Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

October 15, 2026

Agenda Item: Northwestern College Administrator Superintendent Approval

State Board Goal(s): Goal 3

State Board Role/Authority: The State Board sets standards and approves practitioner preparation programs based on those standards. Iowa Code sections 256.7 and 256.16 and Iowa Administrative Code chapter 281-79 Standard for Practitioner and Administrator Preparation Programs.

Presenter(s): Stephanie TeKippe, Education Program Consultant
Office of Educator Quality

Jill Swisher, Dean of Graduate and Professional Studies
Northwestern College

Russ Adams, Assistant Director of Center for Innovation and Leadership
Northwestern College

Attachment(s): Two

Recommendation: It is recommended that the State Board award full approval to Northwestern College to add a superintendent track to their administrator preparation program until the next site visit scheduled for the 2029-30 academic year.

Background: The Department educator preparation staff reviewed Northwestern College's application for program change. Northwestern has met all Chapter 79 standards.

Administrator Superintendent Approval Report

Northwestern College

Presented to the Iowa State Board of Education: October 15, 2026

IOWA™

Department of Education

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Department of Education
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State of Iowa

State Board of Education

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Contents

Overview 4
Background and History 4
Description of Proposed Substantial Change 4
Approval Recommendation 4
Summary of Department Review 5
- Governance and Resources Standard 5
- Diversity Standard 5
- Faculty Standard 5
- Assessment Standard 6
- Administrator Clinical Standard 6
- Administrator Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions Standard 7

Overview

Pursuant to Iowa Administrative Code rule 281—79.9(256), the Director may approve minor additions to or changes within an institution's approved practitioner preparation program.

A revision that exceeds the primary scope of an institution's approved programs becomes operative only after approval by the State Board of Education (State Board).

The addition of a superintendent preparation program represents a substantial program change requiring State Board approval.

Background and History

Northwestern College, located in Orange City, Iowa, maintains approved educator preparation programs, including graduate-level educational leadership preparation. The institution currently offers an educational administration program leading to building-level administrator preparation and has established infrastructure for online graduate education.

Northwestern College proposes to expand its administrator preparation offerings to include district-level leadership preparation through an Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree in superintendency leading to fulfillment of endorsement #171: Superintendent and AEA Administrator.

Description of Proposed Substantial Change

Northwestern College proposes a 30-credit, online Ed.S. program in superintendency designed to prepare educational leaders for district-level leadership and Iowa superintendent endorsement #171. The curriculum consists of eight three-credit academic courses and two three-credit internship courses.

Program coursework addresses district-level leadership in the areas of organizational leadership and systemic improvement, school finance and resource allocation, educational advocacy, supervision and evaluation of district leaders, policy and board governance, instructional leadership, district operations and compliance and equity, ethics and community engagement. The two-semester internship provides a total of 400 clinical hours.

The program is aligned with the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards and the superintendent competencies established in rule 281—79.17(3). Northwestern College has also cross-walked the curriculum to the Iowa Standards for School Leaders.

The Iowa Department of Education's (Department) review determined that the proposed program provides sufficient evidence of alignment with the applicable Chapter 79 standards for governance and resources, diversity, faculty, assessment, administrator clinical practice and administrator knowledge, skills and dispositions.

Approval Recommendation

The Department recommends full approval of Northwestern College's substantial program change to add the superintendent preparation program leading to superintendent endorsement #171.

Summary of Department Review

Governance and Resources Standard

The Department considers the Governance and Resources standard to be MET.

No compliance issues were identified in the Governance standard.

Northwestern College will incorporate the superintendent preparation program within its existing educator preparation governance structure. Responsibility is shared appropriately among the education unit and graduate and online studies, with the educator preparation unit retaining responsibility for curriculum, professional standards, licensure and accreditation. The existing Teacher Education Committee will continue to provide program oversight.

The institution has identified additional resources specifically for the superintendent program, including a program director, enrollment support, curriculum development and additional faculty as enrollment warrants. Existing institutional resources for advising, admissions, instructional design, library services and technology will also support program delivery.

These structures are consistent with Chapter 79 expectations that the professional education unit maintain primary responsibility for educator preparation, align programs with professional standards, collaborate with stakeholders and provide sufficient financial, personnel, technology and clinical resources regardless of delivery model.

Diversity Standard

The Department considers the Diversity standard to be MET.

No compliance issues were identified in the Diversity standard.

Northwestern College will extend its existing institutional and educator preparation practices for establishing a supportive environment to the superintendent program. The online delivery model provides opportunities to recruit candidates and faculty from a broader geographic area and with varied professional experiences.

Clinical requirements further ensure that superintendent candidates engage in multiple educational settings representing differences in district size, socioeconomic composition, geography or other district contexts.

This evidence supports the Chapter 79 requirement that institutional plans, policies and practices establish a supportive environment and support diversity among faculty and candidates.

Faculty Standard

The Department considers the Faculty standard to be MET.

No compliance issues were identified in the Faculty standard.

Northwestern College has established processes for documenting faculty preparation, knowledge, experience, licensure and teaching assignments. Faculty are evaluated under institutional policies and are provided opportunities and resources for continued professional development.

Program leadership and instructional staffing include individuals with relevant administrator preparation and district-level experience. The proposed program director is a retired superintendent holding superintendent endorsement #171, and identified adjunct faculty include experienced current or former educational administrators, including individuals holding the superintendent endorsement.

The Department determined that the proposed staffing structure supports Chapter 79 expectations that faculty responsibilities align with faculty members' preparation, knowledge, experience and skills and that faculty are accountable for instructional quality and professional growth.

Assessment Standard

The Department considers the Assessment standard to be MET.

No compliance issues were identified in the Assessment standard.

The superintendent program will be incorporated into Northwestern College's existing assessment system. Candidate performance will be evaluated through multiple measures, including academic performance, clinical and disposition evaluations, portfolio evidence and exit interviews. Program-level measures include completion and placement data, NELP-aligned assessment results, course evaluations and survey data.

Program learning outcomes are aligned with NELP standards and mapped across the curriculum to identify where competencies are introduced, reinforced and assessed. Signature assessments and a culminating portfolio provide evidence of candidate competency across district-level leadership standards.

Clinical evaluations occur at multiple points, and program faculty will annually review coursework assessments, clinical evaluation data and portfolio evidence to inform continuous program improvement.

This approach aligns with Chapter 79 requirements for a cohesive assessment system, multiple measures of candidate attainment, formative feedback and regular analysis of data for program improvement.

Administrator Clinical Standard

The Department considers the Administrator Clinical standard to be MET.

No compliance issues were identified in the Administrator Clinical standard.

The proposed program includes two sequential, three-credit internship courses requiring 200 hours each for a total of 400 clinical hours, meeting the Chapter 79 minimum. The clinical experience is designed to provide coherent, authentic and sustained opportunities for candidates to apply district-level leadership knowledge and skills.

Candidates will gain experience across multiple district-level contexts and leadership responsibilities, including instruction, finance, governance, operations, community engagement and equity leadership. Placements will involve appropriately qualified administrators, and internship expectations will be documented through agreements, activity plans, logs and program guidance.

Cooperating administrators and college supervisors share responsibility for candidate development and evaluation. Candidates will receive ongoing formative feedback and complete midpoint and final performance-based evaluations aligned with NELP standards and program outcomes. Northwestern College will also provide professional development for cooperating administrators and utilize written agreements with participating school districts.

These provisions address the Chapter 79 requirements for a minimum 400-hour clinical experience, multiple high-quality settings, appropriately licensed cooperating administrators, shared evaluation responsibility, performance-based assessment, cooperating administrator development and written district agreements.

Administrator Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions Standard

The Department considers the Administrator Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions standard to be MET.

No compliance issues were identified in the Administrator Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions standard.

Northwestern College has aligned the superintendent curriculum and clinical experiences with current NELP standards and each of the district-level leadership competencies identified in Chapter 79.

Coursework and clinical experiences also address administrator responsibilities for supporting the needs of diverse learners, including students from varied racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, students with disabilities, students struggling with literacy, including those with dyslexia, gifted and talented students, English learners and students at risk of not succeeding in school. Candidates initially develop these competencies through coursework and subsequently apply and demonstrate them during the supervised internship.

Candidates will also be required to complete evaluator training through a state-approved evaluator training provider.

The Department determined that the program provides an appropriate progression from acquisition of district-level leadership knowledge to application and demonstration in authentic settings, consistent with Chapter 79 expectations for novice superintendent preparation.

The Bureau of Educational Examiners has approved Northwestern College's proposed curriculum.

Northwestern College Administrator Superintendent Approval

Presented to the Iowa State Board of Education

October 15, 2026

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Substantial Change

Background

- Orange City, Iowa
- Currently offers principal preparation

Description of Substantial Change

- Online Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree
- Superintendent endorsement #171
- 30-credit graduate program

State Board approval required under Rule 281—79.9(256)

Proposed Program

Superintendent Endorsement #171

- Builds upon Northwestern College's existing graduate administrator preparation infrastructure
- Eight district-level leadership courses
- Two superintendent internship courses
- 400 total clinical hours
- Aligned with:
  - Chapter 79 superintendent competencies
  - National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards
  - Iowa Standards for School Leaders

State Accreditation Criteria

Assurance Components

- ✓ Chapter 79 Compliance
- ✓ Higher Learning Commission (HLC)
- ✓ Curriculum Exhibit Approval
- ✓ June 8, 2023 – Full State Board Approval for Educator, Administrator and Professional School Counseling Preparation

Summary of 2022-23 Accreditation Review Findings

Educator Preparation Concerns

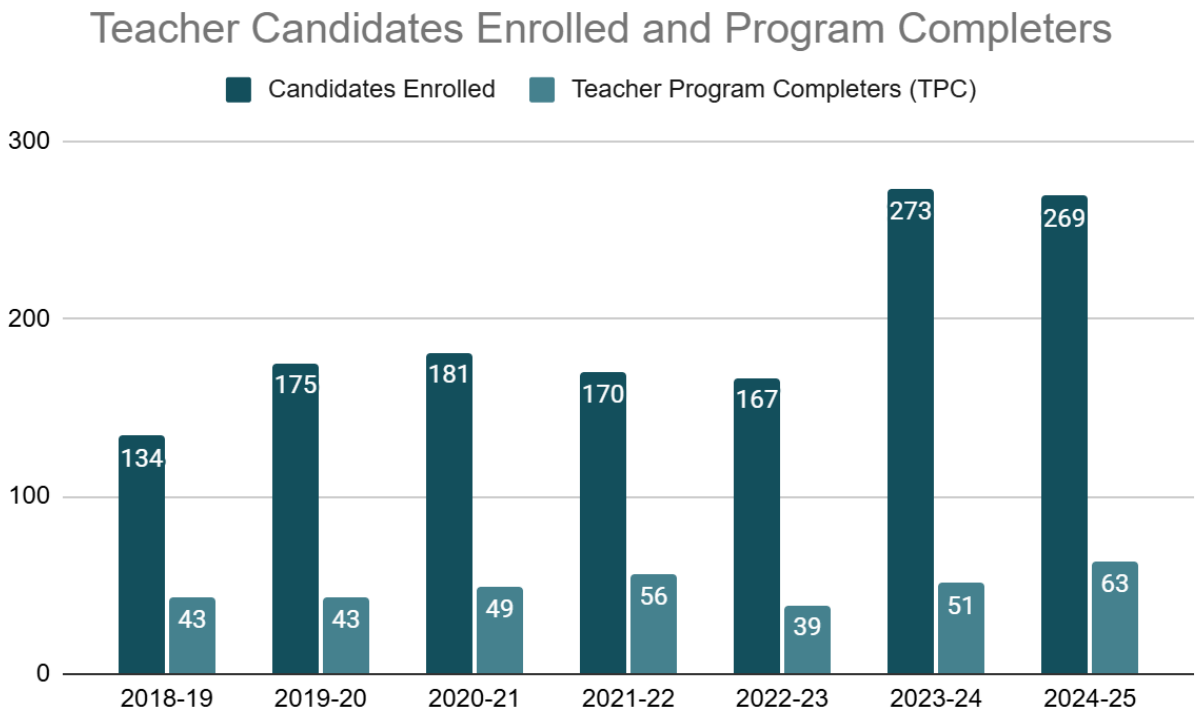
- **Governance and staffing**: Oversight of online programs and staff responsibilities were unclear. Northwestern revised its organizational chart and provided role descriptions across programs.
- **Faculty quality**: Adjunct evaluation and documentation of faculty school experience were inconsistent. The college submitted a peer review schedule and updated faculty documentation.
- **Assessment**: Candidate assessment and scoring practices varied across programs. The college developed an assessment plan, assigned program responsibilities and began faculty scoring calibration.
- **Teacher preparation**: Clinical evaluations did not clearly document InTASC standards, and Iowa Academic Standards evidence was limited in some coursework. The college revised clinical tools and methods course syllabi.

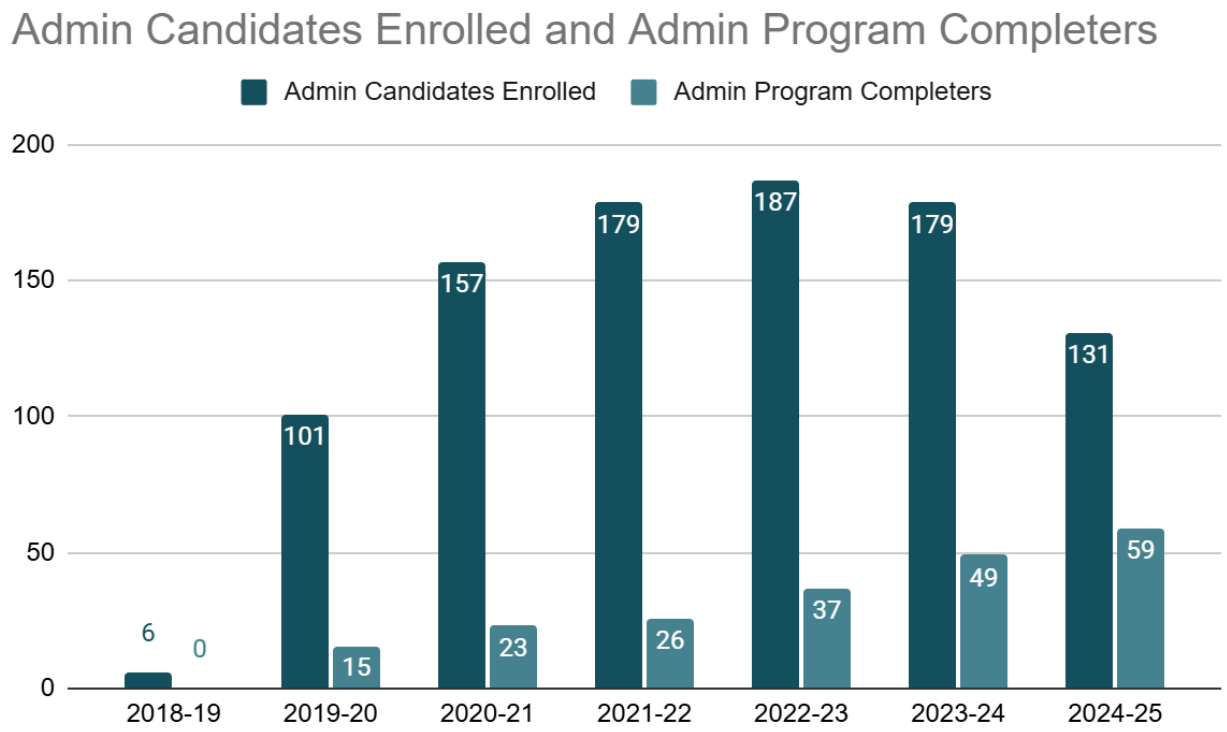
Summary of 2022-23 Accreditation Review Findings Cont.

Principal Preparation Concerns

- **Internship hours**: Some candidate logs counted simulation exercises toward the 400 hours required in accredited schools. Northwestern College added instructions to internship syllabi to remove simulation hours from the total.
- **Standards alignment:** The review found gaps in alignment to NELP substandards 7.1–7.3. Northwestern College submitted alignment evidence, revised syllabi and a resubmitted principal endorsement exhibit to the Educator Quality Team and the Bureau of Educational Examiners, which were approved.

Educator and Principal Preparation Data





Performance Highlights

Teacher

- Foundations of Reading Test improved from a 50% pass rate in 2025 (20 test takers) to 62% in 2025-26 (34 test takers)
- Continued participation in the Teacher Paraeducator Registered Apprenticeship Program

Administrator

- Highest number of principal program completers in the state over the last two reporting years (2023-24 and 2024-25)
- The 2025 job placement rate for educational administration is 100% (employed full-time) with a mean salary of $69,563
- EDAD learning community streamlines and improves communications between candidates, faculty and districts. This has brought a keener insight to how the program aligns with community needs
- Provides an annual Leadership in Education Conference

Candidate Quotes

“The diverse perspectives and support from the Northwestern community foster growth as a leader, allowing me to build stronger connections with stakeholders and refine my approach to fostering a positive school culture. The program has strengthened my resilience, adaptability, and sense of purpose as I balance professional aspirations with a commitment to continuous learning and improvement.”

- *Jennifer* | *M.Ed. Educational Administration*

“I feel extremely well prepared based on my education received at Northwestern.”

– *Novice administrator survey, 2026*

“I feel Northwestern provides a top-notch program. I was very well prepared and would recommend their program to any aspiring administrator.”

– *Novice administrator survey, 2025*

Governance and Resources Standard

- Northwestern College's proposal places the new program within its established education and graduate governance structures
- Education unit retains responsibility for: curriculum, professional standards, licensure and accreditation
- Existing Teacher Education Committee will continue program oversight
- Dedicated program director and enrollment support identified
- Existing graduate resources will support:
  - Advising and admissions
  - Instructional design
  - Library and technology services
- Additional faculty and resources will continue to be added as enrollment increases

Faculty Standard

- Faculty assignments aligned with preparation, knowledge, experience, licensure and skills
- Institutional processes document faculty:
  - Degrees and preparation
  - Professional experience
  - Licensure
  - Teaching assignments
- Faculty evaluated through established institutional policies and procedures
- Professional development opportunities and resources provided
- Program director: retired superintendent and holds relevant endorsement
- Additional identified faculty bring current or former district-level administrative experience

Assessment Standard

- Incorporated into Northwestern College's existing assessment system
- Multiple measures used to evaluate candidate performance, including:
  - Academic performance
  - Clinical evaluations
  - Disposition evaluations
  - Professional portfolio
  - Exit interviews
- Program outcomes aligned with NELP standards
- Curriculum identifies where competencies are introduced, reinforced and assessed
- Signature assessments provide evidence of candidate competency
- Clinical and portfolio data reviewed for continuous program improvement

Administrator Clinical Standard

- Two sequential superintendent internship courses
  - 400 total clinical hours: 200 hours in Internship I and 200 hours in Internship II
- Clinical experiences designed to be:
  - Coherent, authentic, sustained and purposeful
- Candidates engage in multiple district-level leadership contexts
- Experiences address:
  - Instruction
  - Finance
  - Governance
  - Operations
  - Community engagement
  - District leadership
- Cooperating administrators and college supervisors share responsibility for candidate development and evaluation
- Midpoint and final performance-based evaluations required
- Professional development provided for cooperating administrators
- Written agreements maintained with participating districts

Administrator Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions Standard

- Curriculum and clinical experiences aligned with superintendent competencies and current NELP standards
- Coursework and clinical experiences address leadership for the needs of all learners, including:
  - Students from diverse backgrounds
  - Students with disabilities
  - Students struggling with literacy, including students with dyslexia
  - Gifted and talented students
  - English learners
  - Students at risk of not succeeding in school
- Candidates apply superintendent competencies during supervised clinical experiences

Iowa State Board of Education Recommendation

Recommendation:

Full approval for Northwestern College's substantial change proposal to offer a superintendent preparation program leading to the Superintendent Endorsement #171

Next site visit:

2029-2030 academic year

Questions

Educator Preparation Team

Northwestern College