

## Chapter 4

### FINDINGS

#### Introduction

This study dealt with the history of accreditation of Nebraska schools. Through this research the development of Nebraska school accreditation was classified into three periods of history. The first period of accreditation history was called the organizational period. This early period of school supervision included the years from 1855 until 1929. The Department of Public Instruction became organized and required school districts to follow Department of Public Instruction guidelines(Beals, 1871, McKenzie, 1873, Jones, 1884, Lane, 1888, McBrien, 1908). The second period of accreditation history, from 1930 to 1949, was called the regulatory period. The Department of Public Instruction continued to require approval and accreditation standards of Nebraska school districts (Reed, 1947, Decker, 1951, 1955, 1960). The last period of accreditation history, the leadership and service era, developed after 1949 when the Department of Education assumed the educational responsibilities from the Department of Public Instruction(Decker, 1952).

The great changes in the economic, social, and technological facets of society during the settlement of Nebraska and the subsequent development of Nebraska public schools created new demands for a centralized system of education. With faster transportation, better communication, increases in population, and more jobs, local school districts could not keep up with these demands and turned to the Department of Public Instruction for educational guidance. From 1855 until 1949, the Nebraska Department of

Education was known as the Nebraska Department of Public Instruction, and the supervisor of the Department was known as the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. With any reference to Nebraska's state educational agency that occurred after 1949 the terms Nebraska Department of Education, State Department of Education, and Commissioner of Education were utilized.

### Legislative Actions

Early in Nebraska's territorial history, the various Territorial legislatures debated as to how to develop a strong public school system. The first educational legislation, An Act to Establish a Common School system, was passed in March 1855 (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855) (See Appendix A). It established the Territorial Librarian as the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The Superintendent was given the authority to make all rules and regulations necessary to provide students free access to public education, and a school system was put into operation. The Superintendent was to have general supervision of the public schools, recommend a series of textbooks, and make an annual report to the Legislative Assembly.

In 1857, Nebraska Governor Cuming addressed the legislators mentioning the inadequacy of the above school law (Nebraska General Assembly, 1858b). Although he thought the Nebraska school system needed help, Cuming viewed these obstacles as opportunities for improvement. Some county superintendents had not reported the educational events for their perspective counties. In other counties, superintendents had not even been elected, thus, no school districts had been formed nor any teacher employed to instruct the students in those districts.

Early school officials, such as John Kellom, the third Territorial Librarian and Superintendent of Schools, discussed concerns about the direction some of the Nebraska school districts were following (Nebraska General Assembly, 1858a, 1858b). The minutes of the fourth session of the Territorial Legislature listed Kellom's concerns:

Judging from the meager materials handed over to me by my predecessor and from the few county reports received up to this date, I am painfully convinced that the interest of education, and the value of good common schools, have not secured that attention which their importance demands. (Nebraska General Assembly, 1858a, p. 31)

In 1857, there were Nebraska citizens interested in moving the school system forward (Beggs, 1939). Robert Furnas, editor of the Nebraska Advertiser and an early champion of public education, often wrote about a need for better school laws. Later elected to the legislature, Furnas was instrumental in the introduction and the passage of several early legislative acts relating to education (Beggs, 1939).

William Harvey was Commissioner of the Common Schools from 1858 to 1860. His 1860 report to the Legislature dealt with statistics about school funds and school facts, such as student attendance (Harvey, 1860). On January 11, 1861 the Common Schools legislation was repealed and replaced with An Act to Abolish the Office of Commissioner of Common Schools. The office of the Territorial Librarian was abolished and the Territorial Auditor assumed all duties as head of the educational system (Nebraska General Assembly, 1861). With few county reports being sent into the Commissioner, the Legislature believed that the auditor could do both jobs. William Harvey assumed the duties of the auditor. Mr. Harvey was kept very busy running both

agencies for several years. The Legislature had not taken into account the time and energy needed to organize the public schools in Nebraska.

On February 15, 1869, legislators passed An Act to Establish a System of Public Instruction for the State of Nebraska (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1869). A State Superintendent of Public Instruction, elected every two years, was entrusted with the responsibilities for the territory's educational system. The Nebraska school system came under the direction of the Department of Public Instruction (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1869). These early school laws were positive steps to developing a quality state educational system. For example, the above legislation obligated the Superintendent to organize teachers' institutes, visit schools, and required teachers to pass a test prior to becoming certified. Teachers wanting to receive a primary certificate had to pass an examination in orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and English grammar (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1869, Beals, 1869).

In 1871, S. D. Beals, the first State Superintendent of Public Instruction and its only employee, published a comprehensive report, called the Annual Report, about the educational affairs in the state of Nebraska. It included statistics supplied by the county superintendents. Also in 1871, the Department of Public Instruction printed and sent out to districts the first Course of Study (Beals, 1871). Beals believed that schoolteachers, especially those teachers in the rural schools, needed help organizing the school day, planning activities, and teaching lessons. The aim of the Course of Study was to bring uniformity and quality teaching to Nebraska schools through the following objectives:

First-To furnish, as a basis for work, to superintendents, teachers and directors, an outline of the various branches to be taught in the schools of the state, arranged in the several grades, in accordance with established and approved methods.

Second-To advance the pupil, step by step, through his school life, giving him credit for work done, and thereby lessening the evil effects of the too frequent change of teachers.

Third-To unify the work in the common schools of the country by furnishing the basis for a closer and more effective direction and supervision, and for comparing by means of examinations, or written review, the results in the different schools

Fourth-To enable directors and parents to know better what the common schools are accomplishing for their children and to cooperate with teachers in the work. (Nebraska Department of Public Instruction, 1903, p. 5)

Beals had taken upon himself to develop the first standards of accreditation (Beals, 1871). With several chosen words, the Department was advancing the notion of uniformity among Nebraska schools. By sending out an official document listing the established and approved methods of the Department, Beals was laying the groundwork for a better system of school supervision.

Even though school laws and school officials were in place, Nebraska residents were impatient with the slow start in educating school children that was occurring in Nebraska. The Nebraska Advertiser, a newspaper located in Brownville, Nebraska asked:

What city, town, state or nation ever rose to honor? Intelligence, distinction or happiness in the absence of the benign influence of Christianity and education . . . When shall we have churches, schoolhouses, seminaries? (April 2, 1857, p. 3)

A reader wrote to the editor of the Nebraska News, located at Nebraska City, on March 14, 1857 stating:

Mesars. Editors: Much has been said about the want of public schools in this place—but as yet I do not see that any person or persons have taken any steps toward establishing them; now it is very certain that a public school will never be organized until there is a suitable building to keep it in—I would therefore suggest that a company be organized for the purpose of creating a good school house (p. 2).

Most settlers wanted their children to attend school to receive an education (Dick, 1954, Siampos, 1968). The pioneers' hard life was secondary to their wishes for a better life for their offspring (Beals, 1869). From tents to cellars, from make-shift buildings to quickly constructed sod buildings, and from sod buildings to brick buildings, the local communities provided for their students' educational needs. With more and more children living in the territory, new districts were formed almost daily, the new school buildings were springing up on the open prairie (McKenzie, 1872a).

#### Development of Accreditation

The Department of Public Instruction was established to provide for better regulation of school and used Nebraska school laws to meet this aim. Despite challenges from local school districts, the rural school curriculum slowly began to expand. Although the three R's still dominated the students' school day, rural teachers began to teach subjects such as geography, history, music, and art. The high school curriculum also expanded to reach a compromise of preparing students for the world of work and also for college studies. Math, English, science, social studies, foreign languages, and fine arts shared the curriculum spotlights with subjects such as typing, stenography, bookkeeping, law, domestic science, industrial arts, and manual training (Taylor, 1941, Cyr, 1944).

Students could be admitted to the University of Nebraska without an entrance examination if they could produce certificates from their county superintendents that indicated that the student had honorably passed through the high school course of study (Lane, 1888).

J. M. McKenzie, the second State Superintendent, was concerned that unqualified students were entering the university, and McKenzie believed that the Department of Public Instruction needed to initiate a course of study that would be followed statewide. In 1871, the Superintendent sent out a request to all graded schools asking for information such as a local course of study, however, McKenzie received few reports. The movement toward a uniform course of study momentarily stalled in apathy until the University of Nebraska took up the accreditation cause (McKenzie, 1872a, 1872b).

The process of accreditation by the University of Nebraska was established by 1884 (Huitt, 1964). The schools that had adopted the University's Course of Study and had been approved by a faculty committee offered special classes designed by the University. Graduates of these accredited high schools were automatically admitted to the University of Nebraska in 1923. This program of accreditation continued until 1949 when the Department of Public Instruction was given the responsibility of establishing a state standard for accrediting schools by the state legislature. The law stated that the Superintendent of Public Instruction should establish a procedure for accrediting the elementary and secondary schools of Nebraska (Decker, 1956).

Also in 1949, the Superintendent of Public Instruction was authorized to appoint a state accrediting committee with the 14 members from educational agencies and

institutions of the state. The committee was responsible for formulating appropriate standards of accreditation and making recommendations for accreditation of individual schools. In 1951, school districts could voluntarily participate in the accreditation program (Decker, 1951). The purpose of accreditation was to maintain adequate school programs and to encourage school districts to improve existing instruction opportunities for students (Decker, 1951). During the 1953-1954 school year the Department's supervisors of elementary and secondary education visited 452 Nebraska schools giving advice and making recommendations in the areas of administration, school staff, curriculum, instruction, instructional materials, and school plant and equipment (Everingham, 1956).

Schools wanting to become approved or accredited had to submit an annual report. After visitations from Department personnel, a recommendation was made to the state accreditation committee. Occasionally, an advisement was sent to a school asking for corrective action for some weakness. Warnings were issued to districts placing them on probation for the school year. The deficiencies had to be corrected during that school year for the continuation of an approval or accredited status. After a review of the recommendations, the committee made an annual report to the State Superintendent. Schools were given approval or accreditation status for one year (Decker, 1960).

Accreditation was an indication that a school system was operating at a level acceptable in meeting the Rules and Regulations of the Department of Education. The Department of Education encouraged and assisted local school districts in improving their facilities and programs. The purposes of accreditation included certifying that high



school graduates had the necessary qualifications for college and evaluating school programs to suggest ways of improvement (Huitt, 1964). Critics of accreditation believed that the process was time consuming and expensive. Once accreditation was granted the report was shelved for one year until the study was needed again. Yet, proponents of supervision believed accreditation was necessary. This new program of approval and accreditation was viewed as a significant movement toward the improvement of education in Nebraska (Decker, 1951).

The following findings are based on the three periods of school accreditation in Nebraska. Each period is discussed in detail as to societal events, department leadership, and the time frame in Nebraska history.

#### Organizational Period 1855 - 1929

##### First Schools

Major Stephen Long explored the interior of Nebraska in 1820. His reports stated that the land was unfit for cultivation by people who were dependent on agriculture (Olson, 1966). Other explorers also viewed this area as similar to the deserts of Africa, although later events would prove these explorers wrong. Until gold was discovered in California and farmland was offered in Oregon, few white settlers lived in the Midwest. During the late 1840s and the early 1850s, many travelers crossed the Nebraska territory on the way to the west coast. In 1854, Nebraska was undeveloped with little population, however, by 1890 there were more than one million inhabitants, many miles of railroad lines, a strong economy, and an organized school system (Furnas, 1890).

It is to Immigration that we look for the means of developing the resources and prosperity of our territory; and that we can only secure by showing the Immigrant that we pay some regard to the welfare and happiness of our

people. Almost the first questions asked by the better class of Immigrants, are in regard to the Schools; for but very few would be willing to surrender the advantages of an education for their children, for the other advantages to be found here, considering that paramount to all other; and that upon good Schools, more than anything else, depends the welfare, happiness, and prosperity of the County. (Harvey, 1860, p. 5)

Fort Atkinson was an Army post established on September 29, 1819, near the present town of Fort Calhoun. Soon after with crops planted, livestock raised and a sawmill in operation, the Council of Administration at Fort Atkinson realized the need for educating the children at the fort (Sheldon, 1915a). On February 4, 1820 a short note entered in the Council Books indicated that Private George Stevenson was appointed teacher of the Regimental School, however, nothing further appeared in the Council Books until several years later (Beggs, 1939). On January 24, 1822, the following information was noted in Council Book 3:

The Adjutant will select a proper Non-Commissioned Officer or private to teach a school for the benefit of the Children at the Post. The teacher will be allowed such compensation as may be established by the Council of Administration. The building outside the west Gate will be used as a school-room. The Quartermaster will cause it to be put in suitable repair. The Adjutant will cause the school to commence as soon as practicable (Sheldon, 1915a, p. 31).

The Council of Administration, composed of the three senior officers and the Commandant, visited the school monthly to report on progress and condition. On September 9, 1822, Commander Leavenworth imposed the first Nebraska compulsory school law.

The advantages of the post school have been too much slighted. The Commandant is sorry to be compelled to order those having the care of children to do what the strongest principles of nature dictate—To send their children regularly to school. No excuse except sickness will be received (Sheldon, 1915a, p.56).

Little is known about the number of children living at the garrison. No information was provided in the logbooks as to enrollment, curriculum, or books used to teach the children.

Another formal attempt at educating Nebraska youngsters occurred in 1833 when the Baptist Missionary Moses Merrill, and his wife, Eliza Wilcox Merrill, held school for Indian and mixed-blood children in a log cabin near the Bellevue Trading Post. The Merrills were dedicated teachers, trying against great odds, to educate the children. The Indians, however, were not willing to allow the missionaries to help the children, and the school soon closed (Beggs, 1939).

Samuel Allis and Reverend John Dunbar opened another early Nebraska school in 1834. The school was located up the Platte River at Council Pointe. Hostile Sioux caused the teachers to move the school to Bellevue and both white and Indian children attended school together. It was not until 1855 that Mrs. Mary G. Reed started the first private school for white children at Bellevue (Beggs, 1939). The Palladium, a newspaper published at Bellevue, listed a notice of introduction.

#### SELECT SCHOOL AT BELLEVIEW.

Mrs. Mary G. Reed will open a Select School at the MISSION SCHOOL ROOM, For Children and youth; on Monday, January 29, 1855. Tuition, \$1.00 per month (National Palladium, January 24, 1855, p. 3).

These first loosely organized schools like Mrs. Reed's school were known as subscription schools. Parents subscribed a certain amount of money for each child paid directly to the teacher.

On May 30, 1854, an act of Congress called the Kansas-Nebraska Act, organized the territory of Nebraska into a political entity with its own capital, political officials, and land surveys. What soon followed was the migration of farmers and ranchers in search of cheap land and opportunity. Prior to the farmers' building their own more comfortable homes, they often built school buildings. The development of many one-room

schoolhouses occurred when there were barely enough children to justify the schoolhouse (Beals, 1871).

Although the Territorial Legislature had accomplished little work in school organization, one of the laws passed during the first legislative assembly was the establishment of a common school system (Nebraska Territory Legislature, 1855). The Territorial Librarian and Superintendent of Territorial Schools, H. Anderson, did little in the way of organizing a state school system and, instead, gave to the legislature reports in the form of recommendations for the future (Beggs, 1939).

During the early period of Nebraska history when settlement was chaotic and sporadic, pockets of communities were formed. Groups of people came to Nebraska either to develop new communities or to move to an established town. These Nebraska communities, even early in their existence, formed many school districts (Beals, 1871). The pre-Civil War period brought in the initial rush of immigration to Nebraska and in the decades after the Civil War and with exception of the panic of the early 1870s, the population of Nebraska increased. The Homestead Act created free land, and immigrants were able to experience the American Dream of owning land (Dick, 1954). The people were anxious to walk through the rich Nebraska soil and to plant their crops.

Soon after homesteaders settled on their new land, they organized school districts. Throughout the territory and prior to state aid, many school districts were organized. Schoolhouses were built even before settlers had time to build decent homes. For example, a group of farmers reached Buffalo County on April 7, 1871. Few farm sites had been filed, and the county had just been organized. Eight days after arriving on the land, settlers held a meeting to consider starting a school. On April 22, the elected officers decided upon a tax to build a school building. Fewer than three months later, school started in a wing of a recently completed house (Dick, 1954).

During the 1850s, patrons planned for three three-month school terms with a several week break between each term. A teacher was hired for only one term at a time, partially accounting for the large turnover in teachers. A teacher was fortunate to

conduct classes for one or two terms each year. As the enrollment became larger, the teacher was paid 25 to 75 cents a month per pupil.

The first schools were not elaborate. The normal school building was about 22 X 32 feet with rudimentary furniture and was larger than needed for school purposes since it was used for many public gatherings. Often buildings were erected at a building bee for which men furnished what materials and labor they could handle. The buildings were usually completed in a week with a cooperative effort.

Various settlers donated money for the necessary lumber and hardware. The boys plowed the strips of sod and laid up the walls while the men directed their efforts, sawing wood and finishing the building. The bed was taken from a wagon, and planks placed on the running gears formed a flat car arrangement for hauling the sod squares. At noon a table cloth was spread on the prairie and set with good food by the mothers and sisters. (Dick, 1954, pp. 318-319).

A collection was usually taken up to buy windows, doors, and other such devices.

Early school furniture was very crude, for example, student seats were usually rough slabs of wood with pegs built for legs. The teacher counted his blessings if a rude desk and chair were available. The floor was dirt causing dust when dry, and mud when wet. At one end was a woodstove, and a door or window was at the other end. There were no extra accessories such as blackboards, maps, globes, or dictionaries. The typical library consisted of a Bible, a hymn book, a history book, an almanac, and several "hand me down" books. There were no examinations to move students to the next grade, so it was at the teacher's discretion when the student advanced (Dick, 1854).

Teaching school was no easy task in early Nebraska. Even after schoolhouses were built on the Plains, they were inadequate and difficult to keep warm in the wintertime. Nearly all the school buildings followed a pattern: windows on opposite sides, resulting in poor lighting. A little entry was attached to one end of the building. This usually housed children's wraps, lunch buckets, water pail, dipper, broom and other items,

which might be needed. Inside the building were double desks for students, a teacher's desk and chair, a pot-bellied stove and a recitation. (Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, 1967, p. 18)

The teacher, hired by the board after public oral examinations, was paid very little. Men were paid on the average of \$30 a month, and women were paid approximately \$26 a month (Siampos, 1968). The teachers often "boarded around" to help with expenses. Students ranged in age from five to twenty-one. Few textbooks were available until 1891 when the legislature required school districts to furnish books (Beggs, 1939, Dick, 1954).

Margaret Martin taught one of the first subscription schools near Nebraska City in 1855. She taught twelve students at \$1.50 each (Trickey, 1967). One description of an early school in Dawson County in 1864 explained a state of affairs probably similar to Martin's school.

The building was 14' by 16', one room with benches for seats and no desk for the teacher. Since the teacher had no way of telling time, she called school to order when-ever she got there by rapping on the window sash with a McGuffey Reader. The 35 pupils ranged in age from 8 to 35. One had long whiskers and had been a soldier in the Civil War. A young lady, 18 and large, and a boy of 8 had to use the same book-the only one. The girl stooped over as far as she could and the boy stood on tip toes.

The members of the board of directors that hired the young woman to teach could not write or read English. There was no examination-they just told her to go to it and they would help her "lam" the big ones. (Trickey, 1967, p. 47)

### The Rise of Small School Districts

Nebraska rural schools originated through local community effort. Several families who lived close to each other often developed an interest in the maintenance of a school, and voted to organize a district school, to elect trustees, and to initiate a tax on

their property to maintain the school. Parents would meet and build the schoolhouse as well as the furniture. They would decide how long the school term would last and what they would pay the teachers (Dick, 1954).

During the early days there were few school laws or county school officials to supervise teachers or trustees. Low teacher requirements and minimal wages resulted in a large turnover in teachers each year. Teachers worked alone the entire year with few chances for peer collaboration or training. The country schoolteacher rarely attended any teacher preparation classes (Cubberley, 1914).

If he could spell well, read well, write plainly enough to “set copies” for the children to follow, and “do all the sums” he was considered as qualified to teach. There was one qualification, however, that could not be overlooked in the teacher of that early period. He was required to have sufficient physical strength and courage to hold the boisterous boys in subjection and maintain order in his school. (Wakely, 1917, p. 281)

The Nebraska system struggled early in its existence with educational decisions made at the local level by uneducated, yet well-intentioned, directors. District boards of school directors were elected at annual school meetings. Three board members were elected from each district. The three officers included a moderator, a director, and a treasurer (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855). The moderator’s responsibility was to preside and keep order at all district meetings and to countersign disbursement orders from the treasurer. The director was the district clerk. He kept notes on all school district proceedings, took the census of the district school children, and countersigned all warrants and orders drawn up by the moderator. These findings had to be reported to the county superintendent. The director was also responsible for hiring qualified teachers with the advice and the consent of the other two officers. The district treasurer was responsible for custody of all district money. He received funds from the county

treasurer. In order to raise a larger share of the territorial school fund some treasurers padded the school census (Dick, 1954). The treasurer kept books of monies received and disbursed and presented a statement at monthly board meetings.

The school board members were responsible for building schools, buying supplies and books, deciding what subjects should be taught, hiring teachers, and examining teachers' competence in subject matter (Beggs, 1939). They were required to levy, to collect, and to expend the district school taxes. Two general meetings were required each year, one on May one, and the other was held on October one. Except for a few specific powers of the county superintendents and the state superintendent, the local districts enjoyed a great deal of local autonomy (Beggs, 1939). The Legislature gave these broad powers to the local districts with a request to start educating Nebraska's youth immediately (Nebraska General Assembly, 5<sup>th</sup> Session).

Board meetings could either be open or closed at the discretion of the board. Decisions dealing with textbook selection, chosen curriculum, teacher selection, and general school regulations were in the hands of local boards of education although many elected school board officials had little knowledge about books or learning (Beals, 1869, McKenzie, 1872a). The law also provided for directors from each district to examine the applicants prior to hiring them as teachers. Often the directors and the teacher got into arguments about what was the correct answer to oral examination questions during the interview process. The result of this system of hiring often resulted in the selection of incompetent friends of district officers as schoolteachers (Caldwell, 1902).



The general conditions of early schools varied with each school district. In visiting the various districts in Nebraska, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction found school districts kept their buildings in varied conditions (McKenzie, 1872a). Schools were required to be in session for seven months per year although this requirement was largely ignored. The average school term was five months.

In district twenty-five he found a sod house fourteen by twelve, only two small seats, no desks, no table, no blackboard, and no place to put away books. In district twenty-four he found a dugout, crude but comfortable, with board benches, a board writing desk around the room, and a blackboard. In district one he found a log building, rude and uncomfortable, poorly furnished with slab benches and a board desk around the room. (Dick, 1954, p. 322)

These early schools were the impetus behind mounting interest in formal public education among settlers and politicians.

### Early School Laws

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 provided money for the purchase of a territorial library to be kept at the seat of government (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855). One duty of the librarian was to keep a file of newspapers published in the area. The Nebraska Territorial Legislature allowed for the incorporation of libraries and literary associations. The purpose of the libraries was to promote the general interest in education among the patrons (Sheldon, 1915).

The Territorial Legislature realized the need for school laws in order to promote formal schooling. During the various territorial sessions and the early legislative sessions, important school laws were implemented, however, many early laws seemed to duplicate one another. Because the legislators of each session believed it necessary to

repeal existing laws and pass new ones, there appeared to be little difference, if any, from one law to the next law (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855, 5-7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> session).

Acting Governor Cuming addressed the first Territorial Legislature in 1855 (Works Project Administration, 1941). Alluding to public education as a necessary institution important to the future of the territory, Cuming challenged the legislature to pass legislation to formally establish a school system. He noticed that the state needed public education to attract new population. The legislature listened to the governor and drafted a school code (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855).

This first school law provided impetus for public education. On March 16, 1855, the Free Public School Act, also called An Act to Establish a Common School System, was passed during the first territorial session of the Nebraska Territorial Legislature (See Appendix A). This act was instrumental in the start of public education in Nebraska. The law provided for a system of public schools with supervision provided by the Territorial Librarian as the Superintendent of Public Instruction receiving a salary of \$300 per year - \$200 for the Superintendent's position and \$100 for Territorial Librarian (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855). The Superintendent was responsible for the common school system, called the Department of Public Instruction, in the Nebraska territory, and his job included establishing school districts and improving existing ones (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855).

The Territorial Superintendent's duties were very general in nature.

He shall have a general supervision of all the district schools of the Territory, and shall see that the school system is as early as practicable put into uniform operation, and shall recommend to the several school districts

a uniform series of text books to be used in the schools thereof (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855, p. 60).

The Territorial Superintendent was required to report the conditions of the public schools to the Legislative Assembly.

County superintendents were to be elected biennially in organized counties (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855, Beals, 1869, Beggs, 1939). The superintendents' duties included reporting the general state of county school affairs to the Territorial Superintendent. A \$20 fine was imposed for not making this report. The county superintendents were also responsible for dividing the counties into school districts, altering and changing the boundaries of the existing districts for the convenience of the patrons, issuing a one-year teacher certificate to those teachers who qualified through examination, and visiting schools. Funds to pay teachers came from a teachers' fund, and money needed for school expenses came from a schoolhouse fund.

Yet, without proper leadership from the early Territorial Librarians, the school system was slow to develop (Nebraska Territorial Legislature 1855, Beggs 1939). Very little was known about the first several librarians, and little seemed to have been accomplished prior to William Harvey being elected in 1859. Governor Cuming discussed the inadequate supervision of territorial schools in his Annual Message to the legislature on December 9, 1857. In many, if not all the counties, no districts have been formed; no taxes levied, no teachers employed, and no steps taken in respect to School Laws (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1857, p. 5). A January 11, 1856, report of the Standing Committee on Education of the Territorial Council stated that as of yet no provision has been made for the support of free common schools within the territory,

except a defective school law, and consequently no such institutions have been established (Sheldon, 1915c).

Another school act entitled Common Schools, passed on January 26, 1856, during the second session, was very similar to the March 1855 law (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 2<sup>nd</sup> session). Duties and responsibilities of the county superintendents and local boards of education were again discussed, but little additional information was included in this law. The Territorial Superintendent's duties included issuing books to the justices of the territory, keeping a file of all local newspapers, and receiving, labeling and storing books. For this work he was paid \$400 per year. During the second Territorial Session the legislatures approved elections for the Superintendent of Common Schools to be held on the first Monday in August starting in 1857 (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 2<sup>nd</sup>).

Members of the fifth legislature wanted a new school law. Robert Furnas, Chairman of the Committee on Education for the Council and a Brownville school board member, became the catalyst for passage of this new school law by introducing legislation to change the 1855 law. An Act Providing for the Better Regulation of Schools in Nebraska, establishing the township plan of school government, was passed on September 21, 1858 (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855) (See Appendix A). The legislature repealed two previous acts, An Act to Establish the Common School System and Common Schools. A section of the new laws made the township the administrative unit for schools. It also provided for the establishment of township high schools and libraries. Each township in the territory elected a board of directors to manage the

general educational matters of the township. The township board consisted of local directors elected to provide leadership to the township's educational system, including management of a township high school. The board met twice a year, in October and April, to conduct business. It had control of and authority over all high schools in the township and was responsible for hiring teachers and building, repairing, and furnishing the school building. The board had broad political powers including the ability to assign primary students to various elementary or common schools, to set entrance requirements for students over the age of twenty-one, and to suspend students. The board had authority over schools in such areas as curriculum, textbook selection, and general rules and regulations. If the board thought that a high school needed to be built, it estimated costs and held elections (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855).

A County Board of Examiners was appointed to examine and to certificate teachers. In addition, this law granted the local boards the powers of general supervision, the hiring and firing of teachers, the selection of textbooks, and the setting up of general policies. Funding for the County Boards' activities came from two sources. A general two-mill levy was based on the number of unmarried youth between the ages of five and twenty-one years (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855). It was stipulated that the funds be used for the purpose of affording the advantage of a free education to all the white youth of the territory (Sheldon, 1915). A territorial fund was used specifically for the purchase of libraries and equipment and came from a one-tenth mill levy on all property (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855).

All cities or incorporated villages, containing not fewer than 300 people, created a separate school district. A school board was elected and given the same power and duties as any township board of education. The city could be divided into sub-districts and could establish schools of different grades (Nebraska Territorial Legislature 1855).

The Act Providing for the Better Regulations of Schools in Nebraska also made provisions for the Office of the Commissioner of Common Schools (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855). It provided for partisan elections every two years, rather than a political appointment, of the Territorial Commissioner of Common Schools with a salary of \$1000 plus expenses and the creation of a Territorial Common School Fund. This school fund of two mills assessed on taxable property provided for a free education to all students. The Territorial Commissioner of Common Schools performed varied duties including visiting schools, organizing and presiding at Teachers' Institutes, advising school boards and classroom teachers, and delivering lectures on educational topics. The Commissioner dispersed educational funds from sources such as the new school library tax in the amount of one tenth of one mill applied for the purpose of furnishing school libraries with books and equipment. Published laws had to be copied and sent to every school board. Because the Commissioner presented an annual report to each session of the Territorial Legislature, he attempted to collect district reports from local school officials (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855, Beggs, 1939).

William E. Harvey was elected in 1859 as the first Commissioner of Common Schools and was considered a progressive educator (Beggs, 1939). His educational beliefs included grouping students by grades and school district ownership of textbooks.

The first report of the new Commissioner amounted to little more than suggestions and recommendations about what should be done (Harvey, 1860). The second report, dated January 8, 1861, and also written by Commissioner W. E. Harvey, discussed the inadequate school laws and the incompleteness in district school records. Many of the school officials were not returning their annual reports to the Commissioner.

Approximately forty percent of the schools, or only 43 of the 108 schools, sent reports to Harvey. As a result, much of the existing district information was not included in the commissioner's report to the legislature. Information from the reports of nineteen counties listed 3763 males and 3278 females, for a total of 7041 students of school age. From the abstracts of the County Reports, the Commissioner reported that 2930 scholars of 7041 youth from ages five to twenty-one were attending school. There were 376 students attending the four high schools and 2554 students were enrolled in 104 primary schools. Harvey listed 23 private or select schools. There were four high school teachers and 110 primary teachers working in school houses (Harvey, 1861).

During the sixth Territorial Session several important laws were passed. An Act to Amend an Act for the Regulations of Schools in Nebraska, approved on January 13, 1860, continued to develop the township plan of school government (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855). If no sub-districts existed, voters could elect a board of education to establish a school district where at least ten students resided in the area. The previous law allowed districts to form where fewer than ten students resided. The high school levy amount was also amended to limit collection of only one mill. Cost estimates for construction of a high school had to be made public prior to the first Monday of April of

each year. The Territorial Common School Fund now consisted of an annual levy of one mill on all taxable property of the territory. Distribution of tax money, based on the enumeration of scholars, was limited to organized territorial counties (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855).

During the seventh session the legislature passed An Act to Abolish the Office of Commissioner of Common Schools. The State Auditor, who was unfortunately already too busy, assumed all the duties of the Commissioner. The legislature also abolished An Act Providing for the Better Regulation of Schools in Nebraska. In addition, the legislature abolished the office of the Territorial Librarian and also gave those duties to the Auditor. The legislature approved all these actions on January 11, 1861, and for the next eight years, the educational system in Nebraska was without any effective state agency (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855).

During the ninth Territorial Session, Governor Saunders discussed public education in his January 8, 1864 speech to the legislature. He said schools would benefit when Nebraska became a state. After statehood, the sale of land in sections 16 and 36 would be reserved for schools. The monies generated from the sale of these two sections would provide relief from the taxation system or voluntary subscription support for the schools (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855).

Soon after Nebraska became a state, Governor Butler called a special session of the legislature on May 16, 1867 to take action on subjects he believed important (Nebraska General Assembly, 18) . Section Six of Article VII of the Nebraska Constitution stated that the Legislature should provide for the free instruction in the



common schools of this state of all persons between the ages of five and twenty-one years (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1915). Among the areas that Governor Butler thought needed attention included the revision of the school laws and creation of a permanent Office of School Commissioner. Butler said this responsibility could be accomplished through school laws. During the first three Legislative Assemblies, several important school laws became effective (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1915) including:

1. Section II of An Act to Provide for the Location of the Seat of Government of the State of Nebraska, and for the Erection of Public Buildings Thereat, approved on June 14, 1867, involved the University of Nebraska. The State University and the State Agricultural College, combined as one educational institution, was to be located in Lincoln as soon as funds from the sale of donated lands became available to erect the necessary buildings (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1915).

2. An Act to Locate, Establish and Endow a State Normal School was approved on June 20, 1867 (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1869). The legislature established a State Normal School located in Peru to train prospective teachers. Teaching certificates were granted to those students who not only attended all twenty-two weeks of classes but also to those students who only attended a portion of that time. Even though the certificates listed the length of Normal School attendance, most people viewed all certificates as being equally valid. The Normal School teaching certificates were valid throughout the state, whereas, certificates granted by county superintendents were valid only in the county where they were issued (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1915).

3. An Act for the Revision of the School Law was approved on June 24, 1867, and returned the school system to the single district school plan. The county superintendents were authorized to organize as many school districts as they deemed necessary. Although the patrons had the power to determine the length of a school year, the Act fixed a minimum amount of time for a school year. The school year could not be any shorter than three months for districts with fewer than 75 pupils, not less than six months for districts of 75 to 200 students, and not less than nine months for districts of more than 200 students. The law also delineated specific duties for the district school officers (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1915).

Governor Butler, in his January 8, 1869 message, commented on the situation of the territorial school system (Works Projects Administration, 1941). He reported that in many counties no districts had yet been formed nor had steps been taken in respect to the school laws. The Governor wanted the legislature to take responsibility for furthering the cause of public education.

No school system will prove successful without constant efficient supervision. This will be best attained by trusting it to the hands which are not at the same time burdened with other official duties. The local, as well as the general superintendent of the schools and their interests should be made independent offices. To the latter should be attached an ample salary sufficient to secure the constant services of our best man (Work Projects Administration, 1941, p. 287).

### Beginnings of the Department of Public Instruction

As a result for the common desire for a formal educational system, the Nebraska Legislature approved an Act to Establish a System of Public Instruction for the State of Nebraska on February 15, 1869 (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1869, Beggs, 1939) (See

Appendix A). County superintendents organized school districts upon petition by district voters. Districts could impose a tax on property of not less than three nor more than five mills on the assessed valuation of all district property.

These funds, together with the proceeds of fines collected for breach of the penal laws, the sale of water craft, lost goods and estrays were apportioned annually among the several districts in proportion to the school census. (Sheldon, 1915c, p. 861)

The proceeds were distributed on the basis of the number of white children between the ages of five and twenty-one years. Even though the law provided for each county to employ a county superintendent, few individuals wanted the job. The salary of the county superintendent was very low in comparison to the many duties to be performed (Beals 1871).

Money for the support of the schools came from a variety of sources. In addition to the revenue from the sale of school land and funds derived from fines and forfeitures, this law provided for a two-mill levy on all taxable land to be used for a common school fund. The Act also instituted two funds for the support of schools. The School House Fund was not to exceed one and one half percent of the total evaluation of the district. The monies were to be used for the purchase, the lease or the rent of school buildings, the maintenance of the buildings, and the general budget of the district. The Teacher's Fund was a tax of not less than three nor more than five mills on all taxable property in the county to pay for teacher salaries (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1869, Beals, 1871, Beggs, 1939).

The requirements of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction as listed in the Act were very specific:

1. Organize teachers' normal institutes and attend them, if possible. The institutes were intended as a method of providing various lectures on topics of education. County superintendents and teachers across the state were to attend area workshops and also state workshops.
2. Visit schools and advise with teachers and school officers. This requirement was intended to allow the Superintendent to become acquainted with the conditions and the general management of the schools. The State Superintendent wanted to explain to Territorial officials the need for state-wide reform.
3. Decide disputed points in school law. These decisions to have the force of law until reversed by the courts.
4. Prescribe forms for making reports and regulations for proceedings under the general school laws.
5. Publish and distribute school laws and reports.
6. Apportion school funds from collected taxes according to the number of children in each district.
7. Designate normal training high schools and prescribe conditions of admission to classes, and inspect.
8. Expend appropriations to aid weak school districts.
9. With the fire commissioner, prepare book of instruction on fire dangers.
10. Prepare all questions for examination of applicants for teacher's certificates and prescribe regulations for such examinations.
11. Supervise instruction in agriculture, manual training and home economics in certain high schools (Sheldon, 1915c, p. 201.)

With more educational demands placed upon school districts by the Nebraska Department of Public Instruction, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction had to be knowledgeable about educational matters. Cubberley (1914) reported that:

Many of these new powers and duties, such as the certification of teachers, the outlining of the course of study, the selection of school library and school textbooks, the construction and sanitation of school buildings, the examination and grading of the schools, and the supervision of the work of the teacher call for professional preparation of a rather high order if efficient service is to be expected. (p. 310)

Yet for the most part, supervision by the State Superintendent consisted of yearly visitations and year-end district reports (Beggs, 1939). The Free High School Attendance Law of 1895 allowed students to attend an approved high school at the expense of the county in which they resided. The State Department of Public Instruction was required to inspect the high school regularly (McBrien, 1908, Beggs, 1939).

The first job of the State Superintendent was to create order from confusion. The new school laws provided for a central management system in Nebraska schools including more efficient supervision of county schools and more satisfactory reports from school districts and counties. State Superintendents were required to report the general affairs of the educational system to the Legislative Assembly on the first day of each session. The report included school census, receipts and disbursements of school money, the number of teachers, and the number of school buildings (Beals 1871).

The duties of the Superintendent also included the organization and support of district schools. He was required to supervise territorial schools, recommend textbooks, prepare the necessary state forms, make rules, regulations and recommendations, and report to the legislature (Sheldon, 1915c). Duties were regulatory and clerical in nature. The early commissioners were hampered by a lack of funds and staff (Beals, 1971).

As late as March 1875 the Nebraska Teacher magazine reported that the person who filled the State Superintendent did so without a clerk or reimbursement for expenses.

The school system would suffer until the legislature gave the head of the state educational system some help. In 1891, the legislature finally authorized a Deputy Commissioner, however, the work was still an overwhelming burden to both staff members. The Act to Establish a System of Public Instruction also instituted county elections for the office of county superintendents. County superintendents were responsible for dividing the county into school districts and helping residents to organize public schools (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855, Beals 1871). County superintendents advised schools and hired and fired teachers, if necessary. The Schools Laws of 1877 explained that the duties of the county superintendents were:

To visit each of the schools of his county at least once in each year, to examine carefully into the discipline and the modes of instruction, and into the progress and proficiency of the pupils, and to make a record of the same, and to counsel with the teachers and district boards as to the courses of studies to be pursued, and for the improvement of the instruction and discipline of the school; to note the condition of the school house and appurtenances thereof, and to suggest place for new schoolhouse to be erected, and for warming house and grounds; to promote, by public lectures and teachers' institutes, and by such other means as he may devise for the improvement of the schools in his county, and the elevation of the character and qualifications of the teachers thereof, to consult with the teachers and school boards, to secure general and regular attendance of the children of his county upon the public schools. (Thompson, 1877, p. 23)

Teachers were certified for one year, although, teachers did not need to be certified to teach. In these situations, applicants took oral examinations pertaining to spelling, reading, writing, geography, U S history, and English grammar before board members (Beggs, 1939). The county superintendents advertised public examinations for teacher certification to be held on certain days on the first Saturday of the months of August, November, February, and May. Due to the lack of teachers in some counties, the

superintendents asked questions that were not difficult. As time passed, however, the examinations grew more difficult and formal. Aspiring teachers had to provide satisfactory answers to questions in the areas of orthography, reading, writing, grammar, geography, arithmetic, and physiology (Beals, 1871).

County superintendents issued three grades of teacher certificates (Thompson, 1877). The third grade certificate was granted to persons who had passed the examination, and the certificate was valid for six months. The second grade certificate, valid for one year, was granted to persons who had passed the examination and who had passed an additional examination in American history, blackboard drawing, and the theory and art of teaching. The first grade certificate, valid for two years, was granted to teachers who had previously taught for one year and who had passed the second grade examination and another exam in algebra, geometry, botany, and natural philosophy (Thompson, 1877).

Yet, the loosely organized State Department developed few requirements for and little uniformity in Nebraska schools. The difficulties in establishing a state-wide system were great, partially because many people living in the territory were not quite ready to have any type of organized public school system. The few people living in the territory were spread sparsely over a great area and there were no developed means for communication between the capital and the settlers. The farmers were more interested in cultivating crops than in cultivating minds. In addition, building materials, textbooks, teachers, and other supplies were very scarce (Jensen, 1968)

Suggestions from school officials to improve the corps of Nebraska teachers included raising the pay, encouraging teachers to attend teachers' institutes, hiring experienced teachers, and paying closer attention to the qualifications and dedication of those wishing to receive teaching certificates (Beals, 1871). The Department of Public Instruction had to determine ways to keep the teachers knowledgeable about new teaching methods, and one of the most effective opportunities for teacher training was the Teachers' Institutes, organized to impart to rural school teachers knowledge about approved methods of instruction and school organization (Beals, 1871).

#### Leadership of Early State Superintendents

On April 5, 1869, Samuel D. Beals was appointed State Superintendent of Public Instruction by Governor Butler (Sawyer, ) (See Appendix A). The school law, An Act to Establish a System of Public Instruction for the State of Nebraska, allowed the governor to appoint officers until the general election of 1870, and Beals was a logical choice. He previously had been Butler's private secretary, and apparently Beals had performed his duties in at least a satisfactory manner to remain on staff (Sawyer,).

During his appointment as the first State Superintendent of Public Instruction, from 1869 through 1871, Beals recommended several changes to enhance the level of education in Nebraska (Beals, 1871). County superintendents had been issuing teaching certificates, but the State Superintendent wanted a statewide standard of upgraded teacher qualifications. Beals thought that, by developing uniformity in teaching and textbook selection, there would be a savings of tax dollars to the people. Adoption of universal state textbooks was still a controversial issue as late as the 1880s, although,



Superintendent Beals had already persuaded many of the Nebraska schools to adopt standard textbooks (Beals, 1871, McKenzie, 1872a).

During the nineteenth century there were a few influential textbooks that many schools used in instruction. The elementary language curriculum included reading, writing, spelling, and later the subjects of grammar, rhetoric, and composition (Jones, 1882).

Among the hundreds of authors who wrote books on these subjects the most influential were doubtless Noah Webster, Lindley Murray, and William Holmes McGuffey. Webster's "blue-backed speller," grammar, and reader were enormously popular. The speller was doubtless the most widely used schoolbook during most of the century. Expressing the ideals of patriotic nationalism, it represented the new civic and social aim for education as well as the literacy aim. Murray's English Grammar, representing the disciplinary and literacy aims, was patterned on the long-recognized divisions of grammar as defined in Latin grammars, graded series of readers reflected the dominant middle-class virtues of religious morality, patriotism, and prudent practical morality as a means of getting ahead in life. (Butts, 1955, p. 493)

State Superintendent Beals also realized that Nebraska school districts employed many unqualified teachers due in part to low wages and poor qualifications (Beals, 1869, 1871). Few teachers had been trained in a Normal School or had attended teachers' institutes.

For many years, perhaps one-half of the schools must depend upon the energy and enterprise of those who receive no special training - those who must acquire knowledge of the art of teaching after they enter the work. It is therefore necessary to stimulate all who teach, to be untiring in efforts for self improvement. (Beals, 1869, p. 81)

Beals organized eight district teachers' institutes in 1869, because he said that the Institutes would improve classroom teaching methods (Beals, 1871). The workshops discussed method of classroom instruction and were very helpful to beginning teachers.

At such institutes he shall compare views with county superintendents and other friends of education; to compare views, discuss principles, (listening) to communications and suggestions, and to discuss, if (sic) need be, questions relative to compensation and qualifications of teachers, branches of study, methods of instruction, formation of libraries, value of textbooks, and generally to consider all matters connected with the common school system. (Thompson, 1877, p. 24)

By 1882, more than 50 counties held Institutes ranging from one week to five weeks (Jones, 1884). The purpose of the meetings was to allow teachers to attend workshops on the art of teaching and managing schools (Jones, 1884). The 1883 Teachers' Institute Law was amended giving the county superintendent the power to revoke a certificate if a teacher did not attend the annual meetings (Jones, 1884). In 1886, sixty-six counties held Teachers' Institutes with 5,359 teachers in attendance or 89% of all teachers while 93% of all Nebraska teachers attended the Teachers' County Institutes in 1888 (Lane, 1888). Superintendent Lane sent out a Teachers' Manual to be used as a teacher's guide, an indispensable method of imparting information about state approved methods of instruction and school organization, during these summer meetings (Lane, 1888).

Beals (1869) explained that the present educational law passed by the Legislature was a response to a general complaint about the quality of education. It was designed, with its provisions, to aid the people in the work of reformation. Beals perceived it was his responsibility and right as a state superintendent to make improvements to the state

school system. In visiting schools, county superintendents not only observed and evaluated the general conditions of the school but also determined the abilities of the teachers (Beals, 1869, 1871).

In his first Annual Report, published in 1869, Superintendent Beals wrote of bleak news regarding the current educational conditions. There was a school law, but no general state school system. Unqualified people were teaching in schools with little thought to the methods of instruction (Beals, 1869, 1871). Therefore, in order to become acquainted with the general situation of the districts, Beals visited the Nebraska schools. During these visits, Beals found much parental interference with the internal management of the schools. In response to this situation, Beals claimed:

The Public School is not only the creature of the state, but that it is the purpose of the state; that its aid to the parent in the education of his child, or its benefit to the child in preparing it for its future private vocation in life, is only incidental, and is not its leading object. (Beals, 1869, p. 52).

Beals said that the reorganization of the Nebraska school system would bring about a new life for education (Beals, 1869, 1871). In 1859, only 1310 of 4767 children attended public school, however, it was not until 1891 when the legislature passed a compulsory school law that children from ages eight to fourteen year old had to attend school for no less than twelve weeks per year (Siampos, 1968). In 1860, there were only four public high schools with an enrollment of 376 students, and there were 104 primary schools with 2,554 enrolled students (Harvey, 1861). Seven counties reported no school at all, but by 1874 approximately 65% of youth between the ages of five and eighteen attended school (McKenzie, 1874). Table 1 shows the increase in the number of children living in Nebraska and attending public schools.

Table 1  
Children Ages 5 to 18 in Nebraska

Year	# of Children living in Nebraska	# of Children attending school	Percentage
1859	4767	1310	27%
1860	7041	2930	42%
1870	32589	12719	39%
1871	41071	23265	57%
1872	51123	28786	56%
1873	63108	37872	60%
1874	72991	47718	65%

Source: Various Annual Reports, 1859-1874

With more families moving into Nebraska, new districts formed almost daily (Beggs, 1939). Within 17 months of 1870, the number of youth from ages five to twenty-one increased 50% (Beals, 1871). This increase in school-age youth created unique problems for school districts. The teacher-pupil ratio at the turn of the century remained large. In the high school, the ratio was typically one teacher to thirty pupils. The ratio increased as the age of the student became less. For example, in seventh grade the ratio was one to forty-eight and in grades one to four the ratio was one teacher to 52 students (Nelson, 1969). Between 1869 and 1870 there was a great number of school buildings constructed in Nebraska (Beals, 1871). Beals reported in 1870:

In 1869 only seventy-four school houses were reported. On April 1st, 1870, the number reported was three hundred and one. Of these, six are stone, sixteen are brick, one hundred and ninety-six are frame, eighty are log, and three are sod. (Beals, 1871, p. 124)

As late as 1890, sixteen per cent of all youth did not attend school at all (Olson, 1966). In 1895, in response to this problem, the legislature enacted the Compulsory Attendance Law. The law stated that all children between the ages of eight and fourteen had to attend school for a minimum of 12 weeks per year (McBrien, 1908).

In his second Annual Report Beals noted examples of the beginnings of school reorganization including better facilities, higher teacher compensation, and better quality teaching. Although an increase in immigration led to more and more school districts, Superintendent Beals said all schools should have a graded course of instruction. This system of schooling would encourage progressive education, and teachers would then have established standards to guide their instruction (Beals, 1871).

Local school officials knew that Nebraska must abandon its unorganized system of education in order to provide sufficient instruction to its pupils (Beals, 1871, McKenzie, 1872a, 1872b). One of the most frequent complaints against schools in the 1870s was the continuous changes in and diversity of textbook selection (Beals, 1871). Section 91 of the 1877 School Laws, however, required the State Superintendent to determine which textbook school districts should be using when instructing students.

In addition to uniformity in textbook selections, Beals continued to push for organization of graded schools (Beals, 1871). The rationale behind this improvement included efficiency, successful instruction, and economical advantages. Whenever a student moved from one district to another, school districts would not lose time in determining the student's level of performance. The State Superintendent also strived to raise teacher qualifications as well as teacher salaries, and Beals wanted county

superintendents to be more cognizant of qualifications when attempting to hire competent teachers (Beals, 1871).

Samuel Beals, a professional educator who created direction from confusion, did not seek reelection due to health issues (McKenzie, 1872a). McKenzie became the second State Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1871. McKenzie soon realized the amount of work required of a state superintendent. Noting all the accomplishments of the first state superintendent, McKenzie (1872a) wrote in the third Annual Report the decision not to make any radical changes to the Department of Public Instruction's school policies:

No one can fully appreciate the burdens imposed upon the State Superintendent until he undertakes to perform the duties of the office. At the time Mr. Beals was appointed *everything* was to be done: the work of the department was to be organized and systematized; laws were to be compiled and published; all the forms of school reports were to be prepared; blanks were to be printed and distributed; duties were to be performed that required firmness and decision in their execution; the greatest care and wisdom were needed lest some mistake be made that would work great harm to the cause of education. The work of a master mechanic was demanded, with no plans or specifications to guide, only a heterogeneous mass of crude materials, scattered in various localities, to aid him in his labor, and yet a beautiful edifice was expected, complete in all the proportions, when only time had been given to clear the rubbish and commence laying the foundation of the structure. (p. 12)

McKenzie, while visiting Nebraska public schools in the summer of 1871, found education to be in various stages of development. The State Superintendent realized that small districts were more expensive than larger ones. McKenzie reported that most school districts should be at least nine sections in size, furnished well, and be in session at least six months of the year (McKenzie, 1872a).

Teachers took a more active role in improving education after the Nebraska State Teachers' Association became organized in 1867 (Beals, 1869) (See Appendix A). The purpose of the Association was to promote the interests of Nebraska schools and to elevate the teaching profession (Beals, 1869). The Association's objectives also included the general improvement of schools and the promotion of a uniform system of textbooks (Hosman, 1931). The Association continuously made suggestions for the improvement in Nebraska education. By 1905, the organization suggested stricter compulsory education laws, the establishment of a library in every school, the consolidation of schools, and an increased emphasis on character education (Hosman, 1931; Miller, 1962). In 1911, the Association membership announced there was a need for better supervision of rural schools, for state aid to stimulate agriculture, for more diversified curriculum, including home economics, industrial training, and strangely enough, for the censorship of motion picture shows (Miller, 1962). By 1920, the Association wanted school districts to provide health examinations for students as well as the teaching of character education in school (Hosman, 1931).

During the summer of 1870, the State Teachers' Association met in Lincoln (Beals, 1871). The State Superintendent reasoned that the Department of Public Instruction needed to develop a general course of study for the schools with modern facilities. Without proper instruction, students would suffer (Palmer, August, 1872). McKenzie viewed the development of a required course of study as necessary to provide a quality education to Nebraska students.

Let us apply this to our school system. If a regular course of study be adopted and thoroughly carried out in all our schools, we shall have

general good scholarship throughout the entire State; but as long as no system is pursued we shall have a great diversity in the grades of our scholars. (McKenzie, 1872b, p. 39)

In the summer during the 1871 State Teachers' Association meeting, Association members voted on a Course of Study, written and published by the State Superintendent. The Department of Public Instruction printed A Course of Study and made it available to all school districts in the fall of 1871. The State Superintendent was asked to prepare a general course of study for the public schools in Nebraska, because many teachers wanted a general plan to guide them in their daily teachings (McKenzie, 1872a, Palmer, September, 1872).

Superintendent McKenzie, in his 1872 Annual Report, advised county superintendents to discuss their evaluations with the teachers. Before you leave, show the teacher, privately, what his school is in your judgment, wherein it can be improved - wherein it is doing good work (p. 29). Earlier, in his 1871 address to the Nebraska State Teachers' Association, McKenzie emphasized the need for better student attendance in Nebraska schools as only 57% of Nebraska's students were in school. He said that a compulsory attendance law was necessary to keep the youth off the streets (McKenzie, 1872a).

For many years much debate between school officials and the public had developed over the issue of school participation. School laws required all children from ages 8 to 14 to attend school for at least twelve weeks per year unless prevented by illness, inability, already proficient, or poverty (Lane, 1888).

Our national system of education is based upon the fact that each person is individually responsible for his station in life. The child is taught to act



and think for himself. We wish him to be thinking, self-active, self-governing. In the face of this spirit among our people, there is everywhere acknowledged great difficulty in putting a compulsory school law into force. I am of the opinion that compulsory education should not be regarded as of value, simply to the extent to which it can be rigidly enforced, but its main and principle value to a community arises from the environment it throws around the ignorant. General public interest in education is stimulated by it, and this influence does much toward bringing the illiterate into school. (Lane, 1888, p. 46)

If, by reason of poverty, the parents were unable to provide suitable clothing, books, or other necessary articles children were excused from attending school (Lane, 1888). Yet, many patrons were against compulsory attendance. Several comments appeared in Nebraska newspapers in response to the attendance issue.

There is a proposition before the Constitutional Convention to engraft a clause into that instrument making it obligatory upon every parent to send their children of a certain age to school at least a certain number of months during each year. While we think no one will question the fact that education is the great civilizer of the world, and is the foundation stone of Republican institutions and self government, yet we have no more right to force education than we have to force religion, which is strictly prohibited by the Constitution of the United States (The Nebraska Herald, August 3, 1871, p. 3)

Another important resolution passed at the State Teachers' Association of 1871 was the formation of a teachers' journal called The Nebraska Teacher, which was devoted to official matters and decisions of the State Department of Public Instruction and to general matters of interest to teachers (Palmer, August, 1874) (See Appendix A). This journal was a good way to present information that the Department thought was necessary for school district officials and teachers. State educators were encouraged to contribute articles of interest.

In response to concern among educators about the quality of secondary school programs, Nightingale reported that a committee of the Nebraska State Teachers' Association was asked to help prepare a course of study for Nebraska high schools (McKenzie, 1872).

Professor A. F. Nightingale, president of the Nebraska State Teachers' Association, addressed the Eighth Annual Session on March 1874. After much discussion, the legislature agreed that the professional qualifications of teachers should include common sense, knowledge and love of children, university culture, and normal training (Palmer, March, 1874).

Nightingale and the Association committee thought it necessary that the State Department of Education require every Nebraska high school to follow a standard course of study (Palmer, August, 1872). The editorial section in The Nebraska Teacher magazine also reflected on the importance of a course of study; the editor believed that it was necessary for quality teaching.

But with a prescribed course before them, teachers would at least have a common object in view, and however slow the progress toward system and uniformity, it would at least be in the right direction. Then, too, some teachers who are plodding along in the old way, exhausting their strength upon the "three R's," entirely innocent of such new fangled notions as Object Lessons, Physical Exercises, Singing, &c., might be led to leave the old ruts and adopt more modern methods, under the stimulus of an authoritative demand. Thus one effect of the adoption of such a course will be to elevate the standard of the profession and make the public feel that a preparation to teach means something more than a smattering of the English branches. (Palmer, September 1872, p. 75)

Through efforts by many educational leaders, several school journals, a loosely-structured system of state supervision, and the Nebraska State Teachers' Association, Nebraska was on its way to establishing a course of study for all schools in Nebraska.

In addition to concern over issues like a Course of Study, educators recognized a need for adequate facilities (McKenzie, 1872, Cubberley, 1914, Thomas, 1916a). The first high school building was erected at Nebraska City in 1865. At a cost of \$31,000, this fine building was thought the first high school west of the Missouri River (Johnson, 1935, Johnson, 1935). In the previous year the Territorial Legislature, realizing the importance of school facilities, passed An Act to Authorize the Town Council of Nebraska City to Raise Money to Erect a Central or High School Building (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1864).

#### State Supervision of Nebraska Schools

Ever since the first Annual Report by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the territory's organized department of education had viewed a need for supervision and direction (Beals, 1869).

To secure the best economy in these schools, the State must have a single object and it must make everything conspire to gain that object. It must define the methods by which it will gain the end sought . . . Common school education is chiefly an act of self-preservation (Beals, 1869, p. 92).

The Department of Public Instruction reported that school supervision was vital to Nebraska's educational system. The Nebraska State Teachers' Association also agreed with the need for supervision. A. B. Hughes, then president of the Nebraska State Teachers' Association, wrote an article in the April 1891 issue of the North-Western Journal of Education entitled "More School Legislation," in which Mr. Hughes wrote

about the defects in the present educational laws especially those laws dealing with the rural schools:

1. It was ridiculous to require teachers to take annual examinations to qualify to teach. A person's ability to teach was not predicated upon answering questions on content areas year after year. The problem only drove teachers to other professions.

2. The compulsory attendance law was not enforced, and it needed to be taken more seriously.

3. The curriculum in the schools was not meeting the needs of the people. For example, schools needed to offer "handicraft" classes in which a trade would be learned.

4. Supervision in the rural schools needed to be further developed by increasing the staff of the Department of Public Instruction (Hughes, 1891).

Mr. Hughes summarized the need for school reform:

The people must be educated. School boards must be interviewed and instructed. It will take years of earnest work, but it will come to pass. Let us have uniform examinations. Let us have a permanent tenure of office. Let us lift the public schools above party politics and sectarian bigotry. Let us educate the boy as well as the girl. Let us have careful supervision for the country schools. Let us have manual training. Let us have compulsory education. Let us wipe out the stigma of annual examinations. Let it be impossible to select an ignorant school officer, and lastly, let us, as teachers in convention assembled, discuss these questions candidly and carefully, and laying aside all personal interest, let us labor together for the best interest of Nebraska's future men and women (Hughes, 1891, 236).

The state legislature in 1885 passed the Free-Attendance High School Law. Declared unconstitutional by the State Supreme Court, the legislature made necessary changes and the bill was again made law in 1895 (Corbett, 1896). Under these provisions, graduates of country or district schools could attend town schools without the cost of

tuition. The county raised the tax that was paid to the high school, thus, this system provided a free education from the primary grades to college (Corbett, 1896). In 1907, the state legislature passed the Free Tuition Law (Delzell, 1914). This law allowed non-accredited schools wanting to collect tuition from non-resident student had to make detailed reports to the Department of Public Instruction. The reports had to list the qualifications of the teachers, the course of study used by the school, and the equipment of the district (Delzell, 1914).

Superintendent McKenzie, in the state's Fourth Annual Report, published in 1872, emphasized the importance of a quality education. The Department wanted to increase the requirements for teacher certification. Teachers needed only a limited amount of knowledge to receive one of the three grades of certificates. Each grade indicated a greater teacher proficiency, but McKenzie realized there was no incentive for teachers to study and to upgrade their certificates. The wages of a third grade certificated teacher were nearly the same as those teachers holding a second grade certificate or a first grade certificate. McKenzie wanted examinations of the second grade and first grade certificates to be rigorous. To receive second grade certificates teachers must pass a thorough examination in school subjects as well as U. S. History, drawing, bookkeeping, and have some knowledge about the theory and art of teaching. Requirements for first grade certificates included all second grade testing and also knowledge about philosophy, botany, geology, zoology, chemistry, algebra, and geometry (McKenzie, 1872a, 1872b).

Many well-qualified county superintendents were able to assist teachers in their work. If our school system ever accomplishes the ends for which it was established, it

must be controlled and directed by those who understand what the objects are, and how to compass them (McKenzie, 1873, p. 45).

McKenzie realized that the organization of the Department of Public Instruction determined the quality of the county superintendents' services to the public.

There is no other office of our land that has more important duties than the county superintendent; and to perform these duties well, he should be a man well qualified as to knowledge of books, especially of such topics as are generally taught in our common schools. He should be well acquainted with practical school-room work, especially with primary teaching, as his greatest work can be done in schools of elementary branches. He should be a man of the best habits and character: one that can command the esteem of scholars, teachers, school officers, and the public generally. He should be a man of great energy, and have sufficient firmness of purpose to refuse to grant certificates to candidates unworthy and unqualified to become teachers—should be willing to give money to a needy girl or a maimed soldier, rather than grant certificates to such unqualified ones. He should work faithfully and honestly for his pay; and, in fine, he should be a live, qualified, faithful, honest man, who should attend the association of county superintendents, the state teachers' association, etc.; should take and read the best educational journals of the day, should hold institutes, should be a competent and experienced teacher, and he should strive constantly to make his county among the best, educationally, in the state (McKenzie, 1873, p. 48-49).

Because some county superintendents, however, were of no benefit to teachers, McKenzie thought all county superintendents should have to pass an examination necessary to receive a First Grade Certificate. Superintendents should have to be knowledgeable about what was expected of teachers, and their qualifications should be based on ability and knowledge and not on political affiliation or nepotism (McKenzie, 1873).

### Early Accreditation Efforts

Accreditation developed to assist schools to attain high educational standards (Goudy, 1892, Rich, 1960). There were many variations in secondary school facilities, class offerings, and class schedules. The colleges wanted their incoming students to possess the necessary skills to be successful in college work (Thomas, 1916b). Recognizing quality high schools, colleges gave prestige status to graduating seniors of accredited schools (Taylor, 1931). Other schools were encouraged to follow accreditation standards to gain preferred status. These standards impacted the curriculum through minimum facilities and equipment requirements and the subject-related, class time requirements (Thomas, 1916b, Clemmons, 1919). Accreditation helped greatly in the early years of Nebraska education in bringing uniformity to schools.

In 1871, the University of Michigan began a program of accrediting high schools (Geiger, 1970). This program led to establishing regional associations for the purpose of developing greater uniformity of standards among high schools (Davis, 1945). Nebraska joined the North Central Association, a ten-state regional accredited agency, in 1896 (Carroll, 1995). North Central Association standards were very high, and schools were encouraged to apply for accreditation. Upon completion of the application and subsequent inspection by a member of the Committee on High School Inspection, a high school could be approved for accreditation (Davis, 1945). Nebraska school administrators believed the curriculum offerings must be broad and varied to accommodate the interests of all students (Reed, 1947). With many more students attending school than ever before, course offerings must be varied to hold those interest,

however, the colleges wanted incoming freshman to possess the background knowledge needed for beginning college classes (Leach, 1964). The North Central Association determined that standardizing the high school curriculum would greatly help in meeting those needs (Rich, 1960).

In the spring of 1884, I. J. Manatt, Chancellor of the University of Nebraska, and State Superintendent Jones visited schools in Michigan and Iowa to see first hand the relationship between the public schools and the universities in other states (Jones, 1884). Jones (1884) reported that many of the Nebraska high schools were already working to adopt the University's Course of Study. Also in 1884, a joint committee of University faculty and high school superintendents and principals adopted two courses of study for high schools. On the one hand, students completing the Minor Course would be admitted to the second year of the University's Latin School. The Latin School was organized for students who were not fully qualified for college studies. Students completing the Major Course would be admitted to the freshman year of college (Jones, 1884). Schools adopting either course were visited and inspected by a faculty committee and if found acceptable were placed on the list of accepted or accredited schools (Jones, 1884). The State Normal School also had two courses of study. Students completing the Elementary Course received a second grade certificate, good for two years, to teach at any school district in the state. Students completing the Higher Course were granted a diploma and, after three years of successful teaching, received a lifetime teaching certificate for any grade in the state of Nebraska (Jones, 1884).



During the early part of the 20th century, college-preparatory classes dominated high school curriculum, and subject areas included foreign languages, mathematics, English, science, and social studies. These classical offerings commanded the school scene until societal demands forced school districts to offer non-college preparatory studies (Cyr, 1944). For example, the manual training movement sought the help of high schools to provide cursory job training for the new industries. Typical courses in the manual training field included woodworking, clay modeling, iron forging, foundry and sheet-metal work, machine-shop work, and mechanical drawing (Butts, 1955). Girls were not exempt from practical training classes as high schools offered home economics as useful training for future family duties and spotlighted subjects like typing, stenography, bookkeeping, law, and domestic science (Butts, 1955). As school years progressed into decades of learning, the elementary school curriculum also slowly began to expand (Johnson, 1935). Although the three R's still dominated the students' school day, subjects such as geography, history, music, and art were taught (Butts, 1955).

By the late 1880s, public sentiment was divided as to the Department of Public Instruction's control over school districts (Lane, 1888). Some people said that there was too much control, while other patrons favored the Department's policies. State Superintendent Lane (1888) reported, however, this control important to the organization of a proper educational system. In the Twentieth Annual Report (1888) to the Governor, Lane discussed this concern over control.

In this matter of education we have but obeyed the universal law; in our reaction from the "no-system" methods and plans of the early days, we have swung well over to the other side of the arc, the "all-system" plan. In our efforts to repair the waste of the former unorganized activity, we have,

I fear, developed so much organization in some directions as fairly to give rise to the query whether we have not lost sight of the original idea upon which the whole theory of our education was founded. For one, I am persuaded that the criticisms frequently made, that our graded schools are arbitrary in their organization and tyrannous in their administration, that the system is placed first, and education second, and hence that the system is maintained often at the expense of the material for whose welfare and general advantage it was created, are to a certain extent, true (p. 29).

Lane (1988) reported that supervision of Nebraska schools was an indispensable agency of public education for providing thoroughness and efficiency in the schools. He thought that a major part of the Department of Public Instruction's responsibility was to act as an impetus for educational revivalism. The Superintendent also believed that it was the Department's duty to educate the general public about the importance of education.

It is the duty of a School Superintendent to impress upon parents, guardians, school officers and pupils the importance of education [sic]; to convince the people that an education is the richest earthly heritage they can confer upon their children; and that without it, their children must commence and continue the work of life at immense disadvantage (Lane, p. 35).

To keep pace locally, the duties of the County Superintendents had changed greatly since the 1860s and the 1870s (McKenzie, 1873). As education became more organized, the County Superintendents spent more time working with school patrons to arouse a higher degree of interest and enthusiasm for public education (Lane, 1888). County Superintendents also explained the need for children to regularly attend school, the hiring of competent teachers, the advantages of graded schools, and the introduction of the courses of study. Their supervisory duties included visiting and inspecting the

schools, assisting inexperienced teachers, introducing improved methods of instruction, and encouraging students in their daily studies (Corbett, 1896).

State Superintendent Lane said the city schools had many more advantages than the country schools and supervision was greatly needed in the rural schools (Lane, 1888). Town students were assigned to different grades based on assignments. City Boards of Education took interest in the schools, however, country schools were greatly disorganized. Rural schools did not have students assigned by grades or departments following a determined course of study, and one or two teachers taught many different grades. Often, rural Boards of Education officers held few qualifications to help their districts (Lane, 1888).

It is the first duty of the State to encourage and foster the education of those who are ignorant in these branches of education. Our country schools are these schools. They are the poorer or least advanced. The city High Schools are the most advanced and their teachers are of the highest grade in the State. The great demand for teachers, and for better teachers, is from the ranks of our common school teachers. The city schools are all worked up to a high degree of tension under excellent management and supervision. The common district schools are laboring under great disadvantages as compared with city schools, and need and deserve better teachers. They should have the helping hand of the State by way of Normal School teachers. One hundred and twenty-one High Schools in the State report 5,404 pupils in attendance. The teachers remain in these schools for many years and render good service, while 5,664 districts in the State, with 215,889 pupils, have very many poor teachers, with a tenure of service as brief as their services are poor. The great demand for better teachers, and consequently better pay, and longer term of service, is in our rural schools (Lane, 1888, p. 69).

With a larger country school enrollment and the resultant need for greater supervision, the Department of Public Instruction published bulletins such as Jones' (1886) Courses of Study and Methods of Teaching and Prince's (1882) Course of Study

for the Ungraded Schools. The guides provided suggestions for teachers in the management of schools and the conduct of class recitations.

Lane's 1888 Annual Report assessment was that Nebraska had too many small school districts resulting in low standards, low wages, poor teachers, and poor local supervision. With a school population of 298,006 students, Nebraska still had 5,664 independent school districts, with 17,640 school officers with an average of one school officer to every 17 students of school age, including all state cities.

County school expenses varied greatly, ranging from one to 25 mills of valuation, and in lengths of the school term, ranging from three months to nine months for a school year. Lane (1888) reported the educational system should adopt a township plan for Nebraska county schools to bring more uniformity to Nebraska schools.

The legislature vacillated between adopting a township-district plan and a single-district plan. The township-district plan was law from 1858 to 1867 (Caldwell, 1902). Each township constituted one school district with the local government managing the schools. On June 24, 1867, the single-district plan was approved whereby each school district managed its own affairs (Caldwell, 1902). Some educators noted that this township plan would provide more uniformity among schools through grading, length of school year, and local taxation (Lane, 1888). From 1867 to 1873 high schools were organized by special legislative acts, but after 1873 all incorporated towns had to organize their own districts (Caldwell, 1903). The plan of a Board of Education for each township would equalize the taxation issue. Lane (1888) listed the objections to the then

present country school system and the benefits that would result from the township district system:

**Objections:**

1. The facilities were unequal.
2. The cost of maintaining schools was higher.
3. Nepotism would occur when selecting teachers.
4. There would be unjust discrimination in local taxation.
5. Disputes over school sites and boundaries would develop.
6. School laws were not properly understood and enforced.
7. The length of school terms would not be the same.

**Benefits:**

1. All children would be given equal school privileges.
2. A uniformity of textbooks selected for the students.
3. The attendance of school based on convenience.
4. The length of the school year would be uniform.
5. The local taxation would be uniform throughout the district.
6. All schools would have graded classrooms (Lane, 1888).

Lane (1888) reported that, in some cases, school districts were formed just to defeat the levying of taxes and the maintenance of a school. He used the following examples to show conditions of public education in some of these small school districts:

District 13, 8 children, 8 attended school, paid female teacher \$7, owe teacher \$78, taught 100 days. District 19, 9 children, 2 attended school,

taught 60 days, cost \$75. District 39, 3 children, no school. District 30, 7 children, 4 attended school, taught 60 days, cost \$50. District 22, 6 children, 6 attended school, taught 80 days, cost \$165. (p. 74-75)

### Changing Times

As society changed so did schools. Rapid growth of cities, the disappearance of small villages, and the increase in manufacturing brought about the need for school reorganization (Sheldon, 1937). The Nebraska school laws became more comprehensive, and school issues created a greater general interest (Beals, 169). The Department of Public Instruction needed more staff as the State Superintendent was the only employee of the Department (Lane, 1888). There was no clerical staff to greet people or to answer correspondence when the State Superintendent was absent from his office. Lane's 1888 Annual Report explained that the office had received over 6,500 letters within the past two years of which approximately 500 letters were inquiries about school law disputes. There was also an increasing demand for information on educational subjects. County superintendents and school districts had requested blank forms in record numbers (Lane, 1888). As a result, visitations and inspections had been neglected. When he had accomplished inspections, Lane (1888) reported that he had returned to the office to too much accumulated work.

The number of rural schools in the United States began to decrease with fewer families living in rural communities and families having fewer children (Trickey, 1967). As soon as possible, young rural men and women moved to the cities seeking their fortune (Trickey, 1968). Out of necessity, schools gradually changed and reorganized. Graded classrooms, different courses of study, uniform textbooks, and new methods of

instruction began to appear (Lane, 1888). Increased state standards and a general conservative nature among rural communities were major causes for a decline in rural school enrollment. American rural schools were also facing financial problems (Cubberley, 1914).

E. T. Fairchild, as quoted in Cubberley (1914), stated:

The strong, virile, rural school of a generation ago has gone and in its place is a primary school weak in number and lacking in efficiency. School buildings are poor, unsanitary and ill-equipped. The school enrollment is constantly decreasing. The supervision is wholly inadequate. The cost of instruction is higher than in the cities. The terms are short. The teaching body is immature and lacks proper training. Of the 12,000,000 rural-school children, constituting a clear majority of the youth of school age, less than 25 per cent are completing the work of the grades (p. 96-97).

Many people, however, still wanted their children to attend rural schools. The majority of farmers still worked the land on which they had been raised when they were young. As a result, rural school buildings became more fashionable. Framed buildings replaced sod or log ones, and homemade seats replaced benches. Gradually, normal-trained female teachers began to replace male teachers in the rural communities (Cubberley, 1914).

People wanted the state to become responsible for education and saw education as a natural birthright of every youth. Cubberley (1914), in his extensive study of rural schools, reported that that rural schools needed better intellectual direction and educational leadership:

the average rural teacher of today is a mere slip of a girl, often almost too young to have formed as yet any conception of the problem of rural life and needs; that she knows little as to the nature of children or the technique of instruction; that her education is very limited and confined largely to the old traditional school-subjects, while of the great and

important fields of science she is almost entirely ignorant; and that she not infrequently lacks in those qualities of leadership which are so essential for rural progress. (p. 283)

During the panic of 1857 and subsequent depression and the years prior to and after the Civil War, many schools closed (Dick, 1954). In order to continue schooling, teachers taught children of parents who could afford to pay until citizens could collect enough money to pay teachers and operate the schoolhouses (Dick, 1954). The public still thought education for their children was important enough to seek out those who could or would teach for very little money (Trickey, 1967).

Shortly after the Civil War, Americans went from a rural agrarian economy to an industrial revolution (Edwards & Richey, 1963). This rapid change greatly affected education. Nebraska was ready for an economic boom period during the beginnings of the 1870s. The railroad line was completed allowing goods to move back and forth across Nebraska (Dick, 1954, Creigh, 1977). The Homestead Act freed land for farmers (Dick, 1954). Industry was beginning to grow through the availability of cheap labor from Europe and the abundance of natural resources (Olson, 1966). A positive business attitude brought about the rise of cities and big businesses (Olson, 1966). The majority of immigrants during the 1870s and 1880s settled on farms (Morton & Watkins, 1920). Even though the land was free, the settler had to work hard to subsidize the cost of farming (Dick, 1954). New farm machinery created an increase in farm production resulting in a fall in crop prices. Corn fell to sixteen cents a bushel in 1878. Machinery was expensive, so loans were often necessary (Dick, 1954). Technological advances, financial difficulties through lower prices, high freight rates and heavy debt, and more



crop production created unique problems for the farmer. Economic uncertainty during the early settlement period cast a shadow of uneasiness (Morton & Watkins, 1920).

Many people from the rural areas moved to the bigger cities to find employment (Edwards & Richey, 1963). The urban school districts faced a large increase in student population as a majority of immigrants migrated to the larger industrial cities. Prior to this large influx of city dwellers, educators were mainly concerned with teaching students to read, to write, and to learn numbers.

But with the development of urban industrial communities, the conditions surrounding children and youth were vastly changed. The old carriers of the most worthwhile educational experiences began to function poorly or not at all. Cities grew up and took form primarily to accommodate the demands of production and exchange, with little or no regard for the requirements of childhood. Inescapably, the responsibilities of institutionalized education were vastly expanded. More and more the school had to become the carrier of the experiences regarded as necessary for the socialization of youth, whether in the area of manners and morals, health, recreation, vocation, or civic behavior. Urbanization meant not only an increase of education through vicarious experiences but also a longer period of formal schooling. (Edwards & Richey, 1963, p. 486)

Prior to well-developed roads and the automobile, the countryside among Nebraska counties was dotted with small country schools (Olson, 1966, Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, 1967, Creigh, 1977). These simple sod or framed pillars of learning also served as the social center in their communities for events such as box socials, spelling bees, Grange or Farmers' Alliance meetings, and even church services (Morton & Watkins, 1920, Olson, 1966).

Business conditions of the 1880s brought prosperity and growth in Nebraska (Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, 1967). Industry expanded with new inventions and technologies such as the steam engine replacing horsepower. Crops

prospered with good weather (Creigh, 1977). Towns were formed with great enthusiasm, and more schools and churches were organized (Olson, 1966). The railroad line was completed, thus allowing goods to move back and forth across Nebraska (Overton, 1941). As the more desirable land in eastern Nebraska had already been claimed, settlers began to move westward (Olson, 1966). The National Banking Act of 1864 allowed for sound business practices by the establishment of a national banking system and the chartering of national banks (Vaughan, 1964). Farmers, burdened with debt, found themselves in trouble as farm prices began to fall in the 1890s (Morton & Watkins, 1920, Sheldon, 1937).

Between 1878 and 1886 there was a great increase in population in the prairie states. The population in Nebraska rose by more than 600,000 people between 1880 and 1890 (Dick, 1954). There were three main factors that accounted for this great migration of settlers (Dick, 1954). First, the desire to plant and to harvest crops on one's own land was strong. Second, the railroad companies, granted great sums of land, were anxious to convert the land into cash before it became a tax liability (Dick, 1954). Third, advertisements by the railroad companies and the state government brought in immigrants (Trickey, 1967). The railroads advertised through pictures, maps, and elaborate descriptions of the land's production and the life of a settler.

The Nebraska Legislature appropriated \$250,000 to buy food and seed for Nebraska settlers after the drought of 1890 (Morton & Watkins, 1920). For several years the country and the state of Nebraska was in economic panic (Morton & Watkins, 1920).

Banks failed, factories shut down and food prices dropped. The legislature of 1895 granted another \$250,000 more to aid the settlers of Nebraska (Sheldon, 1937).

### 20th Century Events

The turn of the century brought better times (Olson, 1966). Abundant rains fueled good crops. Factories started back up, and many immigrants came from Europe. Prices of crops increased and new crops, such as alfalfa, winter wheat, and sugar beets, were introduced into Nebraska (Sheldon, 1922). The cream separator helped dairy farmers process more milk (Sheldon, 1922, Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, 1967). With all the prosperity the price of land soon rose. Irrigation and dry-and farming became two new methods of farming as ditches and canals brought water right to the field, and dams were built to allow production to increase (Sheldon, 1922, Creigh, 1977). The last of the "cheap" land, gobbled up by settlers after the Kincaid Homestead Act of 1904, was passed. Settlers were given a homestead of 640 acres if they lived on the land for five years and placed \$1000 worth of improvements on it (Sheldon, 1922).

Towns also grew rapidly (Vaughan, 1964). More factories required more workers and the meat-packing business, for example, became very prominent in Omaha. The Omaha and Grant Smelting Company also employed many men. Omaha was booming; from 1880 to 1885 the town doubled in population from 30,000 to 61,000 (Olson, 1966). The farmer, however, did not share in this prosperity. Crop prices dropped, and by 1887 corn prices were at seventeen cents a bushel. Inventions and business development stimulated production. Electricity, telephones, movie theaters, automobiles, roads, and airplanes helped life become more pleasant. Banks were extending a great amount of

money for personal and business loans (Sheldon, 1937). Farmers were deeply into debt and there were many farm foreclosures. Many farmers left their homes and settled in the cities (Vaughan, 1964).

During the early part of World War I, America tried in vain to stay apart from the action in Europe (Olson, 1966). Reacting to the sinking of several American ships, Congress declared war on April 6, 1917 (Olson, 1966). What followed were immediate preparations towards fighting the Germans. There were moments of mixed reactions by Nebraska citizens. Although Nebraska was sympathetic to the Allies' cause, there was a large contingency of German immigrants caught between their alliance with the Fatherland and their new roots in America. Nebraska Czechs and Poles were equally emotional against the Germans (Olson, 1966).

The Nebraska legislature passed an act creating a State Council of Defense (Manley, 1959). Many resources were made available for preparing for war including food, equipment, and supplies. The legislature also repealed the Mockett Law in which foreign languages had been taught to children in the public schools (Sheldon, 1922). Farmers planted more crops than ever before to help in the war effort. Public education was also asked to help with the war effort. Many Nebraska rural schools organized boys' and girls' clubs which helped school-age children raise farm animals, grow vegetables, cook and bake food, sew garment materials, and make butter (Maupin, 1918, Clemmons, 1919). The United States Congress responded in 1917 by passing the Smith-Hughes Act (Maupin, 1918). This legislation provided matching funds in secondary schools for

vocational instruction for agricultural, home economics, trade, and industrial subjects (Maupin, 1918, Clemmons, 1919).

The demands of society required the schools to increase the number of high school offerings (Edwards & Richey, 1963). The Commission on Research and Service of the North Central Association developed qualitative standards for junior high school and high school curriculum (Newman, 1996). Changes of these schools mentioned in the “Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education” of 1921 included social-civic competence, healthful living, use of leisure time, and occupational efficiency (Davis, 1945, Edwards & Richey, 1963). One goal of the Commission was to bring about an introduction to more non-traditional classes. Classes dealing with commercial arts, industrial arts, household arts, and fine arts were appearing in curriculum offerings (Davis, 1945). At the turn of the century many schools were offering new subjects and the curriculum became overcrowded and disorganized (Johnson, 1935). Several national committees, including the Committee of Ten, met to study the problems of a lack of standardization and order in the curriculum programs (Edwards & Richey, 1963).

Between 1904 and 1929 there was another big increase in high school enrollment in Nebraska (Moritz, 1935). The school census increased from 376,868 students to 416,644 students, a ten percent gain in school population, however, the high school enrollment went from 6863 students to 57,007 students, a gain of 730 per cent (Moritz, 1935). Prior to 1904 the high school offerings varied little from the previous fifty years (Moritz, 1935). Curriculum was designed to help students gain entrance to college. Educators soon realized that the curriculum must change to meet the tremendous growth

in school population. A Course of Study, revised in 1909, added new sections on agriculture, geography, domestic science, and manual training (Bishop, 1909). By 1919, twenty-six percent of the students were enrolled in commercial courses, such as accounting, law, typing, and shorthand, and by 1934 almost 44 % of the students were enrolled in commercial classes (Moritz, 1935). The rural school curriculum was considered antiquated.

While the urban school was obtaining more adequate financial support, improving the material equipment with which it operated, drawing from the normal schools and colleges the best-trained teachers, developing a trained administrative and supervisory personnel, and enriching its instructional content, the rural school remained much as it had been for generations. The small district type of organization persisted; the financial support of education remained comparatively meager; schoolhouses were generally inadequate; rural teachers were poorly trained, immature, and poorly paid; the curriculum consisted, in the main, of a formal drill in the three R's; and supervision was practically unknown. The net result was that in many ways rural boys and girls were poorly prepared to compete, as they must, with their better-educated urban brothers and sisters. (Edwards & Richey, 1963, p. 506).

In 1900, only Omaha High School offered a Manual Training course, however, by 1927 approximately 36 % of the schools offered such a course (Caldwell, 1902, Wakeley, 1917, Johnson, 1935). There appeared to be a wide range of industrial arts classes (Moritz, 1935). Thirty-three schools offered mechanical drawing by 1920 (Johnson, 1935). With increased enrollment schools were forced to offer more types of subjects to broaden the curriculum. Other courses listed in curriculum offerings included Gas Engine Mechanics, Radio, Auto Mechanics, Basketry, Typesetting, Printing, Metal Work, Farm Mechanics, Forging, Concrete Work, and Home Mechanics (Johnson, 1935). In 1934, approximately 20 percent of Nebraska high schools offered vocational agriculture

classes; subjects included Observation Work, Soils, Milk Production, Laboratory, and School Gardening (Johnson, 1935).

John Morehead, governor from 1913 to 1917, authorized a commission to study the conditions of schools across Nebraska (Work Projects Administration, 1941). The purpose of the study included a determination of how to make districts more efficient and economical. The commission recommended abolition of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the creation of a State Board of Education, and a revision of the school laws of Nebraska (Work Projects Administration, 1941).

Governor Samuel R. McKelvie, in his inaugural message on January 9, 1919, discussed the need for school improvement, especially in the rural schools (Work Projects Administration, 1941). He theorized the rural schools were not on an equal basis with the rest of the state's educational system. McKelvie believed this catching up could be reached through several means. First, rural schools needed to look at additional consolidations. Second, weak school districts should receive additional financial aid. Third, every Nebraska student should attend an accredited school for eight months a year. McKelvie perceived that accredited schools were schools in which the qualifications of the teachers and the course of instruction had to be approved by the State Department of Public Instruction (Work Projects Administration, 1941).

By 1913, the Department was convinced that one of its chief responsibilities was to continue to modernize the rural schools (Delzell, 1913, Thomas, 1916a). Many rural schools needed to upgrade the physical conditions of the buildings and equipment (Delzell, 1914). The Department of Public Instruction also reported the quality of

teaching candidates should be improved. The Department worked with the normal colleges to promote higher teacher-training standards (Delzell, 1931). The normal colleges were establishing courses of study for students in order to become effective rural school teachers. The rural schoolteacher must hold a first grade certificate or must have completed the work of a twelve-year school in order to become an approved school (Delzell, 1913).

Delzell (1913) theorized the state of Nebraska needed a unified public school system. There was a gap between the rural schools and the high schools (Delzell, 1913). The Nebraska Department of Public Instruction reported standards needed to be raised in order for rural students to be able to stay near home and still complete high school work in their own rural schools. Under his term as state superintendent, Delzell, recommended a constitutional amendment to create a board of education with authority to appoint a commissioner of education as its executive officer to replace the existing Department of Education and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (Delzell, 1913). This revision in the school codes, however, did not occur for another 37 years (Reed, 1915).

Augustus Thomas, State Superintendent from 1915 to 1917, organized the Department of Public Instruction into four major divisions. Executive Division, Division of Secondary Schools, Division of Rural Schools, and Division of Certification (Thomas, 1916b) (See Appendix A). Thomas was concerned with the quality of Nebraska rural schools. There were too many rural schools; approximately 3,390 of the state's 6,571 districts enrolled 12 or fewer students (Thomas, 1916b). Thomas tried to help rural schools through improvement in areas such as better teacher preparation training in the



state normal schools and in the normal training high schools, higher standardization of buildings, and consolidation.

Thomas organized a state-wide rural school conference in Lincoln in the fall of 1916 to study the state's education problems (Thomas, 1916b). The conference was divided into six committees. The committees were: the Course of Study and Program Committee on Finance, the Committee on Selection and Tenure of Office of Public School Officials, the Committee on Consolidation, Transportation, and Teacherage, the Committee on Standardization of School Buildings, and the Committee on the Government of Higher Institutions (Thomas, 1916b). Each committee reported its findings and recommendations to State Superintendent Thomas. By organizing his staff into particular divisions, Thomas assigned specific areas of responsibilities. The State Superintendent reported that this reorganization would provide better service to all school districts in Nebraska (Thomas, 1916b).

The following were State Superintendents during the organizational period of Nebraska's school accreditation history.

State Superintendents

Territorial Librarians

James S. Izard	March 16, 1855 to November 6, 1855
H. C. Anderson	November 6, 1855 to August 3, 1857
John H. Kellom	August 3, 1857 to November 7, 1859

Nebraska Territorial Commissioner of Common Schools\*

William E. Harvey	November 4, 1858 to October 8, 1861
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## Territorial Auditors

William E. Harvey	October 8, 1861 to October 10, 1865
John Gillespie	October 10, 1865 to February 15, 1869

## Nebraska Superintendents of Public Instruction\*\*

S. Dewitt Beals	1869-1871a
J. M. McKenzie	1871-1877
S. R. Thompson	1877-1881
W. W. Jones	1881-1887
George B. Lane	1887-1891
A. K. Goudy	1891-1895
Henry R. Corbett	1895-1897
William R. Jackson	1897-1901
William K. Fowler	1901-1905
Jasper L. McBrien	1905-1909
E. C. Bishop	1909-1911
James W. Crabtree	1911b
James E. Delzell	1911-1915c
A. O. Thomas	1915-1917
W. H. Clemmons	1917-1920d
John M. Matzen	1920-1927e

\* Office abolished by legislative act of January 11, 1861.

\*\* Office created in 1869, abolished by constitutional amendment in 1952 and by statute in 1953.

a Appointed by Governor Butler on February 16, 1869.

b Resigned, in office January to October 1911.

c In office October 1911 to January 1915.

d In office 1917 to January 1920

e In office January 1920 to 1927

(Nebraska Legislative Council, 1900)

## Regulatory Period 1930 - 1951

### National Events

The United States government was heavily involved in helping the country recover from the Great Depression of the 1930s (Olson, 1966). In September 1929, the Stock Market crashed, and the resultant decrease in production and sales increased unemployment (Olson, 1966). The drastic fall in farm prices and the severe drought, creating the great “dust bowl,” caused a great decline in the number of farms (Vaughan, 1964). As a result of the economic depression of the 1930s, the federal government provided economic assistance to the public schools (Korsgaard, 1963). The government’s purpose was to stimulate employment through the training of students. The Roosevelt administration provided needed support through New Deal programs (Vaughan, 1964). Not all Americans, however, advocated federal aid to education. Many groups of people determined that control of schools should remain at the state and local level, however, most people accepted federal monies when they became available.

The Great Depression brought about a change in the attitude of most people about what the role of government in the economy should be. Prior to the 1930’s, it was generally accepted that the government should not enter actively into the working of the economic system. If the government provided the regulations necessary to insure that the rights of regulations necessary to insure that the rights of individuals were not violated, this was deemed to be sufficient. During the thirties, this view changed, until the commonly accepted view was that the government had a responsibility to aid its citizens during periods of particular stress such as was the depression (Vaughan, 1964, p. 250)

The federal government helped Nebraska school districts survive the depression years of the 1930s (Korsgaard, 1963). In 1935, the National Youth Administration began

to provide assistance to needy high school students by hiring them to work at schools and offering the students vocational training (Korsgaard, 1963). Another federal program, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), authorized financial aid to schools that accredited studies for students who attended CCC camps (Butts, 1955, Korsgaard, 1963). Beginning in 1933, the CCC provided training and subsequent employment mainly in the conservation fields for unemployed youths (Butts, 1955). The camps also provided educational training in writing and reading as well as vocational instruction (Korsgaard, 1963). In August of 1933, the Emergency Relief Administration and the Works Project Administration were authorized to use federal funds to pay teacher salaries in rural schools, to continue vocational education, and to initiate a nursery school program (Korsgaard, 1963, Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, 1967). Money was set aside to rehire forty thousand unemployed rural-school teachers (Korsgaard, 1963). Communities also benefited from federal help of the Public Works Administration by receiving grants and loans to construct school buildings.

World War II brought an end to the Great Depression (Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, 1967). After the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, school districts developed civil defense programs at school such as safety and fire patrols and the Junior Red Cross (Jones, 1943, Cyr, 1944). Schools participated in the sale of Defense Bonds and Stamps. Graduation requirements in the Omaha schools were changed during World War II (Nelson, 1969). For example, the basic requirements of the Omaha school districts were established as follows:

Three years of English or equivalent. Two years of social studies or equivalent one unit of which shall be American History and American

Government. One year of science or equivalent. Two years of physical education or equivalent, one year of which must be physical fitness in the senior year. One year of mathematics or equivalent (Nelson, 1969, p. 257).

Students were encouraged to graduate in three years so they could enlist in the armed forces. Recruiters from various branches of the Armed Forces made presentations during the school day and hoped to recruit students (Nelson, 1969).

During World War II, the public schools became responsible for educating students about unique societal problems such as rationing, bond sales, salvage, and unemployment (Cyr, 1944). In the February 1944, The Department of Rural Education explained that the responsibilities of rural schools in wartime were to make sure that students were educated and educational programs related to the needs of the people (Cyr, 1944).

The problem of helping the community to become a better place in which to live and earn a living requires that the educational program in the rural community take into account the functions of rural society in modern American life. The rural community of today must (a) develop within itself a healthy, wholesome, satisfying way of life; (b) produce food and fiber and certain raw materials for industry; (c) produce its own future population and continuous supply of new blood for the cities; (d) provide a major market for the products of industry; and (e) act as a stabilizer of American life and ideals (Cyr, 1944, p. 2).

Nebraska schools were dealing with the problem of providing education to diverse social and economic groups (Moritz, 1935, Johnson, 1935). Should the curriculum follow a path of college bound classes or more in line with industrial and trade training? More and more classes followed the latter (Johnson, 1935, Taylor, 1941). As classes were added to the curriculum many questions developed (Taylor, 1941).

The Department of Public Instruction still noted there were two groups of students attending rural schools (Taylor, 1941). One group of students lived on farms or small towns and would continue to live in those rural areas after high school. The other group of graduates would move to the cities to work (Taylor, 1941). Educators conjectured that the schools were an important vehicle for community service projects and both groups should be involved in supporting the war effort (Jones, 1943, Cyr, 1944).

For example, during the past year the schools were responsible for the sale of more than \$300,000,000 worth of war bonds and stamps; they got in the scrap to the total of more than 1,500,000 tons; they made thousands of garments for the Red Cross; produced millions of recreational articles for the armed forces; are sponsoring an estimated 1,000,000 school and home Victory gardens; are recruiting several hundred thousand high-school youth for farm work through the Victory Farm Volunteers; have produced some 600,000 approved, precisely scaled model airplanes requested by the armed forces; have collected tons of waste paper and waste fats, have canned and preserved thousands of quarts of home grown vegetables and fruits; and in numerous other ways have taken their battle stations on the home front in this war (Cyr, 1944, p. 4).

The public schools were also asked to help America's youth to become physically and academically fit (Cyr, 1944). As a result, physical education requirements were increased in Nebraska schools and learning basic facts was emphasized. The military, however, found that some students needed remedial help with the basic facts of math, reading, social sciences, physical sciences, and foreign language (Cyr, 1944).

School officials noted that the rural school curriculum should meet the needs of the students so many of the rural school activities correlated with events that were occurring (Jones, 1943). Bond and stamp drives incorporated lessons in speech, art, and accounting. Lessons about rationing dealt with conservation, nutrition, economics, and consumer buying. School children also learned about gardening and food conservation,

horticulture, and homemaking (Jones, 1943). The George-Barden Act of 1946 strengthened the vocational education program by providing additional appropriations for the vocational classes (Korsgaard, 1963). Many school activities dealt specifically with proper nutrition education (Cyr, 1944). Secondary students demonstrated cooking skills through food fairs and exhibits while elementary students learned to prepare simple foods. Classes and clubs sponsored radio programs and newspaper articles. Many schools carried out the first registration for the draft. The schools were also given responsibility for starting the rationing campaign by conducting research on sugar consumption (Cyr, 1944).

The Division of Supervision of the Department of Public Instruction assisted school districts with the improvement of instruction and developed courses of study and instructional aids for teachers (Taylor, 1941, Reed, 1946, 1947). For example, driver's education curriculum was added to the program in 1946 (Reed, 1946). Later, a number of other publications were issued to school districts discussing family living issues, such as sex education, moral and spiritual values, atomic energy, and conservation of human and natural resources (Reed, 1945, 1949, Jensen, 1968).

### Normal Training

State Superintendent of Public Instruction W. K. Fowler, writing in the Seventeenth Biennial Report in 1902, first recommended normal training for high school students. Later, at an October 1905 meeting of the Association of Superintendents and Principals of Graded Schools, a committee was formed to study the normal training situation (McBrien, 1907c). The State Legislature enacted the Normal Training Law and

the program became effective in 1908 (McBrien, 1907c) (see Appendix A). The law empowered the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop requirements for high schools to qualify as normal training schools and to inspect and supervise those training classes (McBrien, 1907c). The Association of Superintendents and Principals of Graded Schools considered this statute as a turning point in restructuring public education:

While the statute empowers the state superintendent to prescribe all requirements for high schools qualifying for normal training, we hesitated to inaugurate a law of such magnitude without the help of the school men and women most deeply interested in the results to be obtained by a proper application and enforcement of it. (McBrien, 1907a, p.19)

During the 1907-1908 school year, of the 106 schools that completed the application process to be considered for normal training work, 64 high schools were deemed qualified to be admitted as normal training work sites, with more than 1000 junior and senior high school students registered for normal training classes (McBrien, 1907c). In addition to the regular high school course of study, students who registered for the normal training program took agriculture, arithmetic, geography, grammar, American history, reading, and professional training (Matzen, 1923a). Students were allowed to receive one credit toward study at the University of Nebraska in American history, English grammar, professional training, and agriculture classes (McBrien, 1907a). The legislature appropriated \$50,000 for the promotion of this law in the high schools (McBrien, 1907b). It read:

On and after September 1, 1907 no person shall be granted a first grade county certificate who has not had at least twelve weeks' normal training in a college, university, or normal school of approved standing in this or in another state, or in a state junior normal school of Nebraska, **or in school**



**of Nebraska approved by the state superintendent of public instruction as being equipped to give such normal training.** One or more years of successful experience as a teacher may be considered the equivalent of the normal training required by this section. - Sec 7, Subd. 9a, S. L., 1905.

On and after September 1, 1907, no person shall be granted a second grade county certificate who has not had at least eight weeks, normal training in a college, university or normal school of approved standing in this or in another state, or in a state junior normal school of Nebraska **or in a high school of Nebraska approved by the state superintendent of public instruction as being equipped to give such normal training.** One or more years' successful experience as a teacher may be considered the equivalent of the normal training required by this section. Sec. 8, Subd. 9a, S. L., 1905 (McBrien, 1907c, p. 103)).

The purpose of normal training in the high schools was to provide rural schools with competent teachers. Most high school graduates started their teaching careers in the rural schools. The normal training program was an important factor in providing quality teachers through specific training in rural communities. One particularly important goal of the State Superintendent was for graduates of normal training to teach a few years at the rural schools and then go back to teachers' colleges, called Normal Schools, to complete their degrees (McBrien, 1906). Teachers of normal training classes had to be college graduates with at least three years of previous teaching experience. High school class members were provided opportunities to observe and to teach in several grades under proper supervision. Students enrolled in the training class must have completed the eighth grade and be at least sixteen years old (McBrien, 1907a). Students also had to complete the oath of good faith:

We the undersigned, hereby declare that our object in asking admission to the training class is to prepare ourselves for teaching, and it is our purpose to engage in teaching in the rural schools of Nebraska at the close of such preparation. We pledge ourselves to remain in the class during the year

unless prevented by illness or excused by the state superintendent of public instruction (McBrien, 1907c, p. 103).

Students in normal training had to study a minimum of eighteen weeks of rural school management, methods and observation, reading and primary reading methods, grammar and composition, agriculture, manual training or home economics, physiology, penmanship and drawing, and civics (Clemmons, 1919). In addition, students also had to enroll for six weeks' study of orthography and oral arithmetic, thirty-six weeks of United States history, and twelve weeks each in geography and arithmetic (Clemmons, 1919, Matzen, 1923).

Practice teaching was first mentioned in a 1922 Department of Public Instruction Normal Training Regulation bulletin (Matzen, 1922). All normal training graduates were required to complete a minimum of 24 twenty-minute periods of practice teaching from previously prepared lesson plans under the supervision of a competent teacher (Matzen, 1923). In 1924, the curriculum requirements expanded into a regular four-year curriculum as outlined in the High School Manual (Matzen, 1925).

Graduating high school students were required to successfully complete a final examination in order to become certified to teach in the rural schools Matzen, 1922, 1923a). The same rules and regulations for regular teacher certification were observed under the Normal Training Law (Matzen, 1923a). At least twice a year, a representative of the Department of Public Instruction visited each normal training class to inquire about such areas as membership, age and appearance of the students, credentials of admission, classroom and equipment, qualifications of the instructors, subjects being taught, and observation work (Matzen, 1922). The representative issued written reports and shared

the results with the school district. By 1937, more than two-thirds of rural schoolteachers were normal training graduates (Taylor, 1937). Many of those teachers had taken college classes during summer sessions to enhance their teaching skills and to complete classes necessary to obtain their teaching certificates (Taylor, 1937).

The 1945 Department of Public Instruction's Laws and Regulations Bulletin listed requirements for schools to be included in the normal training program (Reed, 1945c). The State Superintendent prescribed conditions for admission, the course of instruction, and the rules and regulations. For example, at least two full-time teachers had to teach at the approved high school, and each normal training instructor earned a state-funded annual salary of \$1,000 (Reed, 1945).

Table 2  
Trends in Normal Training Enrollment

Year	Number of High Schools	Enrollments in Normal Training Courses	Number of Rural Teachers
			550
1907-08	69	1,212	
1908-09	89	1,502	763
1909-10	83	1,465	894
1910-11	103	1,769	911
1911-12	102	1,860	1,002

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Year	Number of High Schools	Enrollments in Normal Training Courses	Number of Rural Teachers
1912-13	135	2,883	1,350
1913-1914	153	3,343	
1914-1915	212	3,343	1,789
1915-1916	162	3,810	1,979
1916-1917	188	4,331	1,816
1917-1918	219	4,193	1,732
1918-1919	219	3,966	1,508
1919-1920	214	4,000	1,489
1920-1921	223	3,812	1,537
1921-1922	243	5,142	6,742
1922-1923	247	6,122	6,348
1923-1924	251	6,918	7,255
1924-1925	254	7,016	6,991
1925-1926	243	5,436	6,938

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Year	Number of High Schools	Enrollments in Normal Training Courses	Number of Rural Teachers
1926-1927	232	5,595	6,793
1927-1928	226	5,094	6,438
1928-1929	231	4,960	6,382
1929-30	232	4,835	6,347
1930-31	224	4,608	6,331
1931-32	219	4,655	6,321
1932-33	213	4,558	6,302
1933-34	205	4,160	6,335
1934-35	207	3,884	6,297
1935-36	199	3,556	6,236
1936-37	193	3,125	6,196
1937-38	187	2,791	6,059
1938-39	184	2,891	5,991
1939-40	184	3,002	5,863
1940-41	180	2,914	5,833

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Year	Number of High Schools	Enrollments in Normal Training Courses	Number of Rural Teachers
1941-42	176	2,791	5,715
1942-43	176	2,608	5,519
1943-44	172	2,390	5,390
1944-45	162	2,007	5,292
1945-46	150	1,702	5,163
1946-47	137	1,577	4,968
1947-48	126	1,536	4,843
1948-49	114	1,452	4,754
1949-50	105	1,226	4,707
1950-51	94	1,087	4,716
1951-52	82	964	4,537
1952-53	66	790	4,458
1953-54	58	707	4,383
1954-55	44	599	4,341

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Source: Taylor, 1928, Reed, 1947, Ruff, 1951, Decker, 1955, 1956

By 1949, the Normal Training Program was a 36-week 10-hour semester course that students could only take during their senior year (Decker, 1951). Students were eligible for admission to the program only if they had earned by the end of their junior year 120 credit hours including ten semester hours in Teacher Education I and II (Reed, 1949, Decker, 1951).

This 36-week course was divided into three parts. Part one involved learning about student teaching and the procedures of observing the classroom (Reed, 1949, Decker, 1951). Part two required approximately 22 weeks of classwork and lessons dealing with lesson planning, conducting the recitation, standardized tests and teacher-made tests, objectives of education, and unit planning. It also included school and classroom management, lessons about the organization of the rural school, rural school administration and supervision, and professional ethics (Decker, 1951). Part three required approximately 13 weeks of practice teaching (Reed, 1949).

The purpose of the Normal Training Program was not to produce "master" teachers but to provide an initial step toward formal teacher training (Decker, 1951). The reasoning behind the program was to impress upon the normal training students the functions of education. The state superintendent wanted the students to understand the purpose of elementary education and the major responsibilities of the elementary school teacher. The Normal Training Manual was a serious attempt at preparing teachers to the highest degree of professionalism possible in a short period of time (Decker, 1951).

Another Department of Public Instruction strategy to encourage high school students to become rural teachers was known as the accelerated plan (Reed, 1946). High

schools that did not offer normal training classes were asked by county superintendents to set aside two classes a day so that students enrolled in the accelerated plan could work on assignments found in the 1945 Essentials for the Beginning Teacher manual published by the Office of the State Superintendent (Reed, 1945). The county superintendents then met with interested high school seniors to discuss the opportunities and the problems of rural teaching (Reed, 1946). High school teachers used Department publications to encourage students to consider the teaching profession. Exploring the Vocation of Teaching, Gaining an Understanding of Education in American Democracy, Teaching as a Career, and Your Invitation to Teaching were used as resources for the professional training program (Decker, 1951). Under the accelerated plan, the high school graduates earned 12 hours of credit in one of the regular colleges (Reed, 1946). Students usually took these college hours during the summer months and also took the 17-state teachers' examination prior to graduation (Reed, 1946).

#### Teacher Certification

In the 1946 Annual Report State Superintendent Reed noted that Nebraska was facing a shortage of classroom teachers even though the Department of Public Instruction recognized five types of teaching certificates:

1. Third Grade Elementary Certificates were held by teachers who graduated from normal training or who had graduated from high school and had earned twelve hours of college credit.
2. General Elementary Certificates were granted to those teachers who had one year of college.



3. Junior Elementary Certificates were granted to those teachers who had two years of college.

4. Senior Grade Certificates were granted to those teachers who had three years of college.

5. Secondary or Administrative Certificates were granted to those teachers who held a Baccalaureate Degree or who had taken four years of college (Reed, 1946).

Also in 1946, the Department of Public Instruction and the county superintendent issued nonrenewable Temporary Certificates to compensate for the scarcity of legally qualified teachers in Nebraska. If it was determined that the school district was unable to fill a teacher vacancy with a certified staff member, certificates, valid for one year, were issued to those people who applied and qualified (Reed, 1946).

These Temporary Certificates could be issued on the basis of three plans (Reed, 1945b, 1946). The first plan dealt with those teachers who had previously held regular Nebraska certificates and who were qualified to teach within their area of expertise (Reed, 1945b, 1946). The second plan issued certificates to those individuals who had earned college credit (Reed, 1945b, 1946). To teach in the elementary school an individual must have earned a minimum of 60 semester hours of credit (Reed, 1946). Teachers in grades seven through nine in junior high schools and seven to ten in two-teacher rural high schools had to have earned a minimum of 90 semester hours of credit (Reed, 1946). High school teachers had to earn a baccalaureate degree or a minimum of 120 semester hours of class work. Those teachers who did not qualify for either of the other two plans faced the third option in which they had to pass written and oral

examinations to earn a temporary certificate. Those who wanted elementary teaching positions took two nationally normed standardized examinations that tested general information, ability, and teacher aptitude (Reed, 1946). The third written test questioned the applicant from material in the elementary Course of Study (Reed, 1946). The first two exams for high schools teachers also tested general information, ability, and teaching aptitude. The third exam, however, tested knowledge about high school English, social science, mathematics, and science. A staff member from the Department of Public Instruction and two local school administrators conducted the oral examination (Reed, 1946).

Later, the 1949 Nebraska legislature helped solve the teacher shortage by eliminating the state teachers' examinations (Reed, 1950a). Certificates were rewarded upon graduation from the normal training program or completion of twelve semester hours from college. In the first year of this program there was an increase from the previous year of nearly 700 additional teachers who qualified for Third Grade Elementary Certificates (Reed, 1950a). A second legislative change governing certification added requirements for elementary teachers (Reed, 1950a). The Senior Grade Certificate, issued to teachers with three years of college, was eliminated as a certification option (Reed, 1950a). The legislature also added the Senior Elementary School Certificate, granted to teachers with a Baccalaureate degree and a recommendation from the college they attended. The certificate was valid for five years in kindergarten to ninth grade (Reed, 1950a). Other changes in the school certification laws involved withholding state aid from schools employing noncertified teachers. Any person having knowledge of the

employment of an uncertified teacher could prefer charges against the school board (Reed, 1950a).

### District Reorganization

O. Thomas, State Superintendent of Public Instruction from 1915 to 1917, considered a plan of district consolidation as an option for the improvement of rural schools (Thomas, 1916b). He suggested student attendance through the first six grades in the rural school and then sending the seventh and eighth grade students to a central school with the high school population (Thomas, 1916b). The rural schools were not ready for such a drastic of a change, however, whispers of school consolidation could be heard throughout Nebraska communities (Bell, 1941, Schroeder, 1968).

During the 1916 school year, there were 652 graded schools and 6,571 ungraded or one-teacher schools. There were 3,390 schools operating with an attendance from 1 to 12 students (Thomas, 1916b). Many public educators, however, were still optimistic about the existing rural school system (Maupin, 1918).

Our people are getting together and are rapidly solving the Rural School question and the time is not far distant when Nebraska will be able to place at the door of every country boy and girl a splendid, advanced educational opportunity (Maupin, 1918, p. 19).

The Reorganization of School Districts Act became law on August 27, 1949 (Schroeder, 1968) (see Appendix A). A six-member Committee for the Reorganization of School Districts, as well as county committees, was established. The Department of Public Instruction committees held public meetings to explain the reorganization program. Of course, the progress of the plan depended upon the willingness of the public

to accept this change. The committees provide information to the voters about the need for reorganization and how this plan would benefit the children without an increase in cost (Schroeder, 1968).

County committees were busy visiting the schools in order to help voters make informed decisions about reorganization (Decker, 1952b). During 1950, the voters of Wheeler County approved one reorganization plan as presented by the county committee. By 1951, the State Committee approved twelve plans submitted by county committees, however, only two of the plans were actually approved by the voters (Decker, 1952b).

Some counties were very active in reorganization while other parts of the state did very little planning. Hooker County, for example, organized under the county unit plan wherein the entire county became one administrative unit with several attendance centers (Decker, 1953a). In 1952, The Nebraska Farmer published an article written by Superintendent Decker entitled "Can We Afford 6,639 School Districts?" (Decker, 1952b) Decker intended the article to clarify problems of rural school district organization. Through school visitations, county meetings, and written publications, the Department was very busy providing information about reorganization to the public (Decker, 1952b).

Superintendent Decker reported in his 1954 Annual Report that since 1949 more than eight hundred districts had merged with other districts. A major obstacle to reorganization was the large variation of tax levies between school districts (Decker, 1954). Decker noticed, for example, that the range between high and low levies in York County was 19.2 mills (Decker, 1954). The Department of Public Instruction's

committee recommended dissolving any K-8 district that was not affiliated with a K-12 district (Schroeder, 1968).

### Rural School Standards

In a 1915 Department of Public Instruction bulletin entitled Nebraska Rural School Standards, Assistant Superintendent Teed noted that rural schools needed standards in order to compete with city schools (Thomas, 1915a). According to Teed, two obstacles hindered the improvement of rural school education including:

1. Rural schools lacked quality student time. In contrast to the city school teacher who had eight classes with 40 to 45 minute periods, the rural school teacher had approximately 30 ungraded classes each day. Perhaps as a partial result of this situation, only a small percentage of students enrolled in rural schools finished the eighth grade (Thomas, 1915a).

2. Many rural schools lacked high school programs. Schools did not have the capacity to offer the curriculum that city schools offered to their students (Thomas, 1915a).

To improve rural school conditions further, the Nebraska Department of Public Instruction developed rural-school standards. In order to collect tuition, Nebraska high schools had to comply with standards determined by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. A 1915 Nebraska education bulletin, entitled Approved High Schools Village and Rural, listed standards for approved high schools (Thomas, 1915b). Elementary teachers were required to hold at least a first grade county certificate and have a minimum of one year's successful teaching experience. Each teacher should teach no

more than 30 students at one time (Thomas, 1915b). The State Superintendent of Public Instruction was responsible for prescribing the course of study for grades one through eight (Thomas, 1915b). The high school teachers had to be college graduates or graduates of an approved normal school. Those teachers employed at a ten grade school had to hold a first grade country certificate and had to graduate from a high school normal training with at least two years successful experience (Thomas, 1915b). Educators who taught in eleven and twelve grade schools had to hold state teaching certificates, and they had to have at least eight hours of college credit. Each high school was expected to have suitable science laboratory equipment, and the library was expected to have a dictionary, an encyclopedia, and not less than \$50.00 worth of general references (Thomas, 1915b).

The county superintendents reported to the State Superintendent when a school had reached the minimum requirements for standardization. If a school received a favorable report, its name was added to the standard school list. A standard school had to score 75 of 100 points on a Nebraska Score Card For Standard Rural School Form (Thomas, 1916a).

Minimum requirements were:

1. Term must be at least eight months.
2. Teacher must hold a second grade certificate or better with at least 24 weeks normal training or at least two years successful experience.
3. Salary of the teacher must be at least fifty-five dollars per month.
4. School grounds, buildings and outbuildings must be adequate, clean and sanitary.

5. Schoolroom must be lighted from the left or the left and rear of the pupils, with window area at least 20 % of floor area.
- 6 Schoolroom must have a heating and ventilating system of some approved type--at least 200 cubic feet of air space for each pupil.
7. Seats must be individual, adapted to the size of the children and properly adjusted.
8. Outbuildings must be separate, at least fifty feet apart, clean and sanitary.
9. School must have plenty of textbooks, supplementary readers and desk dictionaries.
10. The reference should library include a dictionary.
11. School must be well organized and the teaching efficient.
12. School must have globe, maps and plenty of blackboard (Thomas, 1916a).

The public wanted improvements to the school system, and by 1916 Nebraska was spending \$1,000,000 a month on public education (Thomas, 1916a). The people wanted strong and efficient schools that were attractive and a pride to the community. Trying to give the rural schools every possible opportunity to self-improve, Superintendent Taylor added the designation Superior School for those districts that could qualify by scoring 95 points on a 100 point test (Taylor, 1927).

The 1935 bulletin, Rural Education Moving Forward, provided another guide to rural schools. The manual, written by Charles W. Taylor as State Superintendent of Public Instruction and Chloe C. Baldrige as Director of Rural Education, gave guidance, encouragement, and help to rural teachers as well as assistance to all rural school officials. The Department of Public Instruction listed suggestions that districts were strongly encouraged to follow, including:

1. A list of the objectives of rural education including suggested books to read, organizations to join, and curriculum to follow (Taylor, 1935a).

2. A list of guiding principles for various subject areas including what time to teach each subject and how long to teach subject areas at each grade level. For example, at 9:10, reading should be taught for 15 minutes to first graders. At 1:05 spelling should be taught for 20 minutes to third through eighth graders (Taylor, 1935a).

3. Grade level skills that students should know were listed. The bulletin's suggestions were very specific. Particular objectives that the state department wanted rural students to know by the end of each grade by subject were also listed. For example, English outcomes to be attained by the end of fifth and sixth grade included habits, the spoken language, and the written language (Taylor, 1935).

The standards for written language for the fifth and sixth grade were as follows

1. To attain skill in regard to the correct use of the exclamation point, apostrophe, comma to separate yes and no, comma in a series, and the hyphen at the end of the line.
2. To use a colon before an itemized list.
3. To attain skill in writing social letters, business letters, and informal notes.
4. To write accurate, concise, and brief reports on such topics as health and thrift.
5. To develop skill in taking notes and making a good bibliography.
6. To recognize the subject and predicate of a sentence.
7. To recognize all parts of speech.
8. To master the work outlined in the Elementary Course of Study.

(Taylor, 1935b, p.39-40)

The 1935 Rural Education Moving Forward manual also explained revised procedures for school districts to reach minimum standardization requirements (Taylor, 1935b). Schools requested the county superintendent to inspect and to score the school when minimum requirements for standardization had been reached. Additional



requirements from the 1916 Department of Public Instruction's score card included a longer school year, more teacher experience, and extra reference materials and student textbooks (Taylor, 1935b).

Additional conditions for the 1935 superior school requirements dealt mostly with the physical plant. Superior schools were required to have at least one acre of schoolyard, a sanitary drinking fountain, a basement, and a first-aid kit (Taylor, 1935b). In addition, superior schools needed to have a Parent-Teacher Association in operation, a teacher of superior qualifications, and a library with at least 80 juvenile books, reference materials and bulletins published by the United States Government and the University of Nebraska (Taylor, 1935b).

Teachers who had met minimum "better-teaching" requirements received certificates, titled Recognition of Better Rural School Teaching. Earning this certificate signified that the teacher had given satisfactory answers to the superintendent's questions and had met minimum standards with affirmative answers (Taylor, 1935b). Questions ranged from classroom management (Do pupils move about the room in an orderly manner?) to personal qualities (Is my character good?) (Taylor, 1935b). County superintendents evaluated teachers during their visits to the schools.

Many schools relied on the Department of Public Instruction for suggestions when planning curriculum. In 1945, the State Superintendent's office published the Suggested Program of Studies For Nebraska High Schools manual listing a series of subjects and suggested teaching activities (Reed, 1945c). A vast majority of high school graduates, approximately 75% to 80%, did not attend college (Reed, 1945c). The bulletin

reminded school districts that schools needed to meet the needs of their students by offering nontraditional classes such as small-engine repair, correspondence classes, work study, and pre-induction training for the military (Reed, 1945c). The bulletin listed specific subject requirements for the different colleges of the University of Nebraska (Reed, 1945c).

### North Central Association

The territorial legislature on April 19, 1864 established the Nebraska State University and set-aside 72 sections of land for the establishment of a State University and Agricultural College consisting of six departments or colleges (McKenzie, 1872, Sheldon, 1915). The University of Nebraska was organized in February 1869 and the first classes commenced on September 7, 1871 (Sheldon, 1915) (see Appendix A). The charter of the University recognized the connection between high schools and higher education (McKenzie, 1872, Caldwell, 1902). High school seniors who attended accredited high schools were either admitted to the Latin School of the University or to one of the University's colleges (Jones, 1884, Lane, 1888). The Latin School was a two-year program preparing students for admission to the Colleges of Literature, Science, Arts or Industrial College. Students from nonaccredited high schools had to take comprehensive examinations at the end of the first year of the Latin School (Jones, 1884, Lane, 1888).

The courses of study recommended to be used by High Schools, have generally met the approval of all and adopted by many of our city High Schools. The completion of the Minor Course admits to the second year of the Latin School and the completion of the Major Course admits to the

Freshman Class of the University. High Schools adopting these courses of study with a view of preparing students for the University, by request, will be visited by a committee from the faculty, and upon approval their graduates will be admitted to the University without examination (Lane, 1888, p. 60-61).

Officials believed that, if the University set high standards for incoming freshman, the entire educational system would benefit.

The University of Nebraska aims to continue and complete the work begun in the public schools, and secure to all an opportunity of liberal culture in literature and science, and in such technical and professional courses as shall from time to time be added. These advantages are offered to all free of charge for tuition, without regard to sex or race, or place of residence, on the sole condition of possessing the intellectual and moral qualifications requisite for admission to such an institution (Lane, 1888, p. 80).

A University committee met with the State Teachers' Association in the spring of 1881 (Lane, 1888). The University wanted high schools to offer suitable classes to students in order for the graduates to be admitted to the University without entrance examinations. Several years would pass, however, before Nebraska high schools were ready or able to offer these classes (Lane, 1888).

Nebraska was not alone in its struggle with suitable standards. The North Central Association was founded on March 29, 1895 (Davis, 1945, Carroll, 1995). James B. Angell, President of the University of Michigan and the first President of the North Central Association, remarked that one of the purposes of the association was to help high school teachers prepare students for college (Davis, 1945). Dr. Angell believed that, to a great extent, this was not happening (Carroll, 1995). The object of the association was to establish closer relations between the colleges and the high schools of the north central states including Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa,

Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska (Davis, 1932, Carroll, 1995). Even though accreditation through the North Central Association was voluntary, many high schools applied for membership into this prestige organization (Decker, 1955, Stuit, 1961, Leach, 1964).

The Association appointed the Commission on Accredited Schools to oversee accreditation procedures. The Commission, in turn, divided into three process-related committees. The Committee on Unit Courses of Study recommended high school courses of study including detailed procedures, content, textbooks, and materials. The Committee on High School Inspection developed criteria that high schools must meet to be considered accredited by the Association (Davis, 1945). Because colleges and universities admitted students from different school districts and different states, the Association recognized the need for common standards and curriculum (Geiger, 1970). The Committee on College Credit for High School Work considered advance placement and college credit for high school work (Geiger, 1970). Those schools viewed as exemplary schools were included on the accredited high school list published in the North Central states bulletin (Geiger, 1970).

During the evaluation process, members of the NCA Board of Inspectors visited the different high schools and collected information on three types of forms: (a) a form to be filled out by the principal with regards to the school's organization, teaching force, student attendance, and types of available facilities; (b) a form to be filled out by the inspector while reporting observations and judgments when visiting and inspecting the schools; and (c) blank forms for recommending graduates to colleges (Davis, 1932).

The North Central Association proposed four standards to use when evaluating high schools:

1. The minimum scholastic attainment of all high school teachers must be the equivalent of graduation from a college belonging to the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools including special training in the subjects they taught (Davis, 1932).
2. The number of daily periods of classroom instruction given by any one teacher should not exceed five, each to extend over a period of forty-five minutes (Davis, 1932).
3. The laboratory and library facilities must be adequate to the needs of instruction in the subjects taught as outlined in the report of the Commission (Davis, 1932).
4. The quality of the instructional program must meet the needs of students.

That while the foregoing are exceedingly important factors affecting the quality of the work, the *esprit de corps*, the efficiency of the instruction, the acquired habits of thought and study, and the general intellectual and ethical tone of the school are of paramount importance, and therefore only schools which rank well in these particulars, as evidenced by rigid, thorough-going, sympathetic inspection, should be considered eligible to the list (Davis, 1945, p. 51).

Only schools that ranked high on the above standards were included among the NCA's accredited schools (Davis, 1945). The Committee on High School Inspection recommended that schools with fewer than five teachers should not be considered for inclusion on the accredited list, but, the Association did not approve this proposal (Davis, 1945).

At the North Central Association annual meeting in 1904 the Board of Inspectors recommended that a total of 156 high schools be approved as accredited schools. Nebraska was represented with three accredited high schools (Davis, 1945, Carroll, 1995). The Board based its recommendations on the criteria or standards previously endorsed by the Association, visitations and inspections of the schools, non-recognition of schools with fewer than five teachers, and schools who had a large number of students per teacher as shown by its records. The NCA allowed the State Department of Public Instruction to appoint inspectors (Vanderford, 1988). Accredited schools were published in the member universities' and colleges' catalogues (Davis, 1945).

The 1918 NCA subcommittees considered additional areas to be included in the accreditation requirements such as the social organization of the school body, the supervision of teachers, the athletic policies, and the educational and vocational guidance (Geiger, 1970). The Commission on Secondary Schools in 1933 proposed a study on the accreditation procedures. The purposes of the study included determination of the characteristics of a good school, how schools should improve, and in which ways evaluation could be effective (Geiger, 1970). The Commission revised and expanded the evaluative criteria to include the total school program rather than isolated formal standards. No longer were inspectors solely evaluating instructional materials. Also in 1933, the Commission published the High School Curriculum Reorganization Report recommending school districts to adopt local curriculum policies based on the needs of individual students and local community interests (Geiger, 1970).

### Accreditation Procedures

The University of Nebraska developed accreditation procedures for public high schools as early as 1884 (Jones, 1884) (see Appendix A). The high schools had to offer special classes to be accredited by the University of Nebraska (Jones, 1884). The purposes of the University granting accreditation were to provide entrance standards and to assure quality study in the high schools (Geiger, 1970). University officials were concerned about the quality of college preparation in high-school coursework (Lane, 1888). Graduates from accredited high school were admitted to the University system without having to take an examination. Accreditation requirements for a high school included thirty available credits of classwork, a well-equipped library and science laboratory, and class periods of at least forty minutes in length. In addition to an administrator, the faculty had to include at least two full-time secondary teachers (Jackson, 1901).

Also in 1884, a committee of secondary principals and University faculty members recommended that schools could be accredited by following one of two courses of study: a Minor Course whereby students completing it would be admitted to the second year of the University Latin School, and the Major Course whereby students completing it would be admitted to the Freshman class (Jones, 1884). By 1886, the University had inspected and accredited eight high schools for the Major Course, while nine high schools qualified for the Minor Course (Lane, 1888). By 1888, there were 25 University accredited high schools in Nebraska (Lane, 1888). The 10 schools accredited for the Major Course were: Alma, Beatrice, Edgar, Fremont, Grand Island, Kearney, Lincoln, Nebraska City, Plattsmouth, and Tekamah (Lane, 1888). The fifteen schools

accredited for the Minor Course were: Ashland, Columbus, Fairmont, Friend, Gibbon, Harvard, Hebron, McCook, North Loup, Ord, Red Cloud, Sutton, Tecumseh, Ulysses, and Wilber (Lane, 1888). Many other schools had also inquired about the requirements for University accreditation (Lane, 1888).

After several meetings between the University Committee and the Teachers' Association, a course of study was agreed upon. Some schools, due to a lack of facilities, had difficulty meeting University standards (Lane, 1888). University officials visited the school upon notification of local school boards, and the visitation determined if the high school joined the list of accredited schools (Goudy, 1892). It became quite an honor to be included on the accredited list of the University of Nebraska. Patrons came to realize that university accreditation standards meant quality education in the high schools (Delzell, 1913, Decker, 1951).

The Twentieth Annual Report of 1888 from State Superintendent George B. Lane expressed the prevailing opinion among state educators when he wrote that the State University was theoretically and practically the head of the common school system of education in Nebraska. This indicated a strong sentiment in Nebraska in favor of higher education as well as growth and advancement in city high schools (Lane, 1888).

In 1897, the legislature required high schools to be inspected by a University official (Fowler, 1903). J. W. Crabtree was the first staff member appointed to the position, and his duty was to visit schools and to make judgments of accreditation with respect to efficiency and curricula (Fowler, 1903). Crabtree then reported his findings to



the Committee on Accredited Schools, which would decide the standing of the school. As of 1902, 104 schools had become accredited (Fowler, 1903, Jensen, 1968).

High schools that offered normal training had to be accredited by the University of Nebraska. The University established these standards for accreditation (Reed, 1945).

The criteria included:

1. Graduation requirements had to be not less than twelve units for three year schools and sixteen units for four year schools.
2. Schools had to employ at least three teachers, including the superintendent, for full time instruction for a junior-senior organization. High schools with only grades ten-eleven organization must employ two full time teachers including the superintendent.
3. The teachers must hold at least a baccalaureate degree.
4. Transfer students from nonaccredited or nonapproved schools to accredited schools were required to pass a written examination in order to attend accredited schools.
5. Laboratory and library facilities must be adequate.
6. The physical plant of the school building must be up to date and clean.
7. The University wanted accredited schools to be efficient with a general intellectual and moral tone (Reed, 1945a).

Other requirements for accreditation listed in the Normal Training Course of Study of 1914 included:

1. The program of study needed to have a balance of subjects including: language, math, science, rhetoric, literature, and history.
2. There needed to be sufficient reference materials in the library.

3. The recitation periods were forty minutes.
4. There had to be at least two full time high school teachers as well as a superintendent.
5. Each teacher could not have more than six classroom periods.
6. All teachers needed to have at least four years of academic and professional preparation beyond a high school education (Delzell, 1914b).

The Department of Public Instruction also believed that certain standards must be followed by Nebraska school systems in order to provide a quality program.

There are certain general conditions which must be met. These conditions relate especially to course of study, and number and certification of teachers. During the last year our experience has forced us to conclude that many schools offering high school education must improve general conditions if continued approval is desired. Schools must provide *sufficient room, good sanitary conditions, and adequate equipment* to meet the approval of the department (Matzen, 1924d, p. 2).

The University of Nebraska accredited schools, while the Department of Public Instruction approved Nebraska high schools (Thomas, 1916). Smaller schools, unable to meet accreditation standards due to size or a lack of facilities, had to establish certain standards to be considered approved (Thomas, 1916, Taylor, 1941). The Department believed strongly about schools maintaining an approval status (Thomas, 1916, Taylor, 1941). Those schools were thought to have a well-rounded system of education, offered classes recommended by the University, and met compliance requirements of the Free High School Attendance Law (Thomas, 1916). Approved schools were allowed to collect tuition from other districts for non-resident students. The purpose for approval standards was to develop system of education affording all students a well-rounded

education (Taylor, 1941). This law provided four years of free public high school education for all students. Those students who resided in a district that did not provide for a high school education were allowed to attend another district. The attending district could collect tuition from the non-resident district (Thomas, 1916, Taylor, 1941).

Schools that wanted to be accredited had to fill out an application from the University of Nebraska (Corbett, 1896). The University Inspector determined if the school satisfactorily met accreditation requirements (Decker, 1946). At the start of each school year districts received blank state forms. High schools with small enrollment applied for approval to the Department of Public Instruction (Reed, 1946). A state supervisor carried an application form when visiting a school. The supervisor's visit and report were part of the school's evaluation (Decker, 1952, 1953). The evaluation report often listed suggestions for school improvement. All applications for approval and accreditation were sent to the Office of the State Superintendent, which checked the completed forms against established school standards (Reed, 1946). If discrepancies existed, the State Superintendent's Office wrote letters to the districts and often sought explanations. Supervisors suggested steps schools needed to take in order to meet acceptable standards (Decker, 1952).

The 1914 High School Manual, published by the Nebraska Department of Public Instruction, presented information about rules and regulations, including courses of study and methods of instruction (Delzell, 1914b). An accredited school must include a course of study for four-year graduates to be able to earn thirty credits of classwork. A "credit

point" meant the work of five recitations a week, of not less than forty minutes each, for at least eighteen weeks (Delzell, 1914b).

A University of Nebraska committee set up criteria for accreditation based on the school's program, its physical facilities, and the number of teachers (Everingham, 1956).

The committee standards were as follows:

1. Not less than thirty units required for graduation.
2. The minimum academic and professional preparation of high school teachers equivalent to four years beyond a high-school course. In determining this equivalence, two years of successful experience in work closely related to the teaching field will be considered equivalent to one year of higher preparation.
3. Not to exceed six daily recitations for each teacher, a double period of laboratory work or study room supervision counting as one recitation providing not more than thirty-five periods a week be required of any teacher.
4. Laboratory and library facilities adequate to the needs of instruction in the subjects taught.
5. The location and construction of the buildings, the lighting, heating and ventilation of the rooms, the nature of the lavatories, corridors, closets, water supply, school furniture, apparatus and methods of cleaning such as to insure hygienic conditions for both pupils and teachers.
6. Efficiency of instruction, acquired habits of thought and study, general intellectual and moral tone of the school evidenced by inspection. (Matzen, 1922, p. 32-33)

In the Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report for years 1921 to 1922, 159 schools were listed as being Group A accredited (Matzen, 1923). This status was reserved for schools accredited by the North Central Association that had met all six accreditation standards. Group B schools were fully accredited but did not meet all six standards. The school districts had to employ at least three high school teachers (Matzen, 1923). Fifty percent of the teachers had to meet standard two. There were 182 Group B schools (Matzen,

1923). Graduates of Group C schools were conditionally admitted to colleges. Twenty-five percent of the teachers had to meet standard two. There were 65 Group C schools (Matzen, 1923).

In 1924, the University Committee on Accredited Schools changed the classification system for accredited schools from "A", "B", and "C" to "Minor Accredited" and "Fully Accredited" (Matzen, 1925) The Twenty-Eighth Biennial Report ending January 2, 1924 listed 408 Fully Accredited and 61 Minor Accredited schools. The graduates of the Minor Accredited schools were again conditionally accepted to colleges. There had to be at least two full time high school teachers at these Minor Accredited schools (Matzen, 1925).

Accredited schools met the approval of the University Committee on Accredited Schools, an arrangement between the Department of Public Instruction and the University of Nebraska (Taylor, 1937). This committee received Department reports on school visitations (Taylor, 1937). In the 1930s there were many country schools that provided an education to students in approved schools, but because of financial difficulties, could not maintain the standards necessary to become accredited (Taylor, 1933). Most of the districts maintained nine and ten grades (Taylor, 1935a). In 1934, there were 259 approved schools, most of which were two-year schools. A total of 430 "fully" accredited public districts and 81 "minor" accredited public schools also existed in Nebraska (Taylor, 1935a).

The Normal Training Bulletin of 1914 differentiated between an accredited school and an approved school (Delzell, 1914a). Accredited schools, through inspection, were

found to have a well-balanced program, satisfactory laboratory equipment and library facilities, and a competent and professional staff (Delzell, 1914a). The list of accredited schools was published annually in the University calendar, the University Journal, and the High School Manual. Any public high school could request to be included on the accredited list by making application with the Inspector of Accredited Schools. The High School Manual presented information about suggested accredited requirements including courses of study and methods of instruction (Delzell, 1914a). All accredited high schools submitted an annual report called the Joint Report to the State Department of Public Instruction and the University of Nebraska, commonly known as the Joint Report (Delzell, 1914a). To be fully accredited graduates of Nebraska high schools had to earn thirty credits during four years of class work. A credit point included a class that met five times a week for at least forty minutes per day for eighteen weeks. Graduates of fully accredited schools were admitted to the University, or most colleges in the United States, without an entrance examination (Lane, 1888). Junior accredited schools were schools that developed a three-year course of study in which graduates had earned twenty-eight points (Delzell, 1913). Graduates were given conditional admission to the University (Lane, 1888).

The University of Nebraska accredited three and four-year high schools whose graduates had earned a minimum of 28 points and who were admitted without an examination (Delzell, 1913). For many years, the University of Nebraska has been the accrediting agency for the high schools of the state while the Department approved schools (Taylor, 1933). Copies of each school district's annual report were sent to both

accrediting agencies (Reed, 1950). Supervisors from the Department of Public Instruction visited the schools and made recommendations for accreditation (Reed, 1950). The University developed criteria for evaluating high school programs and kept a list of accredited schools on the recommendations from the Department (Reed, 1950). For the most part, both accrediting agencies cooperated in a cordial manner. In 1923, however, all involved parties decided that it would be more desirable for the Department of Public Instruction to be given responsibility for accrediting schools (Reed, 1950).

The Nebraska School Laws of 1949 required the Department of Public Instruction to visit and to provide supervisory and curriculum assistance to all schools. The legislature attempted to guarantee students a minimum program of education through financial aid and supervisory assistance (Jensen, 1968). Three important supervisory responsibilities of the Department included:

1. The general approval for schools to receive state aid. This approval was based on the information found in the school's annual report and observation by a staff supervisor (Jensen, 1968).
2. The recommendation of approval schools to the University of Nebraska for accreditation status. This recommendation was based upon the school's annual report and a thorough investigation of the school's operation in light of accreditation standards as determined by the University of Nebraska (Jensen, 1968).
3. The approval of accredited high schools for offering the normal training program. The Department governed the program requirements (Jensen, 1968).

The Department of Public Instruction was the controlling agency for all educational matters of the state (Matzen, 1927, Taylor, 1933, 1937). Local school districts had some latitude in organizing, planning, and implementing educational programs, however, the Department had general control and supervision, and issued courses of studies and curriculum guides (Matzen, 1927). Even though the materials were thought of only as suggestions, many school districts incorporated them into their curriculum. The Department of Public Instruction had demanded strict adherence to its educational decisions. The Department believed that in order to develop a quality school system, districts must be forced to comply with guidelines (Matzen, 1927, Taylor, 1933). The Department relaxed its stringent requirements as it became more confident the districts had met state standards (Jensen, 1968).

### Changing Times

During the Department of Public Instruction's transition period between a regulatory agency and a leadership and service agency, three distinct educational issues dominated Nebraska school history (McBrien, 1908, Delzell, 1913, Taylor, 1931). These three issues related to the improvement of rural schools. First, many school districts developed normal-training departments designed to train students to become effective rural schoolteachers (McBrien, 1907c, Clemmons, 1919, Matzen, 1923, Jensen, 1968). Second, the Department of Public Instruction worked with rural school districts to reach required improvements through minimum standards (Thomas, 1915a, 1916a, Matzen, 1927, Taylor, 1927). Third, the Department required schools to become approved schools in order to provide better opportunities to students (Taylor, 1937). The



requirements of approval and accreditation were difficult for some rural schools to obtain, yet the Department still encouraged all districts to meet these minimum criteria (Thomas, 1916a). Once a district earned its approval status, the Department tried to motivate the district to attempt accreditation status (Matzen, 1927). Three institutions accredited Nebraska public schools during the early part of the century including the North Central Association, the University of Nebraska, and the State Department of Public Instruction (Taylor, 1941, Vanderford, 1988).

The Department of Public Instruction was especially busy helping to improve the Nebraska educational system (Jensen, 1968). The 1907 Normal Training Law raised the standards for teaching in the rural schools (McBrien, 1908). Compulsory education for students under the age of sixteen allowed all young people to receive an education Lane, 1888, Reed, 1950a, Siampos, 1968). Laws dealing with curriculum requirements were significant and included: (a) a library in every school district, (b) four years of free public high school education, and (c) higher teacher certification standards (Jensen, 1968). The Department made a conscious effort to provide better supervision to schools, especially in the rural school districts (Thomas, 1916b). State supervisors worked hard to initiate quality programs to rural schools (Thomas, 1916b). Through courses of study and various bulletins, the daily programs of schools were reorganized (Matzen, 1924, Reed, 1943, Decker, 1953b). Extra curricular activities became part of the regular program (Bell, 1935, Decker, 1953b). Student activities included learning by doing and placing emphasis on learning the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic (Bell, 1935).

School business discussion across the state pointed to a need to modernize the Department of Public Instruction (Jensen, 1968). Superintendent Reed recognized a change was needed in the structure of the department (Jensen, 1968). Wayne Reed, State Superintendent from 1943 to 1950, in trying to modernize the Department, divided the agency into two main functions: the Division of Administrative Assistance to Nebraska Schools and the Division of Supervisory Assistance to Nebraska Schools (Jensen, 1968). Assistant Superintendents assumed responsibilities for each division. Reed also encouraged the idea of “locally controlled, locally administered, community-centered schools (Reed, 1945, Jensen, 1968).”

In August 1950, the Nebraska Legislative Council in its Report No.28 also recommended the establishment of the State Board of Education. Decker said that this change would contribute to sound educational reconstruction (Decker, 1952a). The Nebraska Legislative Council reported that education in Nebraska would be improved by abolishing the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and creating a State Department of Education headed by a State Board of Education consisting of a seven-member board chosen by the Governor. The members of the board were to have the authority to appoint a Director of Education (Decker, 1952a).

State Superintendent Ruff discussed the need of a state board of education in his 1951 Annual Report. Among the advantages of this type of organization included:

8. The State Board of Education and an appointed Commissioner of Education tend to improve the rendering of service and conducting of such broad functions of state departments of education as the following:

- (a) To act as a planning agency and providing leadership for the various aspects of the State’s educational enterprise.

(b) To assist local school administrative units in the solution of their educational problems.

(c) To act as the coordinating agency for all educational activities throughout the state.

(d) To determine the effectiveness of the state program of education.

(e) To direct research activities necessary to the solution of educational problems as they arise.

(f) To provide supervision for all activities and services operating within the state which are primarily educational in character and which must operate in or through the public school system. (Ruff, 1951, p. 17).

Many states were moving to adopt a State Board of Education structure with broad powers (Decker, 1952a). With many powers and duties placed upon the Superintendent by the state constitution, the Department wanted Nebraska to join twenty other states in establishing a State Board of Education. By the end of 1951, there were 41 states that had State Boards of Education (Decker, 1952a). Reed reported the Department should act more like a policy-making board and appoint a Chief State School Officer to replace the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The following list of educational leaders employed by the Nebraska Department of Public Instruction were State Superintendents during the Transition Period of Nebraska's school accreditation history.

#### List of Educational Leaders

Charles W. Taylor	1927-1943
Wayne O. Reed	1943-1950f
Otto G. Ruff	1950-1951g
Freeman B. Decker	1951-1955

- f Resigned.
- g Appointed to fill vacancy until general election.

(Nebraska Legislative Council, 1966)

### Leadership and Service 1953 - 1990

#### Transition to Leadership

The 1949 Nebraska State Legislature specified that the sole responsibility for approval and accreditation should be the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the University of Nebraska was no longer responsible for the accreditation of schools (Reed, 1950b). School Law 79-328 specified that the Superintendent of Public Instruction would appoint a State Accreditation Committee, the representative agency of the educational institutions and agencies of Nebraska.

1. The State Department of Education shall establish a procedure for accrediting the elementary and secondary schools of Nebraska, both public and private. The major purposes of such procedure shall be to maintain adequate school programs, and to encourage and assist schools in their purpose of increasing better instructional opportunities for the boys and girls in Nebraska.
2. The Commissioner of Education is authorized to appoint an accreditation committee, which shall be representative of the educational institutions and agencies of the state and shall include as a member the director of admissions of the University of Nebraska.
3. The accreditation committee shall be responsible for: (a) Formulating appropriate standards and policies with respect to the accreditation and classification of schools, and (b) making recommendations annually to the Commissioner relative to the accreditation and classification of individual schools. No school is to be considered for accreditation status which has not fulfilled all requirements for an approved school (Reed, 1950b, p. 218-219).

In spring 1949, a state-wide Conference on Accreditation was held to consider the implications of a new accreditation law (Jensen, 1968). One suggestion that developed from the state-wide conference was that a summer educational workshop should be established to formulate an initial statement of accreditation procedures and criteria and to draft proposals for a new system of accreditation in Nebraska (Everingham, 1956). The proposals were written in bulletin form and made available at the twenty state regional conferences held in the fall of 1949 and 1950 (Jensen, 1968). The purpose of the conferences was to familiarizing teachers and administrators with the accreditation plan (Jensen, 1968).

Through a summer education workshop at the University of Nebraska, proposals for accreditation procedures were initiated (Jensen, 1968, Everingham, 1956). After some revision, a statement was presented to the State Accreditation Committee. During the fall of 1949, the Department held twenty regional conferences to explain the proposed plan (Everingham, 1956, Jensen, 1968). The new procedures went into effect September 1950 (Jensen, 1968). The Committee's standards represented a practical approach to school improvement at a reasonable and affordable cost to school districts. The Department of Public Instruction viewed its supervisory responsibility for the approval and accreditation of schools as very significant to the education of Nebraska's students (Decker, 1955). Its purpose was to maintain basic standards required by law and to encourage and to assist schools to better develop instructional opportunities (Decker, 1954).

The State Department of Public Instruction filed an annual report with the Nebraska State Accreditation Committee (Decker, 1951a). The Report listed the

inspector's findings from their visits with recommendations for approval and accreditation. Criteria for approval and accreditation were strengthened to encourage school districts to improve the quality of education (Decker, 1951a). The Accreditation Committee dropped some districts from the approved list for not meeting the established standards (Decker, 1951b).

The 1951 Report, for example, provided recommendations to the Accreditation Committee for schools inspectors had visited.

a. Schools to be restored to accreditation:

Parks - In view of the efforts that the board of education of this school has put forth in the past two years we feel that the school should be considered for accreditation. Among the improvements that have been made are: installation of adequate instant fluorescent lights throughout the entire building, green chalk boards, complete new library setup which includes classifying and cataloguing of all material, installation of shop with good equipment purchase of much institutional material in elementary grades and a formal guidance program. The attitude of the board of education is that they are anxious to provide the best educational opportunities for their children as far as their resources will allow.

b. School to be advised

Fort Calhoun - According to the annual report, the library expenditure is much too low to provide an adequate library. It is hoped that the general housekeeping, which has been very poor, has been improved during the past year.

Ponca - School reports have lacked accuracy, completeness and punctuality. The areas of instructional materials, library services, guidance services, and high school program need careful attention.

c. Schools to be dropped

Archer - In terms of accreditation criteria, the building is very inadequate. It is in need of repair and renovation and lacks indoor

toilet facilities. The small enrollment, the limited budget, and the building inadequacies naturally result in a very narrow program.

Bennet - The school building needs redecorating, lighting, and a better overall maintenance program including custodial care. The science laboratory and equipment are inadequate. The library is in need of a great deal of attention and additional materials other than fiction and reference sets. The community attitude would not appear to be conducive to a good school situation

Grainton - The high school has a restricted curriculum. The class size in numerous instances is below the minimum. The extremely small total enrollment, limited facilities and activities, and geographic location suggest inadvisability of continuing a school (Nebraska Department of Public Instruction, 1951b, no page number).

The Committee reviewed Department recommendations and made an annual report to the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Decker, 1951a). A 1956 Everingham study of 240 school districts found that the services of department supervisors were helpful to the local districts. Forty-seven percent of the districts stated that the state's Statement of Advisement and Warning was also helpful for the improvement of education in those districts (Everingham, 1956).

In August 1953 the State Superintendent of Public Instruction met with the Director of Supervision and Curriculum and the six supervisors of elementary and secondary education responsible for visiting all schools that employed three or more teachers to discuss the new accreditation requirements (Everingham, 1956). During the 1953-54 school year, the supervisors from the Department of Education visited a total of 452 schools (Everingham, 1956). Services by the supervisors included giving advice and making recommendations to school administration and school board members in areas such as administration, school staff, curriculum, instruction, instructional materials,

library, and school plant and equipment (Everingham, 1956). The Department of Public Instruction adopted the following plan for school visitation for the 1953-54 school year:

1. State supervisors will visit all Class II and Class IV districts.
2. A state supervisor will visit all Class III schools not visited the previous school year.
3. State supervisors will visit all Class III schools that had previously been issued a statement of advisement or warning by the State Committee on Approval and Accreditation.
4. Supervisors will visit some of the schools in the Class IV and Class V districts.
5. Supervisors will visit any public school requesting visitation.
6. Supervisors will visit some of the non-public schools (Everingham, 1956).

Rules and regulations for the accreditation of public school systems became effective March 10, 1967 (Jensen, 1968). Accreditation did not apply to Class I schools unless they voluntarily wanted to be accredited. In K-12 districts both the elementary school and the secondary school had to be accredited. There were many schools that lacked adequate facilities and were unable to carry a full program of studies to meet full accreditation status (Jensen, 1968).

Although the differences between an approved school and an accredited school varied greatly, there were similarities between the two types of schools (Decker, 1951a). Both schools could accept free-high-school tuition students, and they were exempt from the free-county-high school tuition tax levy (Decker, 1951a, Jensen, 1968). The graduates from these schools were eligible to enter the University of Nebraska or other state colleges without an entrance examination. For a school district to operate legally, it



had to meet certain standards which existed on three levels: approval standards, A accreditation standards, and AA accreditation standards (Decker, 1951a).

### Approval Standards

Approval standards established minimum requirements for legal operation while accreditation standards were more rigorous than approval standards as schools had to meet more demanding minimum standards (Decker, 1955). Approved schools were those schools that had met the criteria found in Section B of the 1955 Approval and Accreditation of Nebraska Public Schools bulletin, but had not adequately attained the higher standards of accreditation found in Section C (Decker, 1955). Approved schools had to have a minimum of one teacher per grade level from kindergarten through the twelfth grade as well as a certified administrator (Decker, 1955). The assessed valuations had to be at least \$5,000,000. The Department of Education recommended that a school's educational program should be based on state guidelines for the program of studies, the course of study, and the recommended daily programs (Decker, 1955). The Department of Education listed criteria for approval as:

- \* Teachers in Class I districts must hold at least a Third Grade Elementary School Certificate. If the district had a six-member school board, the teachers must hold an Initial Junior Elementary School Certificate.
- \* Elementary teachers of Classes II, III, IV, and V districts must also hold at least an Initial Junior Elementary School Certificate,
- \* High school teachers must hold at least the Initial Secondary School Certificate and have taken a minimum of twelve college credits in their field of teaching.
- \* The boards of education must hold regular meetings and keep accurate minutes of the board proceedings.

- \* School with three or more teachers must employ an administrator providing active professional leadership.
- \* Elementary schools must have at least one full-time elementary teacher.
- \* The county superintendent will provide supervisory assistance to rural elementary schools.
- \* The teacher-pupil ratio should not exceed 1-40. In elementary schools the ratio should not exceed 45 pupils when there was only one grade. There should not be less than eight students in the high school.
- \* The minimum school day for grades 1-6 should be five hours and six hours for a school with grades 7-12. A half-day kindergarten session was preferable to a full day program.
- \* The school year should not be less than 175 actual teaching days.
- \* High schools with four grades must require a minimum of 160 semester hours of credit for graduation.
- \* All school buses must be inspected twice a school year by the Nebraska Safety Patrol.
- \* The Nebraska Cumulative Record must be kept for each pupil.
- \* Instructional materials must be sufficiently adequate for a minimum program.
- \* Each elementary classroom must provide a library corner or alcove containing suitable reading materials.
- \* The school shall provide an annual health inspection by a teacher, registered nurse or physician (Decker, 1960).

Every seven years the school district had to conduct a "comprehensive school evaluation," measuring inputs such as number of books, minimum number of course offerings, properly certified staff, classroom square footage, and teacher-student ratios. An outside peer evaluation determined district strengths and weaknesses (Nebraska Department of Education, 1985a).

The State Board of Education approved a 1951 guide entitled Approval and Accreditation of Nebraska Public Schools. The guide reported that the new approval and accreditation program had brought about a significant movement towards school improvement. The guide listed criteria information for schools wanting to become approved or accredited. The purpose of the new plan was to maintain adequate school programs and improve new educational opportunities (Decker, 1951a).

The State Board of Education adopted Rule 14 to establish rules and regulations based on the program of studies, the preparation of teachers, and the instructional materials and facilities. Rule 14, Regulations and Procedures For Approving the Continued Legal Operation of All Schools was published on several occasions including June 1965, July 1971, June 1975, and February 1985.

The statutory authority for Rule 14 existed in Section 79-328 (5) (c) and (d) of the Revised Statutes of Nebraska (R.R.S.), to:

. . . (c) establish rules and regulations which govern standards and procedures for the approval and legal operation of all schools in the state and for the accreditation of all schools requesting state accreditation. Such standards and procedures shall be based upon the program of studies, guidance services the number and preparation of teachers in relation to the curriculum and enrollment, instructional materials and equipment, science facilities and equipment, library facilities and materials, and health and safety factors in buildings and grounds, and (d) establish rules for the approval of high schools for the collection of nonresident high school tuition money in accordance with the rules and regulations provided for in this subdivision, except that the State Board of Education shall approve a school for the collection of nonresident high school tuition money where a hardship would result to the students and a substantial effort is being made to comply with the rules and regulations established. (Nebraska Department of Education, 1985a, p. 1).

Approved schools were entitled to the rights and privileges of legally operating school systems. Section 79-328 R.R.S. authorized approved schools to provide a program of instruction which was in compliance with the compulsory attendance laws as listed in the scope and delimitation section of Rule 14:

Public high schools approved by the State Board of Education are eligible to collect nonresident high school tuition and are exempt from the nonresident high school tuition tax levy. Accreditation of school systems is a voluntary process, and regulations and procedures for the accreditation of schools are found in Chapter 15. (Nebraska Department of Education, 1985a, p. 1)

The Department of Education, through the requirements of Rule 14, further monitored the quality of educational programs of school systems in Nebraska. Controlling the amount of money given to the schools forced districts to follow state guidelines. Public school districts had to be approved in order to collect free high school tuition and to be exempt from the free high school tuition tax levy (Nebraska Department of Education, 1985a).

A school system seeking to become an approved school had to request an application form prior to April 15 and complete the applications forms by May 1 (Nebraska Department of Education, 1985a). Members of the school district had until June 1 to meet with representatives of the Department to determine whether the district could meet the provisions found in Rule 14. If the State Board of Education decided the district could, in fact, meet these provisions, the Board granted probationary approval. By October 15 either a State Department supervisor or the County Superintendent again visited the school district to determine if the provisions in Rule 14 were still being met. This meeting culminated in the decision concerning approval or non approval (Nebraska Department of Education, 1985a).

The maximum number of allowable violations for this Rule in one school year depended upon the type of school system in place (Nebraska Department of Education, 1985a).

**Table 3**  
**Rule 14 Violations Allowed by School District**

School District	Violation
K-12 School District	4
7-12 or 9-12 School District	2
K-6 or K-8 School Districts	2

Source: Nebraska Department of Education, 1985s

If a school district exceeded the allowable number of violations in a given year, the school system was placed on probation. If the school district did not correct these violations, the State Board of Education categorized the school system as a non-approved school system (Nebraska Department of Education, 1985a).

Rule 14 listed suggestions for the Elementary Instructional Program. Lesson plans should be prepared on a weekly basis, and the Instructional Program should be based on written goals and a written statement of purpose developed by the district. Teachers had to be certified or hold a permit issued from the Department of Education in order to be employed as a classroom teacher. The ratio of students to teacher could not exceed 30 to 1. At least half the textbooks must be newer than five years. Rule 14 also addressed the issue of school facilities and equipment. Elementary schools must have safe, healthy sanitary conditions. Conditions must include two double electrical wall outlets in every classroom, an inside lavatory, bathrooms, and drinking fountain (Nebraska Department of Education, 1985a).

### Accreditation Standards

The purpose of the accreditation plan was to maintain adequate school programs and to encourage and to assist schools in their provision of increasingly better instructional opportunities for the youth of Nebraska. The 1951 Approval and Accreditation of Nebraska Schools Bulletin listed the accreditation principles that gave direction to approved and accredited schools (Decker, 1951a).

- 1 Insofar as possible, schools should be evaluated in terms of their stated philosophies and objectives and in terms of the educational outcomes as manifested in what their pupils do. This assumes, of course, that the philosophies and objectives of the schools are in harmony with democratic ideals.
- 2 The entire program of the school should be evaluated rather than the program of the high school or elementary grades alone, and the so-called extracurricular activities as well as the regular classroom activities should be included.
- 3 The quality and comprehensiveness of the total program of the school, rather than the measurement of any particular aspect of the school's program, should be the major determinant in the approval and accreditation of schools.
4. Because both the elementary and secondary schools have as their primary purpose that of providing a basic general education for their pupils special emphasis in the evaluation of a school should be placed upon the adequacy of its provision for general education.
- 5 The accreditation procedure should encourage self-appraisal and self-initiated improvement on the part of the school.
- 6 To be considered for classification as an accredited school or school system, all of the schools in the administrative unit must first have met the legal prescriptions and the established minimum standards for approval relating to those schools.
- 7 The criteria for accrediting schools should have sufficient flexibility to permit adjustment to varying situations and to changing conditions. The accreditation

procedures and criteria themselves should be subjected every few years to careful evaluation.

- 8 The criteria should not only serve as measures of the several aspects of the school's program, but should also serve to encourage progress because of their suggestive value.
- 9 Accreditation standards should be sufficiently high to encourage progress and improvement on the part of all schools regardless of previous attainment. The attainment of many schools now equals or exceeds the criteria for Class A accredited schools. It is for this reason that a higher classification, that of Class AA, is included in the program.
10. The accreditation procedure should take into account the fact that a school does not stand still—it is either improving or deteriorating. A good school is a growing school. It should be evaluated in terms of the progress it is making as well as in terms of its present. (Decker, 1960, p.4-5)

Participation in the accreditation process was purely voluntary, but the State Department considered evaluation for accreditation a cooperative venture between itself and the accredited school (Decker, 1951a, 1955, 1960).

Schools that wanted to be accredited had to meet the criteria for approval and had to be in operation for one year on an approved basis. The enrollment requirements of a K-8 organization included a minimum of 20 students and two teachers. Rural one-room schools should have 10 students with one teacher in order to apply for accreditation. K-12 school districts not previously accredited had to have an enrollment of at least 100 high school students, 200 elementary students, six full-time high school teachers, and nine elementary teachers (Decker, 1955).

A school staff of capable and professional competent teachers, administrators, and supervisors is a primary essential for a good school. Each member of the staff is a well-adjusted person of good personality, health, and character. He has a broad general education, an adequate preparation in professional education, and an attitude favorable to continued professional growth (Decker, 1955, p 16).

Elementary teachers had to hold the Initial Secondary School Certificate. High school teachers had to have completed a well-balanced program of college preparation with a minimum of twelve semester college hours in the field in they teach. The 1951 Approval and Accreditation Bulletin suggested what college classes teachers should take to meet this requirement (Decker, 1951a).

The Department of Education listed criteria for Class A accreditation:

- \* A written statement of its educational philosophy must be written that reflected the purposes of the school.
- \* High schools must require a minimum of 160 semester hours for graduation.
- \* Teacher-pupil ratio must not exceed 1-33 and not less than 1-10.
- \* Minimum semester classwork for students shall be twenty semester hours.
- \* The teaching load should not be excessive.
- \* Schools should make use of self evaluation for program improvement.
- \* The school shall have a well-planned salary schedule for teachers.
- \* The school budget must be prepared according to sound financial practice.
- \* The school's public relations program should develop community interest. (Decker, 1955).

Rule 11, Rules and Regulations for the Accreditation of Public and Non-Public Schools dealt with districts being classified as accredited school systems (Nebraska Department of Education, 1979). School districts must be approved by the Department of Education under the provisions of Rule 14, Regulations and Procedures for Approving the Continued Legal Operation of All Schools, in order to be considered as accredited school systems (Nebraska Department of Education, 1979).



Rule 11, designed as an extension of Rule 14, and approved by the State Legislature on August 1979, listed the state statutes that vested the power and duty with the State Board of Education.

Section 79-328 R.R.S. 1943 reads:

The State Board of Education shall have the power and it shall be its duty ... to establish rules and regulations based upon the program of studies, guidance services, and number and preparation of teachers in relation to the curriculum and enrollment, instructional materials and equipment, science facilities and equipment, library facilities and materials, health and safety factors in buildings and grounds and procedures for classifying, approving and accrediting schools.

Section 79-1247.02 R.R.S. 1943 reads:

The State Department of Education shall establish a procedure for accrediting the elementary and secondary schools of Nebraska, both public and private. The major purposes of such procedure shall be to maintain adequate school programs, and to encourage and assist schools in their purpose of increasing better instructional opportunities for the boys and girls of Nebraska ... No school is to be considered for accreditation status which has not first fulfilled all requirements for an approved school.

Section 79-332 (5) R.R.S. 1943 reads:

The Commissioner of Education as the executive officer of the State Board of Education shall ... be responsible for promoting the efficiency, welfare, and improvement in the school system in the state and to recommend to the board such policies, standards, rules and regulations as may be necessary to attain these purposes. (Nebraska Department of Education, 1979, p. 2)

School districts wishing to obtain accreditation status had to request an application prior to April fifteenth and return it completed by October first (Nebraska Department of Education, 1979). Several things had to occur prior to a school district becoming an accredited district:

1. Members of the Department of Education made a preliminary on-site survey of the applying school system prior to November first. This survey determined if further consideration should be given to the school district.

2. Department staff and school district officials met to discuss the results of the visit, and the school district received a written report.

3. If the two parties decided that the school district could meet accreditation rules and regulations, the district developed written documentation of compliance with each regulation of Rule 11.

4. Prior to May first, staff members of the Department of Education and a committee composed of school teachers and administrators mutually agreed upon by both parties visited the school district.

5. The External Visitation Team made a recommendation to the State Accreditation Committee. The Committee, in turn, recommended to the State Board of Education whether or not the school system should be accredited (Nebraska Department of Education, 1979).

A school district was in violation whenever it was not able to meet a regulation of Rule 11. There were a maximum number of violations that a school district could fail:

Table 4  
Rule 11 Violations Allowed by Size of School Districts

School District Size	Violations
K-6 or 1-6	2
K-8 or 1-8	3
K-12 or 1-12	4
7-12	3
9-12	2

Source: Nebraska Department of Education, 1979

If the school district corrected violations prior to February 1, the violations would be considered removed. If the accredited school districts exceeded the allowable number of violations of Rule 11, the State Board of Education placed the district on probation for the ensuing school year (Nebraska Department of Education, 1979). If an accredited school district placed on probation again exceeded the allowable number of violations of Rule 11 or Rule 14, it would be reclassified as an approved school. Whenever the Department of Education determined whether or not a district should be reclassified, staff members took into consideration the purpose and the philosophy of the district's educational program. They also took into consideration other factors such as scarcity of student population. Each classroom teacher had to hold at least a valid Nebraska Pre-Standard Teaching Certificate (Nebraska Department of Education, 1979). The ratio to students to teacher should not exceed 25 to 1 (Nebraska Department of Education, 1979). Teachers must participate in twelve hours of in-service training each year. Each school district must prepare and distribute a staff handbook. Requirements for the school library included a collection of 1600 books, audio-visual equipment, and professional magazines

(Nebraska Department of Education, 1979). No teacher could be absent more than 14 days each school year. Each accredited school had to make available daily services by a nurse. An important Rule 11 requirement that districts had to follow involved development of a comprehensive self-evaluation instrument to be approved by the Department of Education (Nebraska Department of Education, 1979).

A 1971 State Department rules and regulations bulletin listed the rules and regulations for schools to follow in order to be accredited (Nebraska Department of Education, 1971a). The cover page indicated that all school that were classified as approved and not on probation were to be classified as accredited school systems. The bulletin explained the importance of and the need for accreditation of school districts across the state of Nebraska. Accreditation was viewed by the Department of Education as an important factor in the improvement of education in Nebraska. According to the bulletin, recent legislation and Supreme Court decisions had agreed with the importance of accreditation. The bulletin emphasized that the Rules and Regulations did not apply to the Class I schools unless they wanted to be accredited (Nebraska Department of Education, 1971a).

#### AA Accreditation Standards

In 1951, the Department of Education classified accredited schools as either AA (special-recognized accredited schools) or A (regular accredited schools) (Decker, 1951a). Larger school districts that wanted to be recognized as exemplary schools applied for the AA accreditation. In order to obtain the AA rating, the Board of

Education, through an external team, determined that the school had provided outstanding educational opportunities (Decker, 1951a).

Schools seeking AA status had to request special application forms from the Department of Education. The criteria for AA classification was an upward extension of some of the criteria for Class A schools.

- \* Schools must be a K-14 or K-12 system.
- \* Schools must be large enough to be efficient and provide a comprehensive educational program.
- \* Schools must complete a comprehensive self-evaluation of its program.
- \* Forty per cent of the elementary school teachers must hold the Initial Senior Elementary School Certificate.
- \* Twenty percent of the high school teachers must hold a Master's degree.
- \* The administrators must hold administrative certificates.
- \* Teacher-pupil ratio must not be any bigger than 1-30.
- \* The instructional materials must be broader in scope and higher in quality than that of Class A schools.
- \* The school has a comprehensive program of special education.
- \* Students should have the opportunity to visit with a guidance counselor.
- \* The school has a policy with regard to home visitation.
- \* The library should have a superior collection of well-selected books.
- \* Elementary schools should spend one dollar per student. Secondary schools should spend \$1.25 per student (Decker, 1955b).

The criteria for AA classification were subjective statements, and there were no objective criteria to measure. The Department of Education reported that these criteria standards

could be obtained in different ways (Nebraska Department of Education, 1971, 1982, 1982). The external visitation team submitted a report to the State Accreditation Committee, which recommended action on the application based on the team's report. The State Board of Education, in turn, granted the AA classification on the Committee's recommendation. The school system remained classified as AA Accredited for a period of seven years and could continue if the school made further applications to the State Board of Education (Nebraska Department of Education, 1971, 1982, 1983).

#### Department of Education

The Nebraska Legislative Council Committee Report 28, dated August 1950, recommended replacing the Department of Public Instruction with a State Board of Education (Decker, 1952). The trend in many other states was to develop a more progressive political entity (Beach, 1950). The Council approved the committee report between November 15-17, 1950. On May 10, 1951 Legislative Bill 212 was passed by the Legislature on final reading and called for the establishment of a Department of Education and a Commissioner of Education (Decker, 1952). The Board would serve to form policy and to act as the coordinating agency for all educational activities throughout the state. The State Board was comprised of six non-partisan members until 1968 when two additional members were also elected (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1970). In November 1952 the voters passed the constitutional amendment to establish the Department of Education as proposed by the legislature (Decker, 1952). Effective January 1955, the Department was directed to have general supervision and administration of the school system of the state and of such other activities as the

legislature may direct which were formerly held by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1966).

The amendment to Article VII of the Nebraska Constitution reads as follows:

Sec. 14. There is hereby established a State Department of Education which shall be comprised of a State Board of Education and a Commissioner of Education. The State Department of Education shall have general supervision and administration of the school system of the state and of such other activities as the Legislature may direct.

Sec. 15. The State Board of Education shall be composed of six members, who shall be elected from six districts as provided by the Legislature. Their term of office shall be for six years each, except as hereinafter provided. Their duties and powers shall be prescribed by the Legislature, and they shall receive no compensation, but shall be reimbursed their actual expense incurred in the performance of their duties. The members of the State Board of Education shall not be actively engaged in the educational profession and they shall be elected on a nonpartisan ballot. In the general election of 1954, six members shall be elected to the board, one from each of the six districts; two members shall be elected for two years, two for four years, and two for six years. In each general election thereafter two members shall be elected for six-year terms from districts as prescribed by the Legislature.

Sec. 16. The State Board of Education shall appoint and fix the compensation of the Commissioner of Education, who shall be the executive officer of the State Board of Education and the administrative head of the State Department of Education, and who shall have such powers and duties as the Legislature may direct. The board shall appoint all employees of the State Department of Education, on the recommendation of the Commissioner of Education.

Sec. 17. All provisions in the Constitution of Nebraska and laws of the state relating to the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall, insofar as such provisions are applicable, apply to and mean the State Department of Education, the State Board of Education, or the Commissioner of Education as the case may be. (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1956, p. 74)

Two important developments occurred during the 1952 school year. First, a constitutional amendment established the Department of Education comprised of a State Board of Education and a Commission of Education (Decker, 1952). Second, the titles of the members of the Division of Supervision and Curriculum changed from Supervisors of Secondary Education to Supervisors of Elementary and Secondary Education (Decker, 1952).

The State Board of Education became the policy forming, planning, and evaluative body for the state school program. The law transferred all of the powers and duties of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to the State Board of Education, the Department of Education, or the Commissioner of Education (Decker, 1952, Jensen, 1968). The Commissioner became the executive officer of the Board of Education, as well as the administrative head of the professional, technical, and clerical staff of the department. The Commissioner now reported to the State Board of Education and assigned the responsibility for carrying out the requirements of Board policies, standards, rules, and regulations. Responsibilities of the Commissioner also included providing educational leadership and service to the Board (Decker, 1952, Jensen, 1968).

When a supervisor visited a local school, he carried with him the school's application for approval and accreditation previously sent to the Department of Education. The supervisor discussed the visit and the report with the local superintendent, the local board of education, and the teachers (Decker, 1952).

The Commissioner of Education, appointed by the Board of Education, headed the Department of Education and was responsible for the promotion and the improvement



of education in Nebraska public schools. Other responsibilities included: the handling of the general administrative function of the Department of Education; ensuring compliance with school laws; informing the public and the schools through educational information and department documents; and evaluating progress toward school district goals and school improvement plans (Decker, 1952, Jensen, 1968).

The State Board of Education became an elected body that set policy to ensure that the Department of Education functioned effectively (Decker, 1952). The six non-partisan members provided leadership so the Department of Education could carry out certain activities. One important activity, for example, was the adoption of rules and regulations about standards for the legal operation of schools (Jensen, 1968). All accredited school districts periodically developed evaluations for school improvement. Through policies and guidelines the Department of Education monitored approval and accreditation standards (Jensen, 1968).

The Department of Education's powers and duties were listed in School Law 79-321. It read, in part, as follows:

3. The State Board of Education, acting as a unit, shall be the policy-forming, planning, and evaluative body for the state school program. Except in the appointment of a Commissioner of Education, the board shall deliberate and take action with the professional advice and counsel of the Commissioner of Education.
4. The Commissioner of Education shall be the executive officer of the State Board of Education and the administrative head of the professional, technical, and clerical staff of the State Department of Education. The commissioner shall act under the authority of the State Board of Education. The commissioner shall have the responsibility for carrying out the requirements of law and of board policies,

standards, rules, and regulations, and for providing the educational leadership and services deemed necessary by the board for the proper conduct of the state school program. (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1976, p. 189-190)

The State Board of Education's power and duties are listed in School Law 79-328.

- (4) Organize the State Department of Education into such divisions, branches, or sections as may be necessary or desirable to perform all its proper functions and to render maximum service to the board and to the state school system. (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1976, p. 193)

The State Board was also responsible for providing professional leadership for, guidance for, and supervision of the state educational system. Among those responsibilities lay the approval and accreditation process which occurred through the evaluation of the school district's program of studies, the preparation of teachers, and the plant facilities (Decker, 1952).

School Law 79-328 stated that the State Board of Education shall have certain powers and duties to provide guidance, leadership and supervision of the state school system. Through a commissioner and his staff, the board shall:

1. Act as a planning agency and provide leadership to school systems.
2. Assist local school districts with educational problems.
3. Establish standards and procedures for classifying, approving, and accrediting schools, including establishment of minimum standards for approving the opening of new schools, the continued legal operation of all schools, and for the approval of high schools for the collection of free high school tuition money (Everingham, 1956).
4. Provide supervision for all activities and services relating to education.
5. Direct research activities necessary to solve educational problems (Jensen, 1968).

School Law 79-1247.02 required the Department of Education to establish a procedure for accrediting the public and private schools in Nebraska (Nebraska

Department of Education, 1985). The purpose of these school laws was to maintain adequate school programs and to increase instructional opportunities for students (Jensen, 1968). The Commissioner was authorized to appoint an accreditation committee, representing educational institutions and agencies of the state including the Director of Admissions of the University of Nebraska (Decker, 1952). The fourteen-member committee was responsible for formulating appropriate standards and policies for accreditation and classification of schools. The committee also made recommendations to the Commissioner relative to the accreditation and classification of individual schools (Decker, 1952).

#### School Accreditation Designs

Traditionally, the accreditation process that school districts followed had been a self study with an external team visiting every seven years (Nebraska Department of Education, 1985). The comprehensive focus of the study looked at all aspects of the school with staff, administration, and school patrons serving on various evaluative committees. This school evaluation process was a part of accreditation. Educators realized that they could not rely solely on intuition when determining quality school programs. The Nebraska Department of Education established standards. Accredited school districts were more likely to provide a better education to students than districts that were not accredited. As an option school districts could also meet North Central Association standards. Both the Nebraska Department of Education and the North Central Association required school districts to evaluate school programs every seven years

### Traditional Self Study Design

Option one was considered the traditional self-study (Nebraska Department of Education, 1985). This school evaluation design was developed once every seven years using approved Department of Education guidelines. Certain requirements, however, had to be followed for accreditation. Each accredited school had to conduct a self-study, and school districts could choose to conduct a comprehensive self-study based on acceptable guides including the Nebraska Model for School Evaluation (Nebraska Department of Education, 1992) and the NCA Guide for School Evaluation (North Central Commission on Schools, 1988). The process of school improvement required local participation of both staff and community members. An External Team, chaired by an External Leader, visited the district to evaluate the action plan developed by the school district. The final report had to be approved by and filed with the Nebraska Department of Education.

There were three options when school districts chose to conduct the traditional self-study: the Nebraska Model, the North Central Association Guide, and the National Study of School Evaluation Evaluative Guide. Each school improvement design followed distinct guidelines.

Nebraska Model. This discrepancy model was the school evaluation design used by many Nebraska schools since 1976. Once a school district determined to use the Nebraska Model for School evaluation, a Steering Committee was formed to provide leadership for the process. Subcommittees collected and studied data from four broad areas: governance or staffing, instructional programs, learning climate, and support services. Through discussions and research, the subcommittees learned the “Ideal”

school improvement indicators. Then the committees collected the data to determine the “Real” situations. Strengths, concerns, and recommendations were determined for use in the school improvement process (Nebraska Department of Education, 1992).

North Central Association Guide. The North Central Association was a voluntary association of educational institutions in nineteen states, and the purpose of the group was to improve education through cooperative efforts. In order to become an accredited member, a school district had to meet prescribed standards, and this accreditation status was valid for one year. If the North Central Association verified that the school was in compliance with its criteria, the NCA granted schools accreditation status and filed an annual report with the Department of Education.

The NCA self-study method of accreditation included activities that would be followed when addressing current needs in the school. In choosing this option school districts had to select a steering committee to provide leadership and to coordinate planning and implementing the self study (North Central Commission on Schools, 1988). Stages of implementation included: identification of goals and objectives, determination of assessment techniques, development of evaluative instruments, specifications for data collection, and analysis of the results. The plan had to include a timetable that followed the above procedures.

The visiting team consisted of independent observers brought in to verify the results of the internal evaluation. The team reviewed the self-study plan for appropriateness and made recommendations to the district. All people involved in the self study were assigned areas of responsibilities. The school staff had to approve the

plan and provide technical assistance while the visiting team had to validate the self-study plan. The school had to implement the school improvement strategies (NCA, 1988). The district filed a final report with the NCA office in Lincoln. The state NCA office provided assistance to school districts seeking accreditation.

The NCA Guide listed recommended procedures when conducting a self-study. The Guide included data collection instruments and educational program areas to be evaluated by subcommittees. The subcommittees gathered information from the data and wrote a report. The NCA Guide listed eight areas of study for the subcommittees:

1. The social setting of the school.
2. The school's purposes and objectives.
3. The total curriculum.
4. The elementary program.
5. The junior high/middle school program.
6. The high school program.
7. The student activities.
8. The in-school support including:
  - a. Staff and administration
  - b. Guidance and other student services
  - c. Instructional media services
  - d. Auxiliary services: health, food, clerical, and transportation
  - e. School physical facilities

The Visiting Team reviewed and evaluated the plan during a two-day visit and made recommendations for any necessary changes. Finally, the school district implemented the improvement plan.

National Study of School Evaluation Evaluative Guide. School districts that chose the school evaluation design based on the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) followed the format in its guide. The manual listed checklists and criteria for the school district to follow when it studied curriculum, staffing, support services, extracurricular activities, and other areas of concern. Based on the NSSE manual criteria, the school district developed areas of strengths, concerns, and recommendations to be included in a school improvement plan. The school district forwarded its plan to the Department of Education (National Study of School Evaluation, 1995).

#### Continuous School Improvement Design

Option two of Rule 10 (Nebraska Department of Education, 1996) was the continuous school improvement model. Accreditation requirements also included meeting the state standards contained in Rule 10. The plan required input from staff, students, and community members who wrote added mission statements to the plan. The major focus of the plan involved collecting and analyzing data in order to establish improvement goals.

The high-performance learning models as alternatives to the traditional self study were based on a continuous improvement process focusing on improvement of student learning. Most school districts had followed the Department of Education guidelines when meeting school improvement requirements. Through a sequence of steps, local

school districts collected, desegregated, analyzed, and incorporated data into strategic planning goals focused on improving student learning.

There were three options that school districts could choose in the continuous study: Nebraska Research Based School Improvement Process, North Central Outcomes Accreditation Guide, or National Study for School Evaluation Focusing on Desired Learner Outcomes Guide.

Nebraska Research Based School Improvement Process. The guide to the Nebraska Framework for School Improvement, formally called the Nebraska Research Based School Improvement Process, was developed by a joint effort of the Nebraska Department of Education and the nineteen Educational Service Units (Nebraska Department of Education, 1995). This school improvement process focused on knowledge of the “best practices” and the “effective schools” research in order to help school districts become more effective at improving their students’ learning. This school improvement effort was a six-phase continuous process extending for approximately five years. The phases of this model included:

Phase I - The school district preplanned and started the process by getting information about the model from the Department and by selecting a Steering Committee to assume a leadership role in the evaluation.

Phase II - The school district developed a mission statement.

Phase III - Appointed subcommittees gathered desegregated and compared data about effective research practices with the research-based best practices.



Phase IV - The Steering Committee and the subcommittees reviewed the gathered data and selected goals for the improvement of student learning.

Phase V - The Steering Committee and the Action Plan Writing Committee prepared an action plan and selected strategies for each improvement area.

Phase VI - The school district implemented the strategies identified in the action plan, and invited the External Team to the school district to give advice and to make recommendations.

North Central Association Outcomes Accreditation Guide. School districts that used the NCA outcome endorsement process also directed school improvement efforts towards student learning. Districts followed the 1994 handbook entitled Outcomes Accreditation. A Focus on Student Success (North Central Commission on Schools, 1991). The process involved in the three to five year study included a self study, external team visits, and, finally, implementation of the school improvement plan. The external team served as advisors to the school district and as auditors for the NCA. The district also chose and selected target areas for improvement. The resulting target goals reflected the goals of the district and focused on student learning. These goals had to be written as measurable, challenging, and realistic student outcomes.

Before implementing the school improvement plan the various committees collected baseline data pertaining to student performance. The outcomes evaluation plan, therefore, required schools to commit to continuous improvement focusing on specific predetermined goals.

National Study for School Evaluation Focusing on Desired Learner Outcomes Guide

The National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE), organized in 1933, promoted improvement in educational programs. School districts that chose to follow the NSSE option used the guide: K-12 School Improvement Focusing on Student Performance (NSSE, 1995). Using the criteria in the guide, districts focused on their total school program and also looked at the “best practices” research to improve student learning.

The steering committee was responsible for planning and guiding the self-evaluation of the district. The chairperson provided leadership to the committee. The several functions of the steering committee included informing and involving staff in the process and coordinating the entire process. Subcommittees gathered information, compiled reports, and coordinated the efforts of the school improvement process. The NSSE Guide listed eight steps in this process:

1. The steering committee presented an overview.
2. The district ordered self-evaluation materials from NSSE.
3. The district established a reasonable timeline, usually one year, to develop the plan.
4. The steering committee continued to meet during the process.
5. Selected subcommittees reviewed the mission statement, read research about educational practices, reviewed target areas, reached consensus on the recommended target areas, and wrote goal statements and strategies.
6. The completed school improvement plan was made available to staff, administration, and community members.

After the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957, the American people demanded higher academic standards in public education (Gardner, 1983). In the 1970s our educational system stressed a back-to-basics curriculum. During the 1980s the attention of the American people was focused on the American educational system. Concerns of declining test scores and deficiencies in skills needed to work in business and industry were reported. A number of notable reports began the impetus for national discussion of educational reform. The National Commission on Excellence in Education published A Nation At Risk (Gardner, 1983). Also in 1983, Governor Kerrey created the Governor's Task Force on Excellence in Education to study the current status of education in Nebraska (Warren, 1983). The Task Force recommended changes in curriculum offerings, graduation credits, and instructional time. What followed was a new educational policy through the passage of LB 994 and subsequent Nebraska Revised Statutes. Most of the responsibility and authority for implementation of LB 994 was entrusted to the Department of Education.

The standards for the rules were revised in response to the educational reform movements in the 1980s. The new rule attempted to incorporate Legislative Bill 994 standards into accreditation standards. There was an attempt to incorporate suggestions from the national reports, such as A Nation at Risk, LB 994, and department documents into the new requirements. Much discussion and research took place at the Department of Education prior to writing the new rule.

After July 1989 all school districts had to meet quality and performance-based approval or accreditation standards prescribed by the State Board of Education. The bill

amended sections of several school laws, including 79-328, 79-1247.02, and 70-1247.05, to provide additional powers and duties for the Department of Education and provisions related to the approval and accreditation of schools. The State Board of Education became the agency that organized the Department of Education into divisions necessary to perform its proper functions. The Board developed standards and procedures for the legal operation of all schools and those schools requesting accreditation. After July 1, 1985, all public schools were required to meet quality and performance-based approval or accreditation standards. The Commissioner appointed an accreditation committee to make recommendations concerning approval and accreditation of school districts.

Various committees developed plans of action to accomplish the implementation of the law. The Approval, Accreditation, and School Improvement staff established rules and regulations for classifying, approving, and accrediting schools. The standards for regulations and procedures for approval (Nebraska Department of Education, 1971, 1977) and accreditation (Nebraska Department of Education, 1975, 1985) were rooted in the educational reform movements that preceded these regulations.

School districts had to be approved according to Rule 14 to be eligible for classification under Rule 15 as an accredited school system. One change in the 1987-1988 rules pertained to graduation requirements. Students had to complete at least 200 credit hours to graduate, of which at least 80 per cent should be from the core curriculum. The previous graduation requirement was 160 credit hours. Another change was in the amount of instructional units that were offered per year. The units increased from 360

units to 390 instructional units. Specific subject areas, such as foreign language and computers, were added as new subjects.

### Summary

The Nebraska Department of Education has changed during the approximately one hundred-forty years of existence. The Department has grown in service, size, and responsibilities from the very beginning in which one employee, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, supervised the entire organization to over 600 employees working in 1990 (Nebraska Department of Education, 1998). As a result of increased public interest in public education, the Department of Education has expanded and improved educational services to the many Nebraska school districts (Jensen, 1968).

The major functions of the department have also changed with time. The regulatory function of the State Department of Public Instruction was designed to establish minimum standards, rules, and regulations and to examine school programs to determine compliance of those standards. The leadership function refers to the use of the most effective means for improving the Nebraska educational system. The Department of Education performed this leadership function by providing consultative and advisory services to the Nebraska school districts and the general public. The Nebraska Department of Education has provided instructional services to local schools by emphasizing educational research and curriculum development.

Through the development of such functions and services, the Nebraska Department of Education developed strong educational leadership. The establishment of accreditation standards has strengthened local programs of education. Yet, Nebraska

school districts still maintained local rights and responsibilities. From the earliest times of Nebraska school history, local freedom and initiatives have been sustained. The preservation of American education has depended upon keeping the control of the schools close to the people (Jensen, 1968).

The Department of Education established appropriate and reasonable accreditation standards to help schools in the improvement of educational programs (Decker, 1951, 1955, 1960, Jensen, 1968, Nebraska Department of Education, 1971). These standards were designed to increase the improvement of instruction by providing better educational opportunities to students.

#### List of Educational Leaders

The following education leaders in the Nebraska Department of Education were Commissioners of Education during the Leadership and Service Period of Nebraska's school accreditation history.

Nebraska Commissioners of Education***	
Freeman B. Decker	1955-1961
Floyd Miller	1962-1968
Cecil Stanley	1969-1975
Anne Campbell	1975-1982
Joe E. Lutjeharms	1983-1994
Douglas D. Christensen	1994-Present

\*\*\*Office created by constitutional amendment in 1952 and by statute in 1953.