also requires the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) to annually review the progress of each school district. Based on Nebraska State testing results, the Hay Springs Public Schools District was identified by the NDE as a district in need of improvement for the 2015-2016 school year. A district is identified for improvement if it meets this criterion:

Does not make AYP in all grade spans within the district-elementary (grades 3-5), middle school (grades 6-8) and high school (grades 9-12) for two consecutive years in either content area of math or reading, considering all eligible student subgroups.

To be removed from the district improvement status, the district must meet the grade span achievement standards for two consecutive years.

The Hay Springs Public Schools is dedicated to providing all students with a quality education that prepares them to be college and career ready. Evidence of our commitment to education is shown in the academic growth for both reading and mathematics over the last several years. If you would like to compare achievement scores in the district to others across the state, you may access the information of the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) *State of the Schools Report* at <http://reportcard.education.ne.gov>.

Below is a table that compares Hay Springs Public School Students to Nebraska State Average Scores in Reading and Math over the last 5 years. This information can be found in the State of the Schools Report website. The table shows that Hay Springs Public Schools exceeds the state average in both Reading and Math.

School Year	Hay Springs Reading	State Reading Results	Hay Springs Math	State Math Results
2010-2011	83%	72%	81%	63%
2011-2012	88%	74%	78%	67%
2012-2013	86%	77%	86%	69%
2013-2014	81%	77%	86%	71%
2014-2015	90%	80%	80%	72%

As a Title I district identified in need of improvement, Hay Springs Public Schools is required to communicate the district improvement plan strategies specifically addressing the teaching and learning needs of low-achieving students. The goals and strategies identified in the plan intentionally focus on optimizing instruction for all learners using researched based practices with on-going professional learning for staff.

You are encouraged to contact the district office for further information on any of these requirements and to find out how you can become involved in school improvement efforts. An important part of this effort involves parental involvement and support. Parents/guardians and students can monitor progress (grades 3-12) by registering for and using Infinite Campus. Participating in parent/teacher conferences, attending parent/family nights and providing "at home" strategies to support reading and math learning are also key to supporting the home/school partnership. (Attached to this letter are some strategies ideas).

We will continue to communicate with you throughout the year regarding the school improvement efforts underway and hope you will join us in supporting our students and teachers as we work toward reaching our goals for next year.

Please call if you have additional questions about any details.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason Cline". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J".

Jason Cline
Superintendent.



NEBRASKA

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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 28, 2015

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. In recent months, both the Senate and Congress have passed their versions of what they believe should be included in reauthorization of the ESEA. The next step is for members of both the Senate and Congress to form a Conference Committee to come up with a single plan for reauthorization. It is anyone's guess whether ESEA will actually be reauthorized by the end of this year.

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 2014-15 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 unfairly labeled 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 (USDE) 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 2014-15 school year.

In April, 2015, Nebraska submitted a request to the USDE, for waivers from several of the NCLB requirements. NDE has had follow-up conversations with USDE staff, but to date no formal response has been received. This means that for the 2014-15 school year, all NCLB requirements must be followed. NDE was hopeful that some of the requirements, such as the 100% proficiency goals for

reading and math could be waived, but our real hope is that reauthorization takes place very soon, so that all states will be relieved of the unrealistic and harsh consequences of the current law.

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.

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 continues to develop and refine 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. The AQuESTT system focusses on six tenets which are part of two broader principles. We believe that each tenet is equally important.

STUDENT SUCCESS AND ACCESS

Positive Partnerships, Relationships, & Student Success
Transitions
Educational Opportunities & Access

TEACHING AND LEARNING

College and Career Ready
Assessment
Educator Effectiveness

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.

ACT RESULTS - Composite Score

	Hay Springs	Nebraska	National
2012-13	23.4	21.5	20.9
2013-14	*	21.7	21
2014-15	23.2	21.5	21

ACT RESULTS - Reading Score

	Hay Springs	Nebraska	National
2012-13	22.9	21.8	21.1
2013-14	*	22	21.3
2014-15	24	21.9	21.4

ACT RESULTS - Math Score

	Hay Springs	Nebraska	National
2012-13	22.3	21.1	20.9
2013-14	*	21.1	20.9
2014-15	23	21	20.8