

Chapter 6

District and School Accreditation

Section 1. Authority. These rules are promulgated by the Wyoming State Board of Education and the Wyoming Department of Education under the authority of W.S. 21-2-304(a)(i), W.S. 21-2-202(a)(i), and W.S. 21-2-202(c).

Section 2. Purpose. These rules establish the state accreditation requirements for all Wyoming schools and districts.

Section 3. Definitions.

(a) “Accountability” means the system of school performance ratings established by the Wyoming Accountability in Education Act.

(b) “Accountability Framework” means the Wyoming Comprehensive Accountability Framework: Phase 1. National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment. (January 31, 2012) incorporated by reference into Wyoming statute per W.S. 21-2-304(a)(vi), W.S. 21-2-204(f), and W.S. 21-2-204(k).

(c) “Accreditation” means a process by which each district and each school within the district annually self-reports and is monitored by the state in order to assure compliance with statutes that are intended to improve student learning and ensure equity of opportunity to learn.

(d) “Accreditation Criteria” means the requirements established in this chapter that all districts and the schools governed by these districts must meet, as applicable, to be accredited by the State Board.

(e) “Annual Accreditation Report” means a required document with attestations and links to documents submitted annually to the Department by districts that verifies adherence to the accreditation criteria.

(f) “Compliance” means meeting or adhering to the requirements of statutes and regulations.

(g) “Evidence” means annual reports, documents, web sites, data, surveys, and other artifacts used to verify adherence to the accreditation criteria.

(h) “Instructional Core” means an education model that illustrates the relationship between the teacher, the content, and active learning or student engagement.

(i) “Improvement Plan” means a document that includes goals and strategies to meet performance objectives.

(j) “Proprietary” means a process or product that is used, produced, or marketed under exclusive legal right of any business, agency, or non-profit organization.

(k) “Statewide System of Support” means state and district assistance intended to increase school performance in accordance with W.S. § 21-2-204(h).

(l) “Verification” means confirmation that all Wyoming districts and the schools governed by these districts have met the Wyoming accreditation criteria.

(m) “Wyoming Accountability in Education Act” (WAEA) means the Wyoming school accountability system established by W.S. § 21-2-204.

(n) “Wyoming High School Activities Association” (WHSAA) means an organization that promotes, coordinates, and controls interscholastic activities in Wyoming.

Section 4. Accreditation in General. The State Board shall accredit Wyoming districts and the schools governed by these districts based on adherence to all applicable laws, rules, and regulations, including the Wyoming Accountability Framework, based on the recommendation of the Department.

(a) The process for accreditation of Wyoming districts and the schools governed by these districts shall include:

(i) Attestation through an accreditation report submitted to the Department by November 1 annually by the district superintendent that the district and all schools governed by the district meet the accreditation criteria.

(ii) Annual verification of district compliance with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations through review of documents, data and other evidence by the Department aligned to the accreditation criteria.

(iii) A review of the District Assessment System (DAS) every five years by the Department.

(iv) The accreditation status of the district or individual schools may be lowered by the State Board based on school performance as measured by the Wyoming Accountability in Education Act in accordance with Section 6 of this chapter.

(b) All documents and data submitted to the Department, as well as other Department verification processes, shall be considered as evidence for accreditation to reduce duplicative reporting requirements.

(c) Findings of noncompliance shall be reviewed with district superintendents annually by March 1. District superintendents shall be given until May 1 to satisfactorily address the findings without negatively impacting the accreditation level of the district or any school governed by the district.

(d) The Department shall annually make an accreditation recommendation to the State Board for all Wyoming districts and the schools governed by these districts.

(e) The duration of accreditation shall be for one year, from July 1 to the following year on June 30.

(f) The accreditation level shall be the accreditation level for the next year unless an exception is granted by the State Board.

(g) The Department shall maintain a list of accredited Wyoming schools on the Department website.

(h) No Wyoming district or the schools governed by a district shall, as a condition for state accreditation, be required to participate in any proprietary continuous improvement or school improvement process provided by the Department beyond that required by the System of Support per W.S. § 21-2-204(h) and through Federal regulations.

(i) Each district will host an on-site external review of the district and schools within the district at least once every five (5) years with the purpose of reviewing selected accreditation criteria, including the district assessment system. This includes a review of the assessment system by the Department, and may include a review of other aspects of the district system by the Department, or an external systems review by a Department-approved third-party vendor.

Section 5. Accreditation Criteria. The accreditation criteria and the aligned indicators summarize the requirements for Wyoming districts and schools governed by Wyoming districts.

(a) District Board. Oversight and governance for the district is provided by an elected board of trustees that determines the district purpose and goals, operates in an ethical manner, maintains up-to-date, publicly available policies and documents, and employs and evaluates a superintendent who serves as the chief administrator for the district.

(i) Board Members and Operations. An elected board provides oversight and governance for the district, establishes district policy, operates within established board duties, and adheres to a code of conduct and a code of ethics.

(ii) District Purpose and Goals. The board develops a widely shared purpose and goals, or strategic plan for the district that conveys high expectations for learning for all staff and students and is focused on improving the instructional core.

(iii) District Superintendent. A hired superintendent serves as the chief administrative officer, and implements district procedures in a cohesive manner consistent with statute, board policies, and the district strategic plan. The superintendent is evaluated by the District Board.

(b) District Leadership. District administrators, including principals, manage district operations and provide instructional guidance. District administrators are evaluated in a manner

consistent with Wyoming statute and regulations. The district superintendent or their representative provides assistance with school improvement planning and resource allocation for schools that need improvement.

(i) District and School Accreditation. District and school leaders annually self-evaluate to ensure the district and all schools within the district meet all applicable Wyoming accreditation criteria and the aligned requirements of statute.

(ii) District Leader Evaluation. District and school leaders are evaluated by the district superintendent in a manner consistent with statute and board policy. This includes annual submission of a review of the district leader evaluation system for districts with schools that are partially meeting and not meeting expectations per W.S. 21-2-204(h)(v) & (vi).

(iii) School Improvement Representative. The district superintendent or a designated representative provides assistance with improvement planning and resource allocation for schools identified as in need of improvement through the Wyoming accountability system.

(c) School Leadership. Principals provide administrative management and instructional leadership, including the evaluation of teachers and other instructional staff in accordance with Wyoming regulations, for the school(s) to which they are assigned.

(i) Principal Roles and Responsibilities. The district defines the roles and responsibilities of principals, including establishing a positive culture, instructional leadership, and school administration.

(ii) Teacher Evaluation. Teachers are evaluated by principals in a manner consistent with statute and board policy.

(d) Stakeholder Communication and Input. The district and all schools within the district communicate with and solicit input and feedback from stakeholders, and use the input to improve district and school processes.

(e) Employment and Certification. All personnel are hired and evaluated in accordance with Wyoming statute and district policies.

(i) Teacher Employment. District employment policies and practices ensure that quality applicants are hired for all instructional positions.

(ii) Certification and Assignment. All personnel that require certification have a current or pending certificate issued by the Wyoming Professional Teaching Standards Board, and their assignment is consistent with their area of endorsement.

(iii) Education Support Personnel. Education support personnel are employed in a manner consistent with district policy that ensures qualified support staff.

(iv) Compliance Training. District personnel receive compliance training as required by statute.

(f) Professional Development. The district professional development plan is designed to increase the capacity, collaboration, and collective efficacy of instructional staff and leaders to improve the instructional core. Professional development is regularly conducted, is relevant to daily work and content areas, and involves active work among colleagues.

(g) State Assessment and Accountability. All schools in the district administer Wyoming statewide assessments and receive a school performance rating annually in accordance with the Wyoming Accountability in Education Act (WAEA).

(h) School Improvement and Support. Schools identified as partially meeting or not meeting expectations assess needs using WAEA indicator data, write improvement goals aligned with the applicable WAEA indicators, develop improvement plans that are annually approved by the district and submitted to the Department, and participate in the Statewide System of Support if requested to do so by the Department.

(i) Data Review/Needs Assessment. Results from the Wyoming accountability system as well as other data are used to identify school improvement goals and priorities.

(ii) School Improvement Plans. School improvement plans are written, submitted to the district and the Department, implemented, and routinely updated by school leaders and staff for schools designated as in need of improvement.

(iii) Small School Improvement Plans. Schools that do not have at least ten students on at least two WAEA indicators will annually submit an improvement plan to the Department that includes strategies to improve student achievement, growth, and equity.

(iv) Statewide System of Support. Leadership teams for schools designated as priority schools by the Department participate in the system of support in accordance with statute.

(i) Programs, Standards, and Curriculum. Educational programs in the district are sufficient for all students to meet the uniform Wyoming Content and Performance Standards in all content areas.

(i) Education Programs and Standards. The curriculum in all content areas is aligned to and inclusive of the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards.

(ii) Math and Literacy Focus. Math and literacy are a high priority in the elementary grades.

(iii) College and Career Preparation. Coursework and guidance provided is sufficient to prepare students for college, career, and successful citizenship.

(iv) Other Curricular Requirements. The district curriculum addresses other curricular requirements included in Wyoming statute.

(j) District Assessment System. Through a balanced student assessment system, the district verifies that Wyoming Content and Performance Standards are taught and assessed in all content areas. Assessment results are used to set goals, make instructional decisions and monitor student progress. The assessment system is continuously refined and updated by the district, and is formally reviewed every five years by the Department. The assessment system may be reviewed more frequently by the Department for districts with schools that are partially meeting or not meeting expectations.

(k) Instructional Methods. The district has implemented a coherent instructional system and a shared instructional process or framework that defines high leverage teaching methods instructional staff use to engage students in the subject matter in all content areas across the district.

(i) District Instructional System. The district has a coherent approach, model, or system for aligning curriculum, assessment, instruction, learning support and other aspects of the instructional program.

(ii) Instructional Framework. The district has identified high leverage instructional strategies, intended to increase student engagement and active learning that should be observed in all classrooms across the district.

(iii) Teacher Expertise. Individual teacher professional growth is focused on the development of instructional expertise specific to the grade level or content area.

(l) Learning Supports. Assessment results are used to monitor student progress and assign students in need of intervention to multi-tiered supports. The district is in compliance with all State and Federal Special Education laws. The district addresses the individual learning needs of English learners.

(i) Student Learning Support. Individual student needs are addressed through a structured process that includes interventions and enrichment for all students. (i.e. Response to Intervention or Multi-Tiered System of Support).

(ii) Reading Assessment and Intervention. The district reading assessment and intervention plan includes multi-tiered supports, a screening program, progress monitoring, individual student reading plans, and individual school plans in accordance with W.S. 21-3-401.

(iii) Students with Disabilities. Specialized staff, differentiated instruction, and evidence-based interventions are provided for Students with Disabilities in accordance with Wyoming and Federal statute.

(iv) English Learners. The district provides support by qualified staff to address language barriers for English learners.

(v) Gifted and Talented. The district offers instruction that addresses the individual learning needs of gifted students.

(vi) Student Support Services. The district offers additional student supports including guidance counseling and social services, and instruction for hospitalized and homebound students.

(vii) Family Engagement. The district has adopted and implemented strategies to engage families at all levels in their children's learning.

(m) At-Risk and Dropout Prevention. The district has an early warning system to identify at-risk students, and has implemented dropout prevention strategies.

(i) Early Warning Systems. The district has data systems in place to monitor factors that are early predictors of dropout.

(ii) Compulsory Attendance. The district and all schools monitor student absenteeism and intervene as soon as a student becomes chronically absent.

(iii) Dropout Prevention Strategies. The district has implemented dropout prevention strategies.

(n) School Culture, Climate, and Safety. The district has a plan for promoting positive school culture and learning environments that are safe, orderly, and conducive to learning for all students.

(i) School Culture and Climate. The culture and climate in all schools is designed to ensure positive relationships and decrease harassment, intimidation, and bullying.

(ii) School Safety. All schools use multiple strategies to ensure the physical safety of students. These are defined in a district crisis management plan.

(o) Student Activities. Students are encouraged to participate in activities, clubs, organizations, field trips, and school-sponsored events that extend learning beyond the classroom. WHSAA sanctioned activities and athletics are made available to all high school-age individuals that reside in the district.

(p) High School Graduation. High school graduates satisfactorily complete coursework that meets or exceeds the minimum requirements established by the State Board.

(q) Technology and Media. District technology includes internet connectivity. Technology, library, and media services meet the research, learning, and information management needs of students and staff.

(r) Virtual Education. If virtual education is provided by the district, the virtual courses meet all state requirements in accordance with Chapter 41 Rules and Regulations.

(s) Buildings and Facilities. All schools and other district buildings are constructed and maintained in accordance with Wyoming School Facilities Department guidelines and other regulations that govern the safety and security of Wyoming public buildings.

(t) Student Health. Personnel and processes, including prevention programs, are in place to address the physical and mental health needs of all students enrolled in the district.

(u) Calendars and Schedules. The number of school days, hours of student teacher contact, alternative calendars, days of observance and mourning, scheduled holidays, and reports of school closure are in accordance with Wyoming statute, rules and regulations.

(v) Transportation. The district provides student transportation to and from school and provides student transportation for interscholastic activities in accordance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

(w) Food Services. The district adheres to Wyoming and Federal regulations and guidelines related to the sanitation of food service facilities and the quality and nutritional value of food provided to students. Free and reduced cost meals are provided based on the income of parents or guardians.

(x) Finance and Data. District finances are managed and routinely audited in accordance with Wyoming and Federal regulations, and accurate data are collected and reported to the Department in a timely manner.

(y) Student Information Management. Student information, records, identification, attendance calculations, enrollment and transfers are conducted in accordance with statute.

Section 6. Accreditation Status. All public school districts and schools within those districts shall be granted accreditation levels by the State Board.

(a) One of the following accreditation levels shall be granted by the State Board on an annual basis:

(i) Accredited. The district has met all applicable state accreditation criteria based on the Department annual review of evidence or the most recent external review. With the exception of schools identified as accredited with support in accordance with Section 7 of this chapter, the school accreditation level shall be the same as the district accreditation level.

(ii) Accredited With Follow-up. The district has not met one or more of the applicable accreditation criterion, and has not addressed the concern during the grace period described in Section 4(c) of this chapter. Districts that are accredited with follow-up will be

recommended for full accreditation to the state board upon Department verification that the district has met the criteria.

(iii) Accredited With Support. The district failed to meet one or more of the applicable criteria for more than one year. Schools and districts may also be accredited with support based on WAEA school performance level in accordance with Section 6 of this chapter. A district or school may remain at the level of accredited with support indefinitely.

(iv) Non-Accredited. Upon the recommendation of the Department and a majority vote of the State Board, a district that has been at the level of accredited with support for two or more years may be designated as non-accredited by the State Board.

(A) This decision shall be based on refusal or inability of the district to address the issues of non-compliance that caused the district to be at the level of accredited with support and shall not be based solely on school performance.

(B) The State Board may raise the status of a district from *non-accredited* to *accredited with support* based on a majority vote if the district has addressed the issues of non-compliance in a manner deemed satisfactory by the Department.

(C) The State Board and State Superintendent may take appropriate administrative action against any Wyoming district or any school governed by the district for non-accreditation.

Section 7. School Accreditation Status.

(a) The State Board may lower the annual accreditation status for an individual school based on WAEA school performance level per W.S. § 21-2-304(b)(ii). This shall include:

(i) An accreditation status of “accredited with support” for any school that is not meeting expectations for three or more consecutive more years. The first year of identification will be 2020-21 with the initial accountability level derived from the spring 2018 state assessment.

(ii) An accreditation status of “accredited with support” for any district in which every school in the district is not meeting expectations for three or more consecutive years. The first year of identification will be 2020-21 with the initial accountability level derived from the spring 2018 state assessment.