

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

This study has traced the development of Nebraska school accreditation from the mid-nineteenth century to the late twentieth century. The author sought to report the extent to which the state educational agency controlled the process of school accreditation. From 1855 to 1955, the Department of Public Instruction implemented school laws to create continuity of educational standards in communities across Nebraska. After 1955 the Department of Public Instruction became known as the Department of Education. Legislation stressed the importance of accreditation standards, and through mandatory programs such as teacher training, curriculum standards, compulsory schooling, and rural school standards, Nebraska school children were provided better instructional opportunities.

As state government increased its support for education, the Nebraska Department of Public Instruction accepted increased responsibilities such as developing school standards, initiating teacher certification, and updating school laws. During the early years of service to Nebraska school districts, the Superintendent of Public Instruction and his few employees were so busy responding to the paperwork and developing the school regulations that territorial school personnel could not provide adequate leadership activities to local school districts. As the public school system became more developed, many state educators perceived that Nebraska schools needed a Department of Education that could lead and coordinate state educational activities. As quoted in Litherland's 1947 dissertation, a 1922 National Education Association Committee on State

Administration of Schools mirrored the attitude about state school administration of the times.

Judging by the answers received from many of our leading educators in various types of educational activity from all over the country, there is a consensus of opinion that the state should have a head to its educational system and that this head should be the state department of education. This department should direct public school effort throughout the state; at least it should have a large part in directing it. A state requires educational leadership as much as a debating society needs a chairman or an army a commanding officer (Litherland, 1947, p. 9).

The purpose for conducting this historical study was to develop a chronological history of public school accreditation. This study focused on how public school accreditation evolved and the events that contributed to emerging themes and patterns.

Conclusion 1

Early Department of Public Instruction leadership brought unity to school districts and created major school accreditation change.

The first public schools in Nebraska developed as people began to settle on the territory. The first public schools were subscription schools organized when enough settlers could support their children's education. Each school district developed rules and regulations which met the homesteader's interests and needs. What soon developed were thousands of small school districts with no uniformity or common purpose. People were concerned with planting crops, and education took a backseat to survival. Poorly developed communications made it difficult to conform with territorial school laws. The Territorial Legislature quickly realized the need to create order from chaos. On March 1855, the legislature created the office of Territorial Commissioner of Common Schools. This law provided for a supervisory system of Nebraska public schools by the state superintendent who was responsible for reporting the conditions of the state school

system to the legislature. The office of the State Superintendent was combined with the duties of the Territorial Librarian and later the Territorial Auditor. Very little was accomplished in the way of developing an organization of territorial school affairs. Not until the Legislature passed comprehensive school laws did anything get accomplished. From 1869 until 1955 the governing body responsible for school management was called the Department of Public Instruction, and the administrative head of the Department was called the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The Nebraska public school system became part of Nebraska's Constitution during the State Constitutional Convention of 1875.

Although the Territorial Commissioner's office was mainly a record-keeping agency, state superintendents spent a great deal of time trying to persuade the legislature to pass uniform school codes for the entire territory. Early efforts, however, were superficial at best. State superintendents had a monumental organizational task because local school districts were not interested in a unified territorial school system. Not until the February 15, 1869 passage of An Act to Establish a System of Public Education did the legislature pass serious educational measures. This law established a new office entitled the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. This official state agency became responsible for the administration of Nebraska public schools. Requirements for the superintendent were very specific and included organizing teachers' institutes, prescribing school forms, publishing school laws, visiting schools, advising local school officials, and preparing teacher examinations. County superintendents were elected biennially in organized counties. The county superintendents' duties included reporting

to the State Superintendent on the general affairs of their counties as well as dividing the counties into school districts, altering and changing the boundaries of the existing districts if necessary, visiting schools, and issuing teaching certificates to qualified candidates. The State Superintendent was required to report annually the general affairs of the educational system to the Legislature. The educational effort among state school officials during the early years of Nebraska statehood was taken up with matters of improving preparation of teachers, enforcing compulsory attendance laws, improving school buildings, providing uniform textbooks, and developing quality curriculum programs.

Conclusion 2

The Department of Public Instruction established a system of public school accreditation to ensure quality educational standards for Nebraska school districts.

There has been many structural changes to the state educational system in Nebraska. Early in the history of the Department of Public Instruction the Superintendent was the only employee. The head of the school system was responsible for organizing the public school system in Nebraska. This information required a great deal of work for one person. The duties of the Superintendent included printing the school laws, visiting the public schools, distributing school funds, and collecting school reports from county superintendents. A great deal of energy was devoted to developing a quality school program. Early State Superintendents tried to establish standards including a statewide uniformity of textbooks, increase the pay of teachers to attract quality employees, and organize Teachers' Institutes to present topics of interest in education.

As the number of children and school districts increased, the Superintendent realized a need for additional help in the Department. As school issues became more complicated, the State Legislature authorized additional state employees. The growth of the Department of Education seemed to have been a reflection of new duties imposed upon the office. From the beginnings of the office until 1891, the State Superintendent and one part-time assistant accomplished all the work of the department. For example, all correspondence, handwritten until 1885, required a great deal of work on the part of the superintendent.

During the late nineteenth century the State Superintendent was responsible for visiting schools, addressing state school functions, planning and attending institutes, publishing courses of study, and answering correspondence. As early as 1888, Superintendent Lane reported that the Department was overburdened with work.

The general field work by way of visitation and inspection of schools has been neglected. This is an important work in the cause of education. During the months of November and December, 1887, I visited fifteen graded city schools and consulted with the teachers and boards of education as to the best interests of their schools. (Lane, 1888, p. 39)

Superintendent Goudy found the general supervision of Nebraska's public schools was becoming overwhelmingly difficult, so he hired another Deputy Superintendent, Alice D. Goudy, in 1891. In 1893, an additional stenographer was added to the workforce. In 1900, the Department employed four people including the Superintendent, the Deputy Superintendent, an office assistant, and a stenographer. With over 6700 school districts existing across Nebraska serving 288,227 students, the staff was still overwhelmed by the increase of work. There had been a 210 per cent increase in the number of students from

1880 to 1900. These increases created quite a bit of work among the staff. By 1907, the office staff numbered twelve employees. Also in 1907, the Division of Secondary Education and Teacher Training was organized. Deputy State Superintendent E. C. Bishop was designated as “inspector of high schools not accredited with the University of Nebraska.” The Division of Normal Training was also created in 1907 and Mr. I. A. Downey became the inspector of normal training in the high schools. With additional work placed on the department of inspecting and approving high schools, managing junior normal schools, and inspecting and granting teacher’s certificates by the State Board of Examiners, fifteen employees were working for the department by 1908. Delzell’s Twenty-Second Biennial Report of 1913 listed eighteen department employees including a Deputy State Superintendent, a Normal Training Inspector, and Examiner, an Assistant State Superintendent, several inspectors and examiners, and seven office personnel. During the 1920s State Superintendent Matzen organized the state department into specialized sections including the Executive Division, Rural Education and Secondary Education. By 1931, Charles Taylor also organized the department into divisions including the Executive Division, the Division of Certification, the Division of Rural Education, the Division of Secondary Education and Teacher Training, and the Division of Adult-Immigrant Education. By 1940, the Department employed 24 staff helping 7,192 school districts. The staff was sending out ten publications. Ten years later, in 1950, the Department was busy writing and sending out new publications and manuals. The number of employees rose to 315 people serving 3,777 school districts. In 1961, Superintendent Decker had rearranged the State Department into four divisions

called the Division of Instructional Services, the Division of Administrative Services, the Division of Vocational Education Services, and the Division of Rehabilitation Services. By 1990, 624 employees were working at the Department helping 838 school districts. Interesting was the fact that the number of employees increased with the changes in the periods of the State Department of Education. During the time the Department of Public Instruction was busy getting organized and defining the role as a organizational agency no more than 16 people worked for the Department. The number of employees gradually increased during the regulatory period. During the 1950s, however, when the Department assumed a leadership and service philosophy to Nebraska school districts, the number of employees drastically increased until over 600 employees worked at the department.

As events occurred and educational leaders became more outspoken about the need for quality schools, state school management created uniformity and control to Nebraska schools. With the legislature's help, the Department of Public Instruction brought the early schools into compliance with department rules. The task was difficult, but school officials were persistent. New requirements such as compulsory attendance, the filing of state forms, graded schools, state-wide textbook adoption, and following courses of study prepared schools to meet and exceed quality standards. Although reactions were mixed, districts soon realized the need for change.

As the state department became aware of the need for control, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction prescribed courses of study and curriculum needs. The department controlled the districts and became known as the enforcement agency.

As early as 1896 the state superintendent had distributed a teachers' manual to Nebraska school districts. Courses of study and teachers' manuals served as guides to schools to improve student instruction. The 1895 law entitled Free High School Attendance Law addressed the issue of approving high schools. Each county board levied a one mill tax to pay for tuition fees. Districts that maintained high schools approved by the department were exempt from this levy. The superintendent determined whether or not schools were properly equipped with teachers, textbooks and courses of study, and that proper school attendance was maintained. Two years later, in 1897, J. W. Crabtree became the first inspector for accrediting high schools. The state department personnel visited the high schools annually for the purposes of approval and accreditation. Through a cooperative venture between the University of Nebraska and the Department of Public Instruction a high school course of study was developed. Accredited schools, as listed in Clemmon's (1919) Twenty-Fifth Biennial Report fell into one of four groups. Group A schools were accredited by the North Central Association. Group B schools were fully accredited but did not meet fully the standards of teacher preparation or library or laboratory facilities. Graduates of Group C schools were given conditional admission to colleges. Graduates of Junior Accredited schools could receive conditional admission to the university upon completion of sufficient additional work in an accredited school. As the University became more involved in the accreditation process with Nebraska schools, the classification system was changed from A and B accredited to Fully Accredited status and A Accredited schools was changed to Minor Accredited status in 1922. The University of Nebraska established this list of "Minor Accredited" schools for the

convenience of smaller communities. The graduates were given conditional admission to college. The 1929 Biennial Report explained the history of high school supervision.

The Division of Secondary Education and Teacher Training has under its direction all those activities in any way related to the state's supervisory responsibility for the maintenance and development of Nebraska's secondary or high schools and their accreditation to the University of Nebraska. This department does not feel that its responsibility merely lies in the field of inspection for accreditation purposes only. (Taylor, 1929c, p. 95)

The State Superintendent of Public Instruction controlled the curriculum of Nebraska school districts through courses of study that prescribed what should be taught in schools. Superintendent Jackson prepared a new manual, the Nebraska High School Manual.

The University of Nebraska and the State Department of Education have just published a new High School Manual which governs their relation with the public high schools of the State. The new manual embodies the principles and recommendations in the reports of the State Association of Superintendents and Principals and of the National Education Association. It assumes that the high schools are for the purpose of giving the best possible equipment or citizenship and success in life, and that such preparation is a most desirable foundation for college education. (Jackson, 1901, p. 213)

Those districts that wished to develop their own curriculum had to seek the approval of the department. Few school districts had the resources or the ability to devise complete curriculum plans, and the department did little to assist school districts in writing curriculum. As a result, county superintendents guided most small schools.

The Department of Public Instruction was often called upon for aid and assistance in helping schools to provide a better school program. The local schools were to develop educational experiences to meet the student and community's needs. The Director of

Rural Education and the county superintendents worked hard to improve rural schools. By the mid 1890s rural schools were asked to offer more enrichment classes to improve the curriculum offerings. In 1907, the Normal Training Law, permitting high schools to train students to teach in the rural schools, was passed by the State Legislature. By 1914, 186 high schools were giving instruction to normal training students. The Department of Public Instruction viewed its responsibilities broadly to assist schools to meet the educational needs of the students. The Department perceived that Nebraska schools had to be locally controlled based on the needs of the individual districts. The State Department of Public Instruction took a supervisory role through school laws and department policies and procedures. State Superintendent Reed theorized the department activities should be geared towards the improvement of instruction. The Thirty-Ninth Biennial Report in 1947 explained the purpose of the Department.

The Department of Public Instruction conceives the purpose of Nebraska schools to be that of providing young people with a pattern of educational experiences which will meet their needs and the needs of their community and will result in a continuous improvement of the individual and the community living. With this philosophy in mind, the Department has viewed its responsibilities for supervision rather broadly, and it has consistently endeavored to assist the schools in every way possible to meet adequately the educational needs of their young people. (Reed 1947, p. 36)

Although the Department of Education was not able to provide all the supervisory help needed in the local schools due to a limited budget and few supervisors, the Department viewed its job very seriously.

Conclusion 3

Local school district control dominated the early years of organized education in Nebraska.

People settled in Nebraska for two major reasons. First, the Homestead Act provided free land and the opportunity to realize the American dream of owning one's own land. Second, Union Pacific Railroad's continental line and many small railroad company's spurs across Nebraska created an ability to ship goods throughout the state and provided transportation and land for many immigrants. Soon after settling the land, pioneers established schools for their children.

The early school history was chaotic with school districts doing whatever they wanted to do. Early in Nebraska school history officials did not have a clear idea of the purposes of education, and people with good intentions started schools with little thought of direction. Often, the local school districts were more concerned with saving money than bringing a quality program to students. For example, many directors did not think that teachers needed to possess special qualifications other than discipline. In addition, most teachers were young women, often the friends or relatives of directors.

The first public schools were called subscription schools taught by teachers as they boarded around at different houses as partial payment. These early schools were dominated by poor facilities, untrained teachers, short school terms, large enrollment, unruly students, and inadequate supplies. Yet, Nebraska homesteaders remained positive about their children's education. Many school districts were organized and school buildings were constructed through local community effort. Patrons voted to establish a school district, elect trustees, and initiate a tax on their property. Parents met and built a

school building and the necessary crude furniture. School board members were responsible for general school requirements including selections of textbooks, teachers, and curriculum. The general conditions of school districts that existed across the territory of Nebraska depended upon the ability and desire of its citizens to support education.

Conclusion 4

The growth of the Department of Education had been a significant development in the history of Nebraska education.

Through my research I classified the functions of the State Department of Education into three major periods of accreditation history including the organizational period, the regulatory period, and the leadership and guidance period. The function that the Department rendered to Nebraska school districts depended upon the existing state education leadership, the time frame in Nebraska history, and the general events that affected Nebraska history.

The first period of school supervision by the Department of Public Instruction was called the organizational period. The Department was established in the mid-nineteenth century through territorial and state laws, and in March 1855 the state educational agency was officially recognized as the governing educational body. The early functions of the Department mainly involved record keeping by receiving and sending forms and dispersing state funds. Yet, only a decade later, the Superintendent was also busy lobbying the legislature to pass stringent school standards. Later, the Superintendent of Public Instruction's responsibilities also included enforcing state laws about course of study, teacher examinations, textbook selections, and compulsory attendance. Many school officials agreed that the Nebraska schools needed order. This organizational

period, prior to state standards, was described as a chaotic time in which school districts did what each thought best. With no standard requirements or uniformity among districts, the State Department became aware of the need for control. The State Superintendent, therefore, prescribed courses of study and curriculum needs. The Department of Education governed the districts and became known as an enforcement state agency with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction in control of the curriculum of Nebraska school districts. The Course of Study prescribed what should be taught in schools. School Districts had the option of developing curriculum, however, these districts had to seek approval by the State Department of Education. Few school districts had the resources or abilities to work out complete curriculum plans, and the State Department did little to assist school districts in writing curriculum. In reality, county superintendents superficially guided most small school districts.

In the early years of school development, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction was considered the head of the educational system. With few department employees, the Superintendent was required to make all department decisions. From the start the job was very difficult and time consuming. Then, patrons demanded better educational opportunities for Nebraska children, and the Department became the organizational agency for public education. The Superintendent became involved in mandating school laws in order to develop a quality educational system. Issues, such as compulsory school attendance, teacher certification, graded schools, textbook selection and quality rural schools, required a great deal of the Superintendent's attention. Slowly, with a great deal of prodding from school officials, local school board policies and

practices aligned more closely with state wishes. With the many school districts spaced sporadically throughout the state, annual teacher institutes and various department bulletins such as Course of Study, School Laws, and Rural Education Moving Forward became important avenues for the Department to pass along these requirements.

School accreditation developed from the need for high school graduates to be deemed qualified to receive additional education at higher learning institutions. Superintendent McKenzie thought a Course of Study curriculum guide, if followed by all Nebraska schools, would prepare students for college-level studies. The use of this guide would also bring uniformity to Nebraska high schools.

At the height of its authority in the later nineteenth century, the Department of Public Instruction regulated a great deal of local control through state aid contributions, minimum standards for curriculum, length of the school year, and teacher and administrative qualifications. State laws required schools to conform to Department of Public Instruction standards. Not only were schools required to follow courses of study and to standardize plant facilities, but schools also had to instruct students in special subjects, including safety and fire prevention and temperance. The Director of Rural Education in the Department of Public Instruction and the county superintendents worked hard to improve rural standards. Rural schools were asked to offer many enrichment classes to improve the curriculum offerings. The state educational system, however, was still too disorganized to provide much leadership, although the State Superintendents tried hard to provide that service.

In the early part of the twentieth century, many more students were attending school, and districts were offering more and varied courses. For example, manual training classes provided an opportunity for high school students to learn a trade. These classes included vocational agriculture, commercial business, industrial arts, and home economics. These practical classes became an integral part of the curriculum of Nebraska schools for years to come.

The second period in the history of Nebraska education was a regulatory period of accreditation that lasted approximately 35 years from 1916 until 1952. This period was dominated by the regulation of school districts through Department standards to improve the quality of schools. In 1915, Superintendent Thomas reorganized the Department into four divisions including the Executive Division, the Division of Rural Schools, the Division of Rural Schools, and the Division of Certification. Thomas believed that specializing into different areas would provide better help to Nebraska schools in dealing with state and national events. Thomas, as well as future superintendents, thought the Department needed to undertake a campaign of school improvement. The Department determined this philosophy could best be accomplished by developing regulations for Nebraska school districts to follow. By the mid-20th century the state educational agency still had not given up its authority over education, however, it did delegate more power to local school districts. Through state constitutions, state laws, state court decisions, and the policies and regulations of the State Department of Public Instruction, many educational-related decisions were formulated as to how the state school systems should be governed. The Department had the authority to do the following things: define the

power of the local school districts and boards, determine minimum standards for school districts, set requirements for attendance, length of school year, regulate teacher and administrator qualifications, set minimum standards for school curriculum, and determine the method of enforcement of its laws and regulations.

Another important goal of the Department was school district consolidation. The Department of Public Instruction sought to eliminate one-teacher schools, however, the public wanted to keep the small-school status. A further effort to improve rural schools occurred in 1920 with school standardization requirements of plant facilities. School districts filled out a Department report card, and had to earn 75 out of 100 points to qualify as a standard school.

Events that occurred during the twentieth century often had more bearing on school districts than the decisions made by the Department of Public Instruction. Schools were sources for employment training pools. Vocational classes were offered to train students for jobs after graduation. These classes not only helped during the Great Depression of the 1930s by employing young adults in government programs, but students also helped to fill the void in the work force during World War II. This war created unique opportunities for curriculum offerings including civil defense programs, vocational training, and physical education classes. The public schools were asked to help solve many of America's problems through curriculum offerings. Elementary schools were even asked to help out by planting victory gardens, selling War Bonds and teaching children about safety issues. After World War II, academic standards came under sharp attack after the launch of Sputnik by the Soviets. Suddenly more money was

made available for math, science, and technology classes. The Department of Public Instruction organized rules and regulations that school districts were encouraged to meet.

The third period of school accreditation history developed as the Department of Education provided a leadership and guidance function to school districts. The Department realized that providing leadership and service to school districts was the key to a good management system. The Department suggested, rather than required or demanded, that school districts follow its guidelines. In 1949, the state legislature made the Department of Public Instruction responsible for approval and accreditation of Nebraska schools. The newly formed State Accreditation Committee established procedures for evaluating districts. Through accreditation guidelines, the Department provided opportunities for improvement of the quality of education. Department inspectors recommended approval or accredited status based upon visitations to the schools. Prior to the visit the district conducted a self-evaluation study. Accreditation was voluntary, yet, the process was highly encouraged.

This third phase of the accreditation occurred in 1952 when the Nebraska voters approved LB 212, a constitutional amendment creating the State Department of Education. In 1953, the Nebraska legislature passed enabling acts which conferred on the new State Board of Education all the duties and powers formerly held by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. LB 79-328 required the State Board of Education, through the Commissioner of Education and his staff, to provide leadership, guidance, and supervision of the state school system by: a) providing supervisory and consultative services for school districts; b) issuing materials helpful in the development,

maintenance, and improvement of educational facilities and programs; and c) establishing rules, regulations and procedures for classifying, approving, and accrediting schools. Purposes included providing leadership to Nebraska public school districts, directing educational research activities, and coordinating statewide educational activities. The Department believed that the major supervisory functions included:

1. Planning and supervising by assisting schools in developing new programs. A great deal of educational information about current and new trends in the field were disseminated to districts. Department officials offered consultative services in the areas of local curriculum needs and specific educational problems.
2. Much time was spent by supervisors in visiting school districts. Visits were made a part of the function of approval and accreditation. Follow up visits were made to ensure curriculum or program recommendations were in place.
3. Curriculum planning was included as a main responsibility when developing and implementing state-wide curriculum and courses of study. Local districts were expected to follow Department teaching guides and suggestive units.
4. Through institutes, workshops, and conferences, the Department was able to provide instruction on lessons of improving teaching skills, trends in education, and presenting state requirements.
5. Through the findings of state officials during visitations, schools were approved or accredited. The purpose for these classifications included collecting state funds, collecting tuition for students residing in non-high school districts, and high school graduates being allowed to enter colleges without taking an entrance examination.

Later, the school curriculum was changed in the 1980s to meet the challenges of public issues critical of public education. Numerous task forces and committees recommended changes that districts had to meet societal needs. The national studies of the 1980s challenged Nebraska school officials to reassess curriculum and teaching standards.

All Nebraska school districts were required to become accredited according to the standards of Rule 11. School districts were allowed to choose one of two broad accreditation alternatives. Despite the accreditation program selected, the goal was always to secure high educational standards in order to provide better educational opportunities for students.

The accreditation process of Nebraska public schools had greatly changed over the years. Accreditation in Nebraska developed as the University of Nebraska served as the North Central Association regional accrediting agency in Nebraska. Any high school that offered special courses designated by the University was considered accredited. Graduates of these high schools were automatically admitted to the University. In 1949, the Legislature delegated the accreditation process to the Department of Public Instruction. The State Superintendent appointed the State Accreditation Committee to establish procedures for accrediting public and private schools in Nebraska. Accreditation standards involved all the programs offered to all students - curriculum, teacher qualifications, school plant, and guidance services. Many educators perceived accreditation as an overall evaluative program and used accreditation to help insure development and maintenance of standards. The purpose of accreditation was to

maintain adequate school programs and to encourage and assist schools in their search for better instructional opportunities for students. Being accredited meant that school districts had met state standards listed in Department of Education rules. Often, school districts look at the research and best practices on effective schools as a guide for accreditation procedures. The Nebraska Department of Education viewed the main purposes of accreditation as follows:

1. Certifying that high school graduates had the qualifications to succeed when attending college.
2. Facilitating high school graduates entering Nebraska colleges without taking an entrance examination.
3. Evaluating high school programs and suggesting ideas to the school districts for self improvement.

The State Department of Education delegated broad responsibilities to local school districts although retaining overall responsibility for the quality of education through programs of approval or accreditation. State laws and Department policies determined authority for this responsibility. The efforts of a multi-disciplinary team consisting of North Central Association members, State Department of Education personnel, and local education patrons set accreditation standards. The State Department developed rules to insure that standards would be met. When a school district became accredited, the Department of Education agreed that the district met written standards or criteria. After July 1, 1985, all public schools were required to meet quality and performance-based approval and accreditation standards.

This investigation of accreditation must include a study of Nebraska's people.

Traditionally, society had always tried to control and direct education's course. Through certain events such as world wars and economic uncertainty, education had not only drawn sharp criticism, but also had been the cornerstone of stability. People have turned to institutions of learning, ranging from the rural school to the university, for support and vision during both the high points and the low points of societal events. Since 1855 the events which created this uncertainty had greatly affected public education in Nebraska. Societal events and the resultant public demands upon education helped mold educational policy and became an impetus for Nebraska's dynamic and caring politicians setting the stage for statehood. Through public demand for expanded and improved educational services, the Department brought a greater unity of purpose to the statewide program of education.

The duties and responsibilities of the State Department of Education had evolved over its many years of existence and had changed from a supervisor of school lands and funds to a service agency, helping schools provide quality educational programs. Through school visitations, institutes and conferences, published guides and manuals, approval and accreditation, and general educational leadership, the State Department of Education had taken an active role in the history of public education in Nebraska. This transformation in the philosophy from control to leadership allowed school districts to better meet the needs of students. School districts were able to modify standards in order to adapt the rules and regulations to local control. Nebraska's State Department of Education was one of the pioneers in developing recommendations for district school

improvement. The department perceived that classifying schools based on strengths and weaknesses of the total school program was a more significant factor in improving education.

Future Study

This study discusses historical aspects of the Department of Public Instruction and how the accreditation process developed from 1855 to 1990. Little research has been conducted about the Nebraska Department of Public Instruction, later to be called the Nebraska Department of Education, as it evolved from an recording-keeping regulatory agency to an organization that directed the promotion and improvement of education through a leadership and service role. Recommendations for further study on the topic of public school accreditation include developing a detailed analysis of present day accreditation models. Rule 10 states that school districts may choose one of two school improvement plans. One process that school districts can use is a comprehensive plan using Department guidelines once every seven years. This traditional accreditation plan requires an external team visitation to evaluate the action plan that has developed by the school district. The second model incorporates a continuous improvement plan emphasizing quality learning. Local school districts collect, desegregate, analyze, and incorporate data into strategic planning goals. Further study in the area by what means school districts determine which school improvement plan to develop and implement would be helpful. Although statistics are available that identify the specific school improvement plan that Nebraska school districts develop, it would be interesting to conduct a comparative study of each model.

History plays a big part in Nebraska education. Very little information is available concerning the early growth of Nebraska schools. The early State Superintendents were concerned about the establishment of schools and their operations. A second recommendation on the topic of school accreditation includes developing a historical library. Presently, the Nebraska Department of Education does not possess many primary sources and relics about early Nebraska school history. Important sources of educational history can be collected by requesting documents and relics from the general public and the Nebraska school districts. Perhaps, a display about early educational leadership would be very enlightening and interesting.

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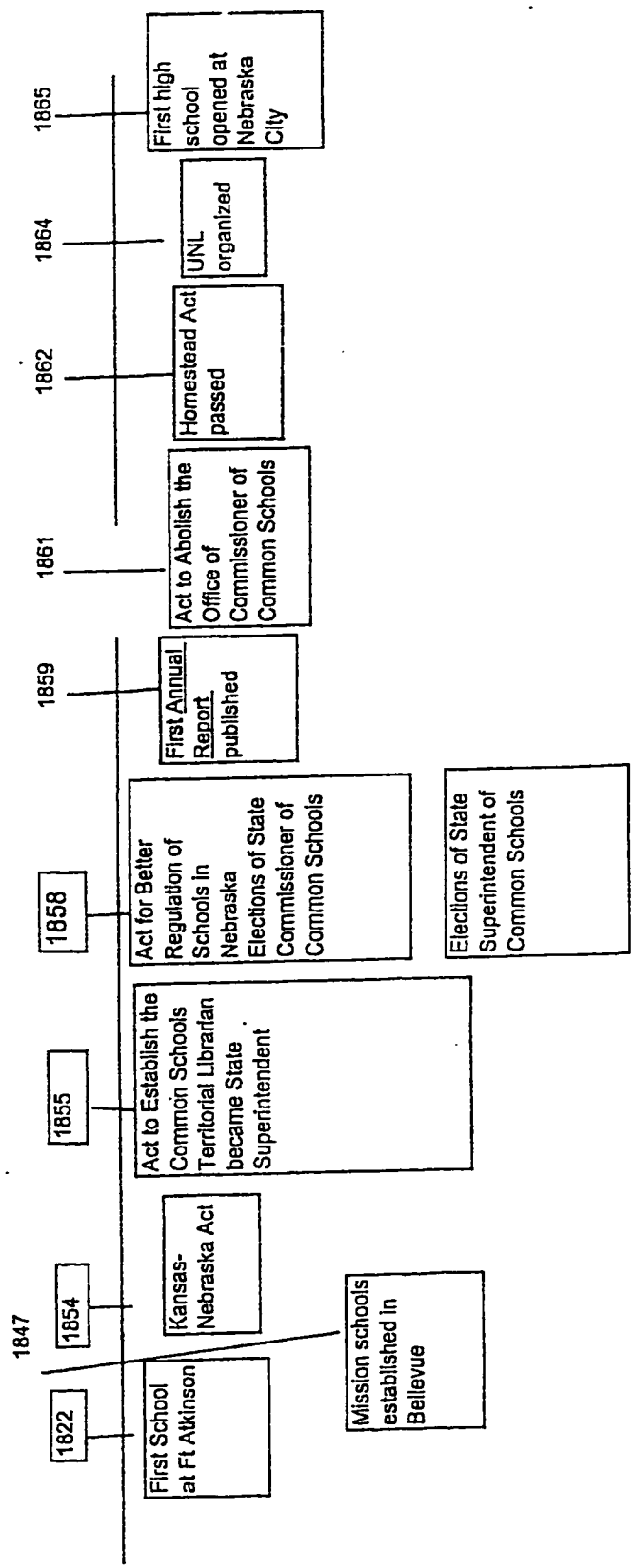
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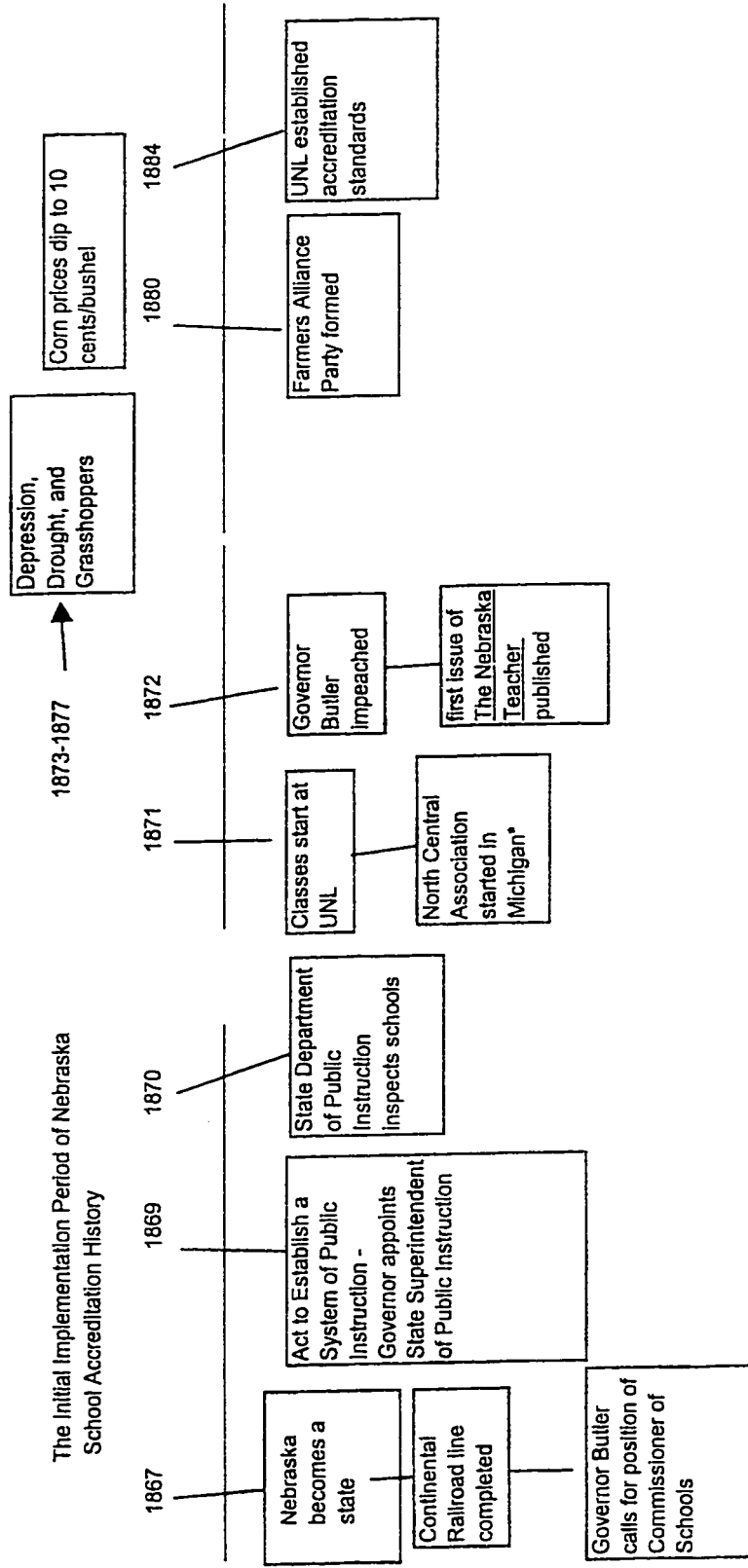
APPENDIX A

Chapter 1 Early History

1857 → General economic panic and depression



The Initial Implementation Period of Nebraska
School Accreditation History



Nebraska Historical Events of
Public School Accreditation Timeline
1822 - 1990

