

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS - BACKGROUND MEMORANDUM

House Concurrent Resolution No. 3054 (attached as an appendix) directs the Legislative Council to study accreditation standards for elementary and secondary schools, including optional accreditation standards, the fiscal impact of accreditation standards, and the waiver of accreditation standards based on student performance.

SCHOOL APPROVAL REQUIREMENTS

North Dakota Century Code (NDCC) Section 15.1-06-06 requires that each public and nonpublic school in this state offering elementary or secondary education be approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The section goes on to provide that the Superintendent may not approve a school unless:

1. Each classroom teacher holds a valid teaching certificate issued by the education standards and practices board;
2. The students are offered all subjects required by law; and
3. The school is in compliance with all local and state health, fire, and safety laws.

Approved public schools are eligible to receive foundation aid payments. However, Section 15-40.1-06 provides that the per student amount for each school that is not accredited must be \$200 less than that paid to accredited schools.

Approved schools may also seek "accreditation" from the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Schools are accredited under the authority of NDCC Section 15.1-02-11, which provides that the Superintendent of Public Instruction may adopt rules governing the accreditation of public and nonpublic schools.

SCHOOL ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS

Standards for the accreditation of schools have, since 1991, been included in a document entitled *Accreditation Standards, Criteria and Procedures for the Classification of Elementary, Middle Level/Junior High, and Secondary Schools*. During the 1997 legislative session, the Legislative Assembly enacted legislation providing that all rules, including regulations, standards, guidelines, statements, and policies that have the effect of law and which were issued by the Superintendent of Public Instruction in a manner other than that set forth in NDCC Chapter 28-32, the Administrative Agencies Practice Act, are ineffective after October 31, 1999. Accreditation standards therefore must be adopted as rules, and in order to meet the legislative requirement, the Superintendent

has indicated the text of the existing standards will serve as the first set of accreditation "rules."

The Superintendent of Public Instruction has provided for five levels of accreditation status:

1. "Accredited with commendation," which involves participation in the four phases of the state school improvement process, i.e., planning, self-study, team visitation, and followup;
2. "Accredited," which requires that a school meet all the required standards and criteria, accrue 85 percent of the total point values assigned to the optional standards and criteria that apply to the school, and achieve at least 50 percent of the point values assigned to sections governing administration, instructional personnel, instructional programs, student evaluations, student personnel services, library media services, and school policies;
3. "Accredited warned," which means that a school has been cited on a required criterion, that a school has obtained less than 85 percent of the points assigned to the optional standards and criteria, or that the school has obtained less than 50 percent of the points assigned in any one section;
4. "Not accredited," which means that a school does not meet the qualifying standards and criteria or that the citations issued for the previous years have not been removed; and
5. "Nonclassified," which means that a school is not seeking accreditation.

Required standards and criteria are reviewed annually. Citations must be removed by March 31 of the following school year or the school loses accreditation. Optional standards and criteria are reviewed on a two-year cycle. A school must accrue 85 percent of the total points and achieve at least 50 percent of the point value assigned in each section in order to remain accredited.

Appeals regarding a school's accreditation status are decided by the State Accreditation Committee. This committee consists of members appointed by the executive boards of the North Dakota School Boards Association, the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders, the North Dakota Association of Elementary School Principals, the North Dakota Association of Secondary School Principals, the North Dakota Education Association, and the North Dakota Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Accreditation standards and criteria have been organized into the following eight categories:

1. "School improvement," which includes a requirement for written mission statements, school evaluations, improvement plans, and progress reports;
2. "Administration," which includes qualifications and time assignments for superintendents, assistant superintendents, curriculum or instructional directors, principals, and assistant principals;
3. "Instructional personnel," which includes teacher certification, general preparation, specific subject area preparation, professional growth, and professional development plans;
4. "Instructional programs," which include written plans for curriculum assessment, development, implementation and evaluation, minimum units of credits to be taught annually, required courses, elective courses and cooperative courses, the use of study halls, and standards for class size and teacher preparation time;
5. "Student evaluations," which include written programs for the utilization of standardized test scores and other evaluative data;
6. "Student personnel services," which include the coordination and provision of counseling and guidance services, social and psychological services, health services, and counselor qualifications and time assignments;
7. "Library media services," which include the scope of services, school library media personnel qualifications and time assignments, and library expenditures per student; and
8. "School policies," which include teacher handbooks, student and parent handbooks, written attendance requirements, and written school board policies regarding the promotion and retention of students.

ATTACH:1

Fifty-sixth Legislative Assembly, State of North Dakota, begun in the Capitol in the City of Bismarck, on Tuesday, the fifth day of January, one thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 3054
(Representatives Delmore, Hawken, Lemieux, R. Kelsch)
(Senators Cook, O'Connell)

A concurrent resolution directing the Legislative Council to study accreditation standards for elementary and secondary schools, including optional accreditation standards, the fiscal impact of accreditation standards, and the waiver of accreditation standards based on student performance.

WHEREAS, the current standards for the accreditation of elementary and secondary schools in this state were issued by the Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1991; and

WHEREAS, in order to comply with certain provisions of the current standards for the accreditation of elementary and secondary schools in this state, school boards often have to expend funds that could be put to greater benefit for other purposes; and

WHEREAS, the expenditure requirements directly or indirectly imposed by certain provisions of the current state standards for the accreditation of elementary and secondary schools prevent school boards from accomplishing goals based on the priorities of their school districts; and

WHEREAS, the current state standards for the accreditation of elementary and secondary schools do not include any mechanisms for measuring the effect of the standards on academic achievement or performance; and

WHEREAS, a review of optional accreditation standards, such as those by the North Central Association Commission on Schools, may result in improving accreditation standards in this state;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF NORTH DAKOTA, THE SENATE CONCURRING THEREIN:

That the Legislative Council study accreditation standards for elementary and secondary schools, including optional accreditation standards, the fiscal impact of accreditation standards, and the waiver of accreditation standards based on student performance; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Legislative Council report its findings and recommendations, together with any legislation required to implement the recommendations, to the Fifty-seventh Legislative Assembly.