



November 2015

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Thank you for your continued support for and collaboration with the Elkhorn Public Schools. This work has resulted in a strong reputation for the Elkhorn School District and a history of very high achievement. Last fall, Elkhorn Public Schools was the only district in the state with three consecutive years of top ten district-level rankings on NePAS, the state ranking system for student achievement. This ranking system compares districts of all sizes across the state. If Elkhorn is compared only with other large districts, the rankings are even higher.

Subject Area	EPS State Achievement Status Ranking 2013-14 (out of 249 districts)
Reading	1st
Mathematics	3rd
Science	7th

This fall the Nebraska Department of Education revised its accountability system from a ranking to a rating system. Elkhorn's achievement levels continued to trend upward during 2014-15 and preliminary results indicate that EPS will receive the highest possible rating of Excellent.

2014-15 Percent of Students Proficient on Nebraska State Assessment Measures				
	Reading	Math	Science	Writing
Elkhorn	97%	95%	94%	92%
Nebraska	80%	72%	72%	72%

Despite the exceptionally high achievement of the Elkhorn Public Schools, Nebraska continues to be governed by the requirements of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The original goal of the NCLB Act was to have 100 percent proficiency for students by 2014. All of the other districts in the metropolitan area have been impacted, and Elkhorn is one of the last to need to address NCLB Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements. Although NCLB was scheduled to be reauthorized in 2007 and federal legislators acknowledge the serious flaws in the act, action has not yet been taken.

Elkhorn prides itself on high expectations and very strong student achievement, but also for being a public school that welcomes all students. The realities of the federal 100 percent proficiency requirement mean that if even one student fails to master the state NeSA test due to serious language limitations or a severe disability, an entire school can fail to meet the 100 percent proficiency requirement. Under these regulations even though Elkhorn may be the highest achieving district in the state, it will still be labeled as a district "in need of improvement" for the 2015-16 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 district improvement status, Elkhorn would need to meet the grade span achievement standards of 100 percent proficiency for two consecutive years.

Nebraska Commissioner Of Education, Matt Blomstedt, has explained some of the concerns with the federal requirements and the fact that most Nebraska schools will be unable to meet new 100 percent Adequate Yearly

Progress (AYP) goals. The Elkhorn Public School District 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 both exceptionally high student performance, and academic growth for both reading and mathematics as documented on the 2014-15 assessment results. The Elkhorn Public School district has been recognized at the top of the Governor's list for high school achievement, has maintained a top ten ranking on state assessments, and consistently exceeds state averages for both achievement and student growth from year to year. If you would like to compare achievement scores in the district to others across the state, please access the information on the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) *State of the Schools Report* at <http://reportcard.education.ne.gov>.

The Elkhorn Public School district has a strong commitment to continuous improvement and maintains focused school improvement plans at both the district and building levels. The goals and strategies identified in these plans intentionally focus on optimizing instruction for all learners using researched-based practices with ongoing professional learning for staff. Our district is also accredited through AdvancEd, an international organization that reviews our improvement plans through an external visit process.

For more information on any of these AYP requirements and to find out how you can become involved in school improvement efforts, please contact the District Central Office. An important part of this effort involves parental involvement and support. Parents/guardians and students can monitor progress (grades 4-12) by registering for and using PowerSchool, participating in parent/teacher conferences, attending school events, and supporting student attendance for any supplemental activities (e.g., summer school, Jumpstart to Reading, before and after school academic interventions, and high school peer tutoring options). All of these are a key to supporting the home/school partnership, and we continue to be grateful to a supportive community that assists us in our efforts to keep all doors open for the future of our students.

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

Please call if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Stephen R. Baker, Superintendent