# CHAPTER 12
# GENERAL ACCREDITATION STANDARDS
[Prior to 9/7/88, see Public Instruction Department[670] Ch 4]

Chapter rescission date pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.7: 5/22/29

**281—12.1(256) General standards.**

**12.1(1)** *Schools and school districts governed by general accreditation standards.* To become or remain accredited, school districts and accredited nonpublic schools are to comply with Iowa Code section 256.11 and this chapter.

**12.1(2)** *School board.* Each school or school district shall be governed by an identifiable authority that exercises the functions necessary for the effective operation of the school and is referred to in these rules as the "board" and as referenced in Iowa Code sections 280.2 and 280.3.

**12.1(3)** *Application for accreditation.*

*a.* The board of any school or school district that is not accredited on the effective date of these standards and that seeks accreditation shall file an application with the director of the department on or before the first day of January of the school year preceding the school year for which accreditation is sought.

*b.* The board of any school or school district that is not accredited on the effective date of these standards and that seeks accreditation from the department shall file an application with the director of the department on or before the first day of January of the school year preceding the school year for which accreditation is sought.

*c.* Nonpublic schools seeking accreditation under rule 281—12.10(256) shall provide evidence of accreditation by an organization approved under subrule 12.10(1) and such assurances of compliance with Iowa school law that the department may prescribe.

**12.1(4)** *Accredited schools and school districts.* Each school or school district receiving accreditation under the provisions of these standards will remain accredited except when by action of the state board of education it is removed from the list of accredited schools maintained by the department in accordance with Iowa Code sections 256.11(11) and 256.11(12).

**12.1(5)** *When nonaccredited.* A school district is nonaccredited on the day after the date it is removed from the list of accredited schools by action of the state board of education. A nonpublic school is nonaccredited on the date established by the resolution of the state board, which will be no later than the end of the school year in which the nonpublic school is declared to be nonaccredited.

**12.1(6)** *Alternative provisions for accreditation.* School districts may meet accreditation requirements through the provisions of Iowa Code sections 256.13, nonresident students; 273.7A, services to school districts; 279.20, superintendent—term; 280.15, joint employment and sharing; 282.7, attending in another corporation—payment; and 282.10, whole grade sharing. Nonpublic schools may meet accreditation requirements through the provisions of Iowa Code section 256.12.

**12.1(7)** *Minimum school calendar.* The minimum school calendar is set, either by a minimum number of hours or a minimum number of days, pursuant to Iowa Code sections 256.7(19), 279.10, and 279.11.

**12.1(8)** *Kindergarten.* The number of instructional days or hours within the school calendar and the length of the school day for kindergarten will be defined by the board or by authorities in charge of an accredited nonpublic school that operates a kindergarten program.

[**ARC 7787C**, IAB 4/17/24, effective 5/22/24]

**281—12.2(256) Definitions.** For purposes of this chapter, the following definitions apply:

*"Age-appropriate,"* with the exception of the human growth and development, means topics, messages, and teaching methods suitable to particular ages or age groups of children and adolescents, based on developing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral capacity typical for the age or age group.

1. "Age-appropriate" does not include any material with descriptions or visual depictions of a sex act. A reference to or mention of a sex act in a way that does not describe or visually depict a sex act as defined in these rules is not included in the previous sentence.

2. For purposes of human growth and development instruction required by Iowa Code section 279.50, "age-appropriate" means topics, messages, and teaching methods suitable to particular ages or age groups of children and adolescents, based on developing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral capacity typical for the age or age group.

3. For purposes of human growth and development instruction required by Iowa Code section 279.50, in grades 5 through 12, "age-appropriate" also includes the content required by Iowa Code section 279.50(2)*"b"*(1) and 279.50(3)*"b"*(1).

4. For purposes of human growth and development instruction required by Iowa Code section 279.50, "age-appropriate" does not include any book, article, outline, handout, video, or other educational material described in Iowa Code section 279.50(2)*"b"*(2) and 279.50(3)*"b"*(2).

*"Annual improvement goals"* means the desired one-year rate of improvement for students. Data from multiple measures may be used to determine the rate of improvement.

*"Baseline data"* means information gathered at a selected point in time and used thereafter as a basis from which to monitor change.

*"Benchmarks"* means specific knowledge and skills anchored to content standards that a student needs to accomplish by a specific grade or grade span.

*"Board"* means the board of directors in charge of a public school district or the authorities in charge of an accredited nonpublic school.

*"Competency-based education"* means that learners advance through content or earn credit based on demonstration of proficiency of competencies. Proficiency for this context is the demonstrated skill or knowledge required to advance to and be successful in higher levels of learning in that content area. Some students may advance through more content or earn more credit than in a traditional school year while others might take more than a traditional school year to advance through the same content and to earn credit. A student must meet the requirements of subrule 12.5(13) to be awarded credit in a competency-based system of education.

*"Curriculum"* means a plan that outlines what students shall be taught. Curriculum refers to all the courses offered, or all the courses offered in a particular area of study.

*"Department"* means the department of education.

*"Districtwide"* means all attendance centers within a school district or accredited nonpublic school.

*"Districtwide assessments"* means large-scale achievement or performance measures. At least one districtwide assessment shall allow for the following: the comparison of the same group of students over time as they progress through the grades or the cross-sectional comparison of students at the same grades over multiple years.

*"Districtwide progress"* means the quantifiable change in school or school district student achievement and performance.

*"Dropout"* means a school-age student who is served by a public school district and enrolled in any of grades 7 through 12 and who does not attend school or withdraws from school for a reason other than death or transfer to another approved school or school district or has been expelled with no option to return.

*"Educational program."* The educational program adopted by the board is the entire offering of the school, including out-of-class activities and the sequence of curriculum areas and activities. The educational program will provide articulated, developmental learning experiences from the date of student entrance until high school graduation.

*"Enrolled student"* means a person who has officially registered with the school or school district and is taking part in the educational program.

*"Indicators"* provide information about the general status, quality, or performance of an educational system.

*"Library program"* means an articulated sequential kindergarten through grade 12 library or media program that enhances student achievement and is integral to the school district's curricula and instructional program. The library program is planned and implemented by a qualified teacher librarian working collaboratively with the district's administration and instructional staff. The library program services provided to students and staff will include the following:

1. Support of the overall school curricula;

2. Collaborative planning and teaching;
3. Promotion of reading and literacy;
4. Information literacy instruction;
5. Access to a diverse and appropriate school library collection; and
6. Learning enhancement through technologies.

*"Long-range goals"* means desired targets to be reached over an extended period of time.

*"Multiple assessment measures,"* for reporting to the local community or the state, means more than one valid and reliable instrument that quantifies districtwide student learning, including specific grade-level data.

*"Performance levels."* The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires that at least three levels of performance be established to assist in determining which students have or have not achieved a satisfactory or proficient level of performance. At least two of those three levels will describe what all students ought to know or be able to do if their achievement or performance is deemed proficient or advanced. The third level will describe students who are not yet performing at the proficient level. A school or school district may establish more than three performance levels that include all students for districtwide or other assessments.

*"Prekindergarten program"* includes a school district's implementation of the preschool program pursuant to Iowa Code chapter 256C.

*"Proficient,"* as it relates to content standards, characterizes student performance at a level that is acceptable by the school or school district.

*"School"* means an accredited nonpublic school.

*"School counseling program"* means an articulated sequential kindergarten through grade 12 program that is comprehensive in scope, preventive in design, developmental in nature, driven by data, and integral to the school district's curricula and instructional program. The program is implemented by at least one school counselor, appropriately licensed by the board of educational examiners, who works collaboratively with the district's administration and instructional staff. The program standards are described in subrule 12.3(11). The program's delivery system components will include the following:

1. School guidance curriculum;
2. Support of the overall school curriculum;
3. Individual student planning;
4. Responsive services; and
5. System support.

*"School district"* means a public school district.

*"School improvement advisory committee"* means a committee, as defined in Iowa Code section 280.12, that is appointed by the board. Committee membership will include students, parents, teachers, administrators, and representatives from the local community that may include business, industry, labor, community agencies, higher education, or other community constituents. To the extent possible, committee membership is to have balanced representation of the following: race, gender, national origin, and disability. The school improvement advisory committee as defined by Iowa Code section 280.12 and the board are also part of, but not inclusive of, the local community.

*"Sex act"* means any sexual contact between two or more persons by any of the following:

1. Penetration of the penis into the vagina or anus.
2. Contact between the mouth and genitalia or mouth and anus or by contact between the genitalia of one person and the genitalia or anus of another person.
3. Contact between the finger, hand, or other body part of one person and the genitalia or anus of another person, except in the course of examination or treatment by a person licensed pursuant to Iowa Code chapters 148, 148C, 151, or 152.
4. Ejaculation onto the person of another.
5. Use of artificial sexual organs or substitutes therefore in contact with the genitalia or anus.
6. The touching of a person's own genitals or anus with a finger, hand, or artificial sexual organ or other similar device at the direction of another person.

*"Student groups"* (formerly known as "subgroups") means a subset of the student population that has a common characteristic. Student groups include but are not limited to gender, race, students with disabilities, and socioeconomic status.

*"Student learning goals"* means general statements of expectations for all graduates.

*"Students with disabilities"* means students who have individualized education programs regardless of the disability.

[**ARC 7787C**, IAB 4/17/24, effective 5/22/24; **ARC 8147C**, IAB 7/24/24, effective 8/28/24; **ARC 0056D**, IAB 2/4/26, effective 3/11/26; **ARC 0724D**, IAB 11/11/26, effective 12/16/26]

**281—12.3(256) Administration.** The following standards apply to the administration of accredited schools and school districts.

**12.3(1)** *Board records.* Each board is to adopt by written policy a system for maintaining accurate records. The system will provide for recording and maintaining the minutes of all board meetings, coding all receipts and expenditures, and recording and filing all reports required by the Iowa Code or requested by the director of the department. Financial records of school districts are to be maintained in a manner as to be easily audited according to accepted accounting procedures.

**12.3(2)** *Policy manual.* The board shall develop and maintain a policy manual that provides a codification of its policies, including the adoption date, the review date, and any revision date for each policy. Policies shall be reviewed at least every five years to ensure relevance to current practices and compliance with the Iowa Code, administrative rules and decisions, and court decisions.

**12.3(3)** *Personnel evaluation.* Each board will adopt evaluation criteria and procedures that conform to Iowa Code sections 279.14 and 279.23A for all contracted staff.

**12.3(4)** *Student records.* Each board will establish and maintain a system of student records, which will include for each student a permanent office record and a cumulative record.

The permanent office record serves as a historical record of official information concerning the student's education. The permanent office record is to be recorded and maintained under the student's legal name. At a minimum, the permanent office record will contain evidence of attendance and educational progress, serve as an official transcript, contain other data for use in planning to meet student needs, and provide data for official school and school district reports. This record is to be permanently maintained and stored in a fire-resistant safe or vault or can be maintained and stored electronically with a secure backup file.

The cumulative record provides a continuous and current record of significant information on progress and growth. It should reflect information such as courses taken, scholastic progress, school attendance, physical and health record, experiences, interests, aptitudes, attitudes, abilities, honors, extracurricular activities, part-time employment, and future plans. It is the "working record" used by the instructional professional staff in understanding the student. At the request of a receiving school or school district, a copy of the cumulative record will be sent to officials of that school when a student transfers.

For the sole purpose of implementing an interagency agreement with state and local agencies in accordance with Iowa Code section 280.25, a student's permanent record may include information contained in the cumulative record as defined above.

The board is to adopt a policy concerning the accessibility and confidentiality of student records that complies with the provisions of the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as effective on February 7, 2024, and Iowa Code chapter 22.

**12.3(5)** *Requirements for graduation.* Each board providing a program through grade 12 will adopt a policy establishing the requirements students will meet for high school graduation. This policy will make provision for early graduation and be consistent with these requirements, Iowa Code sections 280.14 and 256.7(26).

**12.3(6)** *Student responsibility and discipline.* The board will adopt student responsibility and discipline policies as required by Iowa Code section 279.8. The board will involve parents, students, instructional and noninstructional professional staff, and community members in the development and revision of those policies where practicable or unless specific policy is mandated by legislation. The policies will relate to the educational purposes of the school or school district. The policies will include the following: attendance; use of tobacco; the use or possession of alcoholic beverages or any controlled

substance; harassment of or by students and staff as detailed in subrule 12.3(13); violent, destructive, and seriously disruptive behavior; suspension, expulsion, emergency removal, weapons, and physical restraint; out-of-school behavior; participation in extracurricular activities; academic progress; and citizenship.

The policies will ensure due process rights for students and parents, including consideration for students who have been identified as requiring special education programs and services.

The board will also consider the potential, disparate impact of the policies on students because of race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation as defined in Iowa Code section 216.2, disability, religion, creed, or socioeconomic status.

The board will publicize its support of these policies, its support of the staff in enforcing them, and the staff's accountability for implementing them.

**12.3(7)** *Audit of school funds.* This subrule applies to school districts. The results of the annual audit of all school district funds conducted by the state auditor or a private auditing firm will be made part of the official records of the board as described in Iowa Code section 11.6.

**12.3(8)** *School or school district building grade-level organization.* The board shall adopt a grade-level organization for the buildings under its jurisdiction as described in Iowa Code sections 279.39 and 280.3.

**12.3(9)** *Standards for school counseling programs.* Each school district will establish a kindergarten through grade 12 comprehensive school counseling program, driven by student data and based on standards in academic, career, personal, and social areas, which supports the student achievement goals of the total school curriculum and to which all students have equitable access.

*a.* A qualified school counselor, licensed by the board of educational examiners, who works collaboratively with students, teachers, support staff and administrators will direct the program and provide services and instruction in support of the curricular goals of each attendance center. The school counselor is the member of the attendance center instructional team with special expertise in identifying resources and technologies to support teaching and learning. The school counselor and classroom teachers will collaborate to develop, teach, and evaluate attendance center curricular goals with emphasis on the following:

(1) Sequentially presented curriculum, programs, and responsive services that address growth and development of all students; and

(2) Attainment of student competencies in academic, career, personal, and social areas.

*b.* The program will be regularly reviewed and revised and designed to provide all of the following:

(1) Curriculum that is embedded throughout the district's overall curriculum and systemically delivered by the school counselor in collaboration with instructional staff through classroom and group activities and that consists of structured lessons to help students achieve desired competencies and to provide all students with the knowledge and skills appropriate for their developmental levels;

(2) Individual student planning through ongoing systemic activities designed to help students establish educational and career goals to develop future plans;

(3) Responsive services through intervention and curriculum that meet students' immediate and future needs as occasioned by events and conditions in students' lives and that may require any of the following: individual or group counseling; consultation with parents, teachers, and other educators; referrals to other school support services or community resources; peer helping; and information; and

(4) Systemic support through management activities that establish, maintain, and enhance the total school counseling program, including professional development, consultation, collaboration, program management, and operations.

**12.3(10)** *Standards for library programs.*

*a.* The board of directors of each school district shall establish a kindergarten through grade 12 library program to support the student achievement goals of the total school curriculum as referenced in Iowa Code section 256.11(9). The board of directors of each school district will adopt policies to address selection and reconsideration of school library materials; confidentiality of student library records; and legal and ethical use of information resources, including plagiarism and intellectual property rights.

*b.* Each school district shall establish a kindergarten through grade 12 library program that is consistent with Iowa Code section 280.6 and with the educational standards established in this chapter,

that contains only age-appropriate materials, and that supports the student achievement goals of the total school curriculum. In complying with the requirements in Iowa Code section 279.77(3), the district, if it does not make available a comprehensive list of all books available to all students in libraries offered by the district on its website in real time, must post an updated list at least two times per calendar year.

*c.* Support, monitoring, and enforcement.

(1) If, after investigation, the department determines that a school district or an employee of a school district has violated the provisions of this subrule related to library programs containing only age-appropriate materials, beginning January 1, 2024, the school district or employee of the school district, as applicable, shall be subject to the following:

1. For the first violation of this subrule, the department shall issue a written warning to the board of directors of the school district or the employee, as applicable.

2. For a second or subsequent violation of this subrule, if the department finds that a school district knowingly violated this subrule, the superintendent of the school district shall be subject to a hearing conducted by the board of educational examiners that may result in disciplinary action.

3. For a second or subsequent violation of this subrule, if the department finds that an employee of the school district who holds a license, certificate, authorization, or statement of recognition issued by the board of educational examiners knowingly violated this subrule, the employee shall be subject to a hearing conducted by the board of educational examiners that may result in disciplinary action.

(2) This paragraph relates solely to library programs operated by the district, which means library programs over which the district exercises administrative control.

(3) Concerning enforcement provisions relating to library books containing only age-appropriate materials, the department may exercise enforcement discretion if any violation is voluntarily and permanently corrected prior to the department making a determination of a violation.

(4) For library collections that serve multiple grade ranges, the district will exercise reasonable physical, administrative, and technological controls to ensure that students have access to age-appropriate materials based on the students' ages and grades.

**12.3(11)** *Policy declaring harassment and bullying against state and school policy.* Each school and school district will adopt a policy declaring harassment and bullying against state and school policy and complying with the terms of Iowa Code section 280.28.

**12.3(12)** *Policy prohibiting the aiding and abetting of sexual abuse.*

*a. General.* The department and each public school district and area education agency shall adopt policies that prohibit any individual who is a school employee, contractor, or agent, or any state educational agency or local educational agency, from assisting a school employee, contractor, or agent in obtaining a new job, apart from the routine transmission of administrative and personnel files, if the individual or agency knows, or has probable cause to believe, that such school employee, contractor, or agent engaged in sexual misconduct regarding a minor or student in violation of the law.

*b. Exception.* The requirements of paragraph 12.3(12)*"a"* do not apply if all of the following conditions are met.

(1) The information giving rise to probable cause has been properly reported to a law enforcement agency with jurisdiction over the alleged misconduct; and has been properly reported to any other authorities as required by federal, state, or local law, including Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.) and the regulations implementing such title under Part 106 of Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations, or any succeeding regulations.

(2) The matter has been officially closed or the prosecutor or police with jurisdiction over the alleged misconduct have investigated the allegations and notified school officials that there is insufficient information to establish probable cause that the school employee, contractor, or agent engaged in sexual misconduct regarding a minor or student in violation of the law; or the school employee, contractor, or agent has been charged with, and acquitted or otherwise exonerated of, the alleged misconduct; or the case or investigation remains open and there have been no charges filed against, or indictment of, the school employee, contractor, or agent within four years of the date on which the information was reported to a law enforcement agency.

**12.3(13)** *Display of United States flag, Iowa state flag, Pledge of Allegiance.* Iowa Code section 280.5 is incorporated by this reference.

**12.3(14)** *Parental rights in education.*

*a.* A school district shall not knowingly give false or misleading information to the parent or guardian of a student regarding the student's gender identity or intention to transition to a gender that is different than the sex listed on a student's official birth certificate or certificate issued upon adoption if the certificate was issued at or near the time of the student's birth.

*b.* If a student enrolled in a school district requests an accommodation that is intended to affirm the student's gender identity from a licensed practitioner employed by the school district, including a request that the licensed practitioner address the student using a name or pronoun that is different than the name or pronoun assigned to the student in the school district's registration forms or records, the licensed practitioner shall report the student's request to an administrator employed by the school district, and the administrator shall report the student's request to the student's parent or guardian. Concerning a student's request to use a name that is different from the name on the student's registration forms or records, that request is governed by this subrule only if the request is an accommodation intended to affirm a student's gender identity.

*c.* If, after investigation, the department determines that a school district or an employee of a school district has violated this subrule, the school district or employee of the school district, as applicable, shall be subject to the following:

(1) For the first violation of this subrule, the department shall issue a written warning to the board of directors of the school district or the employee, as applicable.

(2) For a second or subsequent violation of this subrule, if the department finds that a school district knowingly violated this subrule, the superintendent of the school district shall be subject to a hearing conducted by the board of educational examiners, which may result in disciplinary action.

(3) For a second or subsequent violation of this subrule, if the department finds that an employee of the school district who holds a license, certificate, authorization, or statement of recognition issued by the board of educational examiners knowingly violated this subrule, the employee shall be subject to a hearing conducted by the board of educational examiners, which may result in disciplinary action.

*d.* Concerning enforcement of this subrule, the department may exercise enforcement discretion if any violation is voluntarily and permanently corrected prior to the department making a determination of a violation.

*e.* "Gender identity" has the meaning given in Iowa Code section 279.78(1)*"a"* as amended by 2025 Iowa Acts, Senate File 418.

**12.3(15)** *Compliance with Iowa Code section 279.80.*

*a.* A school district shall not provide any program, curriculum, test, survey, questionnaire, promotion, or instruction relating to gender theory or sexual orientation to students in kindergarten through grade six.

*b.* "Gender theory" and "sexual orientation" have the same meanings as those given in Iowa Code section 279.80(1) as amended by 2025 Iowa Acts, Senate File 418.

*c.* In monitoring and enforcing this subrule, the department will not conclude that a neutral statement regarding sexual orientation or gender theory violates Iowa Code section 279.80 as amended by 2025 Iowa Acts, Senate File 418, or this subrule.

[**ARC 7787C**, IAB 4/17/24, effective 5/22/24; **ARC 8147C**, IAB 7/24/24, effective 8/28/24; **ARC 8240C**, IAB 10/2/24, effective 11/6/24; **ARC 8982C**, IAB 3/5/25, effective 4/9/25; **ARC 9806C**, IAB 12/10/25, effective 1/14/26]

**281—12.4(256) School personnel.** License/certificate and endorsement standards required in this rule relate to licenses/certificates and endorsements issued by the state board of educational examiners as referenced in Iowa Code chapter 256, subchapter VII, part 3. The following standards apply to personnel employed in accredited schools:

**12.4(1)** *Instructional professional staff.* Each person who holds a license/certificate endorsed for the service for which that person is employed is eligible for classification as a member of the instructional professional staff as referenced in Iowa Code section 279.13.

**12.4(2)** *Noninstructional professional staff.* A person who holds a statement of professional recognition, including a physician, dentist, nurse, speech therapist, or a person in one of the other

noninstructional professional areas designated by the state board of education, is eligible for classification as a member of the noninstructional professional staff.

**12.4(3)** *Basis for approval of professional staff.* Each member of the professional staff will be classified as either instructional or noninstructional. An instructional professional staff member will be regarded as approved when holding either an appropriate license/certificate with endorsement or endorsements, or a license/certificate with an endorsement statement, indicating the specific teaching assignments that may be given. A noninstructional professional staff member will be regarded as approved when holding a statement of professional recognition for the specific type of noninstructional professional school service for which employed.

**12.4(4)** *Required administrative personnel.* Each board that operates both an elementary school and a secondary school will employ as its executive officer and chief administrator a person who holds a license/certificate endorsed for service as a superintendent. The board of a school district may meet this provision by contracting with its area education agency for "superintendency services" as provided by Iowa Code section 273.7A. The individual employed or contracted for as superintendent may serve as an elementary principal or as a high school principal in that school or school district provided that the superintendent holds the proper licensure/certification. For purposes of this subrule, high school means a school that commences with either grade 9 or grade 10, as determined by the board of directors of the school district, or by the governing authority of the nonpublic school in the case of nonpublic schools. Boards of school districts may jointly employ a superintendent, provided such arrangements comply with the provisions of Iowa Code section 279.23(4).

**12.4(5)** *Staffing policies—elementary schools.* The board operating an elementary school will develop and adopt staffing policies designed to attract, retain, and effectively utilize competent personnel. Each board operating an elementary school will employ at least one elementary principal. This position may be combined with that of secondary principal or with a teaching assignment at the elementary or secondary level, provided the individual holds the proper licenses/certificates and endorsements.

When grades 7 and 8 are part of an organized and administered junior high school, the staffing policies adopted by the board for secondary schools apply. When grades 7 and 8 are part of an organized and administered middle school, the staffing policies adopted by the board for elementary schools apply.

**12.4(6)** *Staffing policies—secondary schools.* The board operating a secondary school will develop and adopt staffing policies designed to attract, retain, and effectively utilize competent personnel. Each board operating a secondary school will employ at least one secondary principal. This position may be combined with that of elementary principal or with a teaching assignment at the elementary or secondary level, provided the individual holds the proper licenses/certificates and endorsements. This position may be combined with that of superintendent, but one person may not serve as elementary principal, secondary principal, and superintendent.

**12.4(7)** *Principal.* "Principal" means a licensed/certificated member of a school's instructional staff who serves as an instructional leader, coordinates the process and substance of educational and instructional programs, coordinates the budget of the school, provides formative evaluation for all practitioners and other persons in the school, recommends or has effective authority to appoint, assign, promote, or transfer personnel in a school building, implements the local school board's policy in a manner consistent with professional practice and ethics, and assists in the development and supervision of a school's student activities program.

**12.4(8)** *Teacher.* A teacher is defined as a member of the instructional professional staff who holds a license/certificate endorsed for the type of position in which employed. A teacher diagnoses, prescribes, evaluates, and directs student learnings in terms of the school's objectives, either singly or in concert with other professional staff members; shares responsibility with the total professional staff for developing educational procedures and student activities to be used in achieving the school's objectives; supervises educational aides who assist in serving students for whom the teacher is responsible; and evaluates or assesses student progress during and following instruction in terms of the objectives sought, and uses this information to develop further educational procedures.

**12.4(9)** *Educational assistant.* An educational assistant is defined as an employee who, in the presence or absence of an instructional professional staff member but under the direction, supervision,

and control of the instructional professional staff, supervises students or assists in providing instructional and other direct educational services to students and their families. An educational assistant shall not substitute for or replace the functions and duties of a teacher as established in subrule 12.4(8).

During the initial year of employment, an educational assistant will complete staff development approved by the board as provided in subrule 12.7(1).

**12.4(10)** *Record of license/certificate or statement of professional recognition.* The board shall require each administrator, teacher, support service staff member, and noninstructional professional staff member on its staff to supply evidence that each holds a license/certificate or statement of professional recognition that is in force and valid for the type of position in which the individual is employed.

**12.4(11)** *Record required regarding teacher and administrative assignments.* The board shall require its superintendent or other designated administrator to maintain a file for all regularly employed members of the instructional professional staff, including substitute teachers. The file will consist of official licenses/certificates or copies thereof for all members of the instructional professional staff, including substitute teachers, showing that they are eligible for the position in which employed. The official will also maintain on file an official license/certificate or statement of professional recognition as defined in subrule 12.4(2) for each member of the noninstructional professional staff. These records will be on file at the beginning of and throughout each school year and updated annually to reflect all professional growth.

On December 1 of each year, the official will verify to the department the licensure/certification and endorsement status of each member of the instructional and administrative staff. This report will be on forms provided by the department and identify all persons holding authorizations and their specific assignment(s) with the authorization(s).

**12.4(12)** *Nurses.* The board of each school district shall employ a school nurse and require a current license to be filed with the superintendent or other designated administrator as specified in subrule 12.4(10).

**12.4(13)** *Prekindergarten staff.* Prekindergarten teachers shall hold a license/certificate valid for the prekindergarten level. The board will employ personnel as necessary to provide effective supervision and instruction in the prekindergarten program as referenced in Iowa Code sections 256.11(1) and 256.11(2).

**12.4(14)** *Support staff.* The board shall develop and implement procedures for the use of educational support staff to augment classroom instruction and to meet individual student needs. These staff members may be employed by the board or by the area education agency.

**12.4(15)** *Volunteer.* A volunteer is defined as an individual who, without compensation or remuneration, provides a supportive role and performs tasks under the direction, supervision, and control of the school or school district staff. A volunteer shall not work as a substitute for or replace the functions and duties of a teacher as established in subrule 12.4(8).

[**ARC 7787C**, IAB 4/17/24, effective 5/22/24]

**281—12.5(256) Education program.** The following education program standards shall be met by schools and school districts for accreditation:

**12.5(1)** *Prekindergarten program.* Iowa Code section 256.11(1) is incorporated by this reference.

**12.5(2)** *Kindergarten program.* Iowa Code section 256.11(2) is incorporated by this reference. Any classroom serving students at least five years of age by September 15 is considered kindergarten.

**12.5(3)** *Elementary program, grades 1 through 6.* Iowa Code section 256.11(3) is incorporated by this reference. All content areas may be taught by the general education teacher in the teacher's own classroom. In implementing the elementary program standards, the following general curriculum definitions apply. It is locally determined how to incorporate these content specifications into relevant standards and benchmarks.

*a. English-language arts.* English-language arts are as referenced in Iowa Code sections 256.7(28) and 256.9(49)*"a."*

*b. Social studies.* Social studies are as referenced in Iowa Code section 256.7(26)*"a"*(3).

*c. Mathematics.* Mathematics instruction is as referenced in Iowa Code section 256.7(28).

*d. Science.* Science instruction is as referenced in Iowa Code section 256.7(28).

*e. Health; human growth and development.* Health instruction and human growth and development instruction are as referenced in Iowa Code sections 256.7(26)*"a"*(3) and 279.50. During fifth and sixth

grade, human growth and development instruction will include the content described in Iowa Code section 279.50(2).

*f. Physical education.* Physical education instruction will include movement experiences and body mechanics; fitness activities; rhythmic activities; stunts and tumbling; simple games and relays; sports skills and activities; and water safety.

*g. Traffic safety.* Traffic safety instruction will include pedestrian safety; bicycle safety; auto passenger safety; school bus passenger safety; seat belt use; substance education; and the application of legal responsibility and risk management to these concepts.

*h. Music.* Music instruction will include skills, knowledge, and attitudes and will include singing and playing music; listening to and using music; reading and writing music; recognizing the value of the world's musical heritage; respecting individual musical aspirations and values; and preparing for consuming, performing, or composing.

*i. Visual art.* Visual art instruction will include perceiving, comprehending, and evaluating the visual world; viewing and understanding the visual arts; developing and communicating imaginative and inventive ideas; and making art.

*j. Computer science.* Computer science instruction incorporating the standards established under Iowa Code sections 256.7(26)*"a"*(4) and 256.9(61) is to be offered in at least one grade level.

*k. Career planning and pathways.* Instruction in career planning and pathways pursuant to Iowa Code section 256.11(3)*"a"*(11) as enacted by 2025 Iowa Acts, House File 316, is to be offered in grades five and six. This paragraph does not apply to accredited nonpublic schools.

**12.5(4)** *Grades 7 and 8.* The following will be taught in grades 7 and 8 pursuant to Iowa Code section 256.11(4). If grade 6 is configured with grades 7 and 8, the grade 7 and 8 requirements apply. It is a local decision whether all students are required to take visual arts or music. In implementing the grade 7 and 8 program standards, the following general curriculum definitions apply. It is locally determined how to incorporate the content specifications into relevant standards and benchmarks.

*a. English-language arts.* English-language arts instruction is as referenced in Iowa Code section 256.7(28).

*b. Social studies.* Social studies are as referenced in Iowa Code section 256.7(26)*"a"*(3).

*c. Mathematics.* Mathematics instruction is as referenced in Iowa Code section 256.7(28).

*d. Science.* Science instruction is as referenced in Iowa Code section 256.7(28).

*e. Health; human growth and development.* Health instruction and human growth and development instruction are as referenced in Iowa Code sections 256.7(26)*"a"*(3) and 279.50. During seventh and eighth grade, human growth and development instruction will include the content described in Iowa Code section 279.50(3).

*f. Physical education.* Physical education will include the physical fitness activities that increase cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, and flexibility; sports and games; tumbling and gymnastics; rhythms and dance; water safety; and leisure and lifetime activities.

*g. Music.* Paragraph 12.5(3)*"h"* applies, with the addition of using music as an avocation or vocation.

*h. Visual art.* Paragraph 12.5(3)*"i"* applies, with the addition of using visual arts as an avocation or vocation.

*i. Career instruction, exploration, and development.* Career instruction, exploration, and development will include content specified in Iowa Code section 256.11(4)*"a"*(7) as enacted by 2025 Iowa Acts, House File 316. This paragraph does not apply to nonpublic schools. However, nonpublic schools will comply with subrule 12.5(7).

*j. Computer science.* Computer science instruction incorporating the standards established under Iowa Code section 256.7(26)*"a"*(4) will be offered in at least one grade level.

*k. Secondary credit.* Secondary credit will be awarded as referenced in Iowa Code section 256.7(26)*"a"*(1).

**12.5(5)** *High school program, grades 9 through 12.* In grades 9 through 12, a unit is a course or equivalent related components or partial units taught throughout the academic year as defined in subrule 12.5(13). The following will be offered and taught as the minimum program as referenced in Iowa Code

section 256.11(5). All students in schools and school districts shall satisfactorily complete requirements as referenced in Iowa Code sections 256.7(26), 256.11(5)*"b"* and *"g,"* and 256.11(6)*"c,"* and, for the school year commencing July 1, 2026, section 280.9A(1A) as enacted by 2025 Iowa Acts, Senate File 369, in order to graduate. It is locally determined how to incorporate the content specifications into relevant standards and benchmarks.

In implementing the high school program standards, the following curriculum standards apply:

*a. English-language arts (six units).* English-language arts instruction is as referenced in Iowa Code section 256.7(28).

*b. Social studies (five units).* Social studies is as referenced in Iowa Code sections 256.7(26)*"a"*(3), 256.11(5)*"b,"* and 280.9A.

*c. Mathematics (six units).* Mathematics instruction is as referenced in Iowa Code sections 256.7(28) and 256.11(5)*"d"* through *"e,"* including:

(1) Four sequential units that are preparatory to postsecondary educational programs.

(2) Two additional units.

*d. Science (five units).* Science instruction is as referenced in Iowa Code sections 256.7(28) and 256.11(5)*"a."*

*e. Health (one unit).* Health instruction is as referenced in Iowa Code sections 256.7(26)*"a"*(3), 256.11(5)*"j,"* and 279.50.

*f. Physical education (one unit).* Physical education, as well as any exemption or excusal, is as referenced in Iowa Code sections 256.11(5)*"g"* and 256.11(18).

*g. Fine arts (two units).* Fine arts instruction may include any of the following:

(1) Dance. Dance instruction encompasses developing basic movement skills, elementary movement concepts, study of dance forms and dance heritage, participating in dance, evaluating dance as a creative art, and using dance as an avocation or vocation.

(2) Music. Music instruction include skills, knowledge, and attitudes and the singing and playing of music; listening to and using music; reading and writing music; recognizing the value of the world's musical heritage; respecting individual musical aspirations and values; preparing for consuming, performing, or composing; and using music as an avocation or vocation.

(3) Theatre. Theatre instruction encompasses developing the internal and external resources used in the theatre process; creating theatre through artistic collaboration; relating theatre to its social context; forming aesthetic judgments; and using theatre as an avocation or vocation.

(4) Visual art. Visual art instruction includes developing concepts and values about natural and created environments; critiquing works of art; evaluating relationships between art and societies; analyzing, abstracting, and synthesizing visual forms to express ideas; making art; and using visual art as an avocation or vocation.

*h. World language (two units).* The world language program will be a two-unit sequence of uninterrupted study in at least one language, which may include American Sign Language.

*i. Career and technical education service areas—school districts (three units each in at least four of the six service areas).* A minimum of three sequential units, of which only one may be a core unit, will be taught in four of the six service areas as referenced by Iowa Code section 256.11(5)*"h"*; Iowa Code chapter 256, subchapter VII, part 2; and 281—Chapter 46.

*j. Vocational education/nonpublic schools (five units).* A nonpublic school that provides an educational program that includes grades 9 through 12 will comply with Iowa Code section 256.11B.

*k. Personal finance literacy (one-half unit).* Iowa Code section 256.11(5)*"k"* is incorporated by this reference.

*l. Computer science (one-half unit).* Iowa Code section 256.7(26)*"a"*(4) is incorporated by this reference.

**12.5(6)** *Exemption from physical education course, health course, physical activity, or cardiopulmonary resuscitation course completion.* Exemptions from these activities are governed by Iowa Code section 256.11(5)*"g"* and 256.11(6).

**12.5(7)** *Career education.* Iowa Code sections 256.9(42), 279.61, and 280.9 are incorporated by this reference.

**12.5(8)** *Age-appropriate, multicultural and gender-fair approaches to the educational program.* Iowa Code section 256.11's provisions for an age-appropriate, multicultural, and gender-fair program are incorporated by this reference.

**12.5(9)** *Special education.* The board of each school district shall provide special education programs and services for its resident children that comply with rules of the state board of education implementing Iowa Code chapters 256, 256B, 273, and 280.

**12.5(10)** *Global education.* Iowa Code section 256.11's provisions for a global education are incorporated by this reference.

**12.5(11)** *Provisions for gifted and talented students.* Iowa Code sections 257.42 through 257.49 are incorporated by this reference.

**12.5(12)** *Provisions for at-risk students.* Iowa Code sections 280.19 and 280.19A are incorporated by this reference.

**12.5(13)** *Unit.* A unit is a course that meets one of the following criteria: it is taught for at least 200 minutes per week for 36 weeks; it is taught for the equivalent of 120 hours of instruction; it requires the demonstration of proficiency of formal competencies associated with the course according to the State Guidelines for Competency-Based Education or its successor organization, as effective on February 7, 2024; or it is an equated requirement as a part of a flexible student and school support program filed as prescribed in rule 281—12.9(256). A fractional unit will be calculated in a manner consistent with this subrule. Unless the method of instruction is competency-based, multiple-section courses taught at the same time in a single classroom situation by one teacher do not meet this unit definition for the assignment of a unit of credit, unless otherwise provided by Iowa Code section 256.11.

**12.5(14)** *Credit.* A student shall receive a credit or a partial credit upon successful completion of a course that meets one of the criteria in subrule 12.5(13). The board may award high school credit to a student who demonstrates required competencies for a course or content area in accordance with assessment methods approved by the local board.

**12.5(15)** *Subject offering.* Except as provided for under subrule 12.5(20), a subject is regarded as offered when the teacher of the subject has met the licensure and endorsement standards of the state board of educational examiners for that subject; instructional materials and facilities for that subject have been provided; and students have been informed, based on their aptitudes, interests, and abilities, about possible value of the subject. A subject is regarded as taught only when students are instructed in it in accordance with all applicable requirements outlined herein. Subjects that the law requires schools and school districts to offer and teach shall be made available during the school day as defined in subrules 12.1(8) to 12.1(10).

**12.5(16)** *Twenty-first century learning skills.* Twenty-first century learning skills are as referenced in Iowa Code section 256.7(26)*"a"*(3).

**12.5(17)** *Early intervention program.* Iowa Code section 279.50(8) is incorporated by this reference.

**12.5(18)** *Physical activity.*

*a.* Iowa Code sections 256.11(6) and 256.11(18) are incorporated by this reference. In no event may a school or school district reduce the regular instructional time, as defined by "unit" in subrule 12.5(13), for any pupil to enable the pupil to meet the physical activity requirement. However, this requirement may be met by physical education classes, activities at recess or during class time, and before- or after-school activities.

*b.* Schools and school districts must provide documentation that pupils are being provided with the support to complete the physical activity requirement. This documentation may be provided through printed schedules, district policies, student handbooks, and similar means.

**12.5(19)** *Cardiopulmonary resuscitation course completion.* Cardiopulmonary resuscitation course completion requirements are as referenced in Iowa Code section 256.11(6).

**12.5(20)** *Contracted courses used to meet school or school district requirements.* Contracted courses used to meet school or school district requirements are as referenced in Iowa Code section 279.50A.

[**ARC 7787C**, IAB 4/17/24, effective 5/22/24; **ARC 8240C**, IAB 10/2/24, effective 11/6/24; **ARC 9807C**, IAB 12/10/25, effective 1/14/26; **ARC 9808C**, IAB 12/10/25, effective 1/14/26; **ARC 0056D**, IAB 2/4/26, effective 3/11/26; **ARC 0724D**, IAB 11/11/26, effective 12/16/26]

**281—12.6(256) Activity program.** The following standards apply to the activity program of accredited schools and school districts.

**12.6(1)** *General guidelines.* Each board will sponsor a pupil activity program sufficiently broad and balanced to offer opportunities for all pupils to participate. The program will be supervised by qualified professional staff and designed to meet the needs and interests and challenge the abilities of all pupils consistent with their individual stages of development; contribute to the physical, mental, athletic, civic, social, moral, and emotional growth of all pupils; offer opportunities for both individual and group activities; be integrated with the instructional program; and provide balance so a limited number of activities will not be perpetuated at the expense of others.

**12.6(2)** *Supervised intramural sports.* If the board sponsors a voluntary program of supervised intramural sports for pupils in grades 7 through 12, qualified personnel and adequate facilities, equipment, and supplies will be provided. Middle school grades below grade 7 may also participate.

[**ARC 7787C**, IAB 4/17/24, effective 5/22/24]

**281—12.7(256,284,284A) Professional development.**

**12.7(1)** The standards set forth in the following Iowa Code sections apply to staff development for accredited schools and school districts: Iowa Code sections 256.7(3), 256.7(25), 256.9(47), 256.9(49), and 256.9(62) and chapter 284.

**12.7(2)** To meet the professional needs of all staff, professional development activities will align with district goals; will be based on student and staff information; will prepare all employees to work effectively with diverse learners and to implement age-appropriate, multicultural, gender-fair approaches to the educational program; and will adhere to the professional development standards in 281—paragraph 83.6(2) *"b"* to realize increased student achievement, learning, and performance.

[**ARC 7787C**, IAB 4/17/24, effective 5/22/24]

**281—12.8(256) Accountability for student achievement.** Schools and school districts shall meet the following accountability provisions for increased student achievement. Area education agencies will provide technical assistance as required by 281—subrule 72.4(7).

**12.8(1)** *School improvement advisory committee.* Each school and school district will establish a school improvement advisory committee that is governed by Iowa Code section 280.12.

*a. Community involvement.*

(1) Local community. The school or school district will involve the local community in decision-making processes as appropriate. The school or school district will seek input from the local community about, but not limited to, the following elements at least once every five years:

1. Statement of philosophy, beliefs, mission, or vision;
2. Major educational needs; and
3. Student learning goals.

(2) School improvement advisory committee. To meet provisions of Iowa Code section 280.12(2), the board will appoint and charge a school improvement advisory committee to make recommendations to the board. Based on the committee members' analysis of the needs assessment data, the committee will make recommendations to the board about the following components:

1. Major educational needs;
2. Student learning goals;
3. Long-range goals that include, but are not limited to, the state indicators that address reading, mathematics, and science achievement; and
4. Harassment or bullying prevention goals, programs, training, and other initiatives.

(3) At least annually, the school improvement advisory committee will also make recommendations to the board with regard to, but not limited to, the following:

1. Progress achieved with the annual improvement goals for the state indicators that address reading, mathematics, and science in subrule 12.8(3);
2. Progress achieved with other locally determined core indicators; and
3. Annual improvement goals for the state indicators that address reading, mathematics, and science achievement.

*b. Data collection, analysis, and goal setting.*

(1) Policy. The board will adopt a policy for conducting ongoing and long-range needs assessment processes. This policy will ensure involvement of and communication with the local community regarding its expectations for adequate preparation for all students as responsible citizens and successful wage earners. The policy will include provisions for keeping the local community regularly informed of progress on state indicators as described in subrule 12.8(3), other locally determined indicators and the methods a school district will use to inform kindergarten through grade 3 parents of their individual child's performance biannually. The policy will describe how the school or school district will provide opportunities for local community feedback on an ongoing basis.

(2) Long-range data collection and analysis. The long-range needs assessment process is to include provisions for collecting, analyzing, and reporting information derived from local, state, and national sources. The process will include provisions for reviewing information acquired over time on the following:

1. State indicators and other locally determined indicators;
2. Locally established student learning goals; and
3. Specific data collection required by federal and state programs.

Schools and school districts are to also collect information about additional factors influencing student achievement that may include, but are not limited to, demographics, attitudes, health, and other risk factors.

(3) Long-range goals. The board, with input from its school improvement advisory committee, will adopt long-range goals to improve student achievement in at least the areas of reading, mathematics, and science.

(4) Annual data collection and analysis. The ongoing needs assessment process will include provisions for collecting and analyzing annual assessment data on the state indicators, other locally determined indicators, and locally established student learning goals.

(5) Annual improvement goals. The board, with input from its school improvement advisory committee, will adopt annual improvement goals based on data from at least one districtwide assessment. The goals will describe desired annual increase in the curriculum areas of, but not limited to, mathematics, reading, and science achievement for all students, for particular student groups, or both. Annual improvement goals may be set for the early intervention program as described in subrule 12.5(18), other state indicators, locally determined indicators, locally established student learning goals, other curriculum areas, future student employability, or factors influencing student achievement.

*c. Content standards and benchmarks.*

(1) Policy. The board will adopt a policy outlining its procedures for developing, implementing, and evaluating its total curriculum. The policy will describe a process for establishing content standards, benchmarks, performance levels, and annual improvement goals aligned with needs assessment information.

(2) Content standards and benchmarks. The board will adopt clear, rigorous, and challenging content standards and benchmarks in reading, mathematics, and science to guide the learning of students from the date of school entrance until high school graduation. Included in the local standards and benchmarks are the core content standards from Iowa's approved standards and assessment system under the applicable provisions of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as effective on February 7, 2024. Standards and benchmarks may be adopted for other curriculum areas defined in rule 281—12.5(256).

*d. Determination and implementation of actions to meet the needs.* The school or school district will specify actions it will take in order to accomplish its long-range and annual improvement goals as established in Iowa Code section 280.12(1)*"b."*

(1) Actions will include addressing the improvement of curricular and instructional practices to attain the long-range goals, annual improvement goals, and the early intervention goals as described in subrule 12.5(18).

(2) A school or school district will document consolidation of state and federal resources and requirements. State and federal resources will be used, as applicable, to support implementation of the plan.

(3) A school or school district may have building-level action plans.

*e. Evaluation of plan.* A school or school district will develop strategies to collect data and information to determine if it is accomplishing the goals it set.

*f. Assessment of student progress.* Each school or school district will provide for districtwide assessment of student progress for all students. It will identify valid and reliable student assessments aligned with local content standards, which include the core content standards referenced in subparagraph 12.8(1)*"c"*(2). These assessments are not limited to commercially developed measures. School districts receiving early intervention funding described in subrule 12.5(18) will provide for diagnostic reading assessments for kindergarten through grade 3 students.

(1) State indicators. Using at least one districtwide assessment, a school or school district will assess student progress on the state indicators in reading, mathematics, and science as specified in subrule 12.8(3). At least one districtwide assessment will allow for the comparison of the school or school district's students with students from across the state and in the nation in reading, mathematics, and science.

(2) Performance levels. A school or school district will establish at least three performance levels on at least one districtwide valid and reliable assessment in the areas of reading and mathematics for at least grades 4, 8, and 11 and science in grades 8 and 10 or use the achievement levels as established by the Iowa testing program to meet the intent of this subparagraph.

*g. Assurances and support.* A school or school district will provide evidence that its board has approved and supports the actions under this rule. This assurance includes the commitment for ongoing improvement of the educational system.

*h. Statewide summative assessment.*

(1) For purposes of this chapter, the statewide summative assessment of student progress administered by school districts for purposes of the core academic indicators is the summative assessment developed by the Iowa testing program within the University of Iowa college of education and administered by the Iowa testing program's designee. The department may require the Iowa testing program to enter into agreements with such designee to ensure the department is able to comply with Iowa Code chapter 256; this chapter; the provisions of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, Pub. L. No. 114-95; the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. 1232g; and any other applicable state or federal law.

(2) The statewide summative assessment referred in this paragraph is to meet all of the following provisions:

1. All students enrolled in school districts in grades 3 through 11 will be administered an assessment in mathematics and English language arts, including reading and writing, during the last quarter of the school year, and all students enrolled in school districts in grades 5, 8, and 10 will be administered an assessment in science during the last quarter of the school year.

2. The assessment, at a minimum, will assess the core academic indicators identified in Iowa Code section 256.7(21)*"b"*; be aligned with the Iowa common core standards in both content and rigor; accurately describe student achievement and growth for purposes of the school, the school district, and state accountability systems; provide valid, reliable, and fair measures of student progress toward college or career readiness; and meet the summative assessment provisions of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, Pub. L. No. 114-95.

3. The assessment will be available for administration in both paper-and-pencil and computer-based formats and include assessments in mathematics, science, and English language arts, including reading and writing. For students receiving instruction primarily over the internet from a school district, accredited nonpublic school, or charter school, a school or school district may administer any state-required assessment remotely pursuant to the terms of Iowa Code section 256.7(21)*"b"*(2)(e) as enacted by 2025 Iowa Acts, House File 190.

4. The assessment will be peer-reviewed by an independent third-party evaluator to determine that the assessment is aligned with the Iowa core academic standards, provides a measurement of student growth and student proficiency, and meets the summative assessment provisions of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, Pub. L. No. 114-95. The assessment developed by the Iowa testing service within the University of Iowa college of education will make any necessary adjustments as determined by the peer review to meet the provisions of this paragraph.

5. The costs of complying with this paragraph will be borne by the Iowa testing program within the University of Iowa college of education.

**12.8(2)** *Annual reporting.* A school or school district will, at minimum, report annually to its local community about the progress on the state indicators and other locally determined indicators.

*a. State indicators.* A school or school district will collect data on the following indicators for reporting purposes:

(1) The percentage of all fourth-, eighth-, and eleventh-grade students achieving proficient or higher reading status using at least three achievement levels and by gender, race, socioeconomic status, students with disabilities, and other student groups as required by state or federal law.

(2) The percentage of all fourth-, eighth-, and eleventh-grade students achieving proficient or higher mathematics status using at least three achievement levels and for gender, race, socioeconomic status, students with disabilities, and other student groups as required by state or federal law.

(3) The percentage of all eighth- and tenth-grade students achieving proficient or higher science status using at least three achievement levels.

(4) The percentage of students considered as dropouts for grades 7 to 12 by gender, race, students with disabilities, and other student groups as required by state or federal law.

(5) The percentage of high school seniors who intend to pursue postsecondary education/training.

(6) The percentage of high school students achieving a score or status on a measure indicating probable postsecondary success. This measure should be the measure used by the majority of students in the school, school district, or attendance center who plan to attend a postsecondary institution.

(7) The percentage of high school graduates who complete a core program of four years of English-language arts and three or more years each of mathematics, science, and social studies.

*b. Annual progress report.* Each school or school district will submit an annual progress report to its local community, its respective area education agency, and the department. That report will be submitted to the department by September 15 of each year. The report will include the following information:

(1) Baseline data on at least one districtwide assessment for the state indicators described in subrule 12.8(3). Every year thereafter the school or school district will compare the annual data collected with the baseline data. A school or school district is not to report to the community about student group assessment results when a student group contains fewer than ten students at a grade level. A school or school district will report districtwide assessment results for all enrolled and tuitioned-in students.

(2) Locally determined performance levels for at least one districtwide assessment in, at a minimum, the areas of reading, mathematics, and science. Student achievement levels as defined by the Iowa Testing Program may be used to fulfill this provision.

(3) Long-range goals to improve student achievement in the areas of, but not limited to, reading, mathematics, and science.

(4) Annual improvement goals based on at least one districtwide assessment in, at a minimum, the areas of reading, mathematics, and science. One annual improvement goal may address all areas, or individual annual improvement goals for each area may be identified. When a school or school district does not meet its annual improvement goals for one year, it shall include in its annual progress report the actions it will take to meet annual improvement goals for the next school year.

(5) Data on multiple assessments for reporting achievement for all students in the areas of reading, mathematics, and science.

(6) Results by individual attendance centers, as appropriate, on the state indicators as stated in subrule 12.8(3) and any other locally determined factors or indicators. An attendance center, for reporting purposes, is a building that houses students in grade 4 or grade 8 or grade 11.

(7) School districts are encouraged to provide information on the reading proficiency of kindergarten through grade 3 students by grade level. However, all school districts receiving early intervention block grant funds will report to the department the progress toward achieving their early intervention goals.

(8) Other reports of progress as the director of the department requires and other reporting requirements as the result of federal and state program consolidation.

**12.8(3)** *Accreditation, monitoring, and enforcement.* Accreditation, monitoring, and enforcement is as referenced in Iowa Code section 256.11(10) and 256.11(11).

[**ARC 7787C**, IAB 4/17/24, effective 5/22/24; **ARC 8240C**, IAB 10/2/24, effective 11/6/24; **ARC 9807C**, IAB 12/10/25, effective 1/14/26; **ARC 0724D**, IAB 11/11/26, effective 12/16/26]

**281—12.9(256) Flexible student and school support program.**

**12.9(1)** *General.* The flexible student and school support program is as referenced by Iowa Code section 256.11(8). Applications are due to the department on May 31 prior to the school year the application will be implemented. Each school district or nonpublic school approved to participate in the flexible student and school support program will file an annual report with the department on the status of the program in a format prescribed by the department by May 31. Participation in the flexible student and school support program may be renewed for additional periods of years, each not to exceed three years. The director may revoke approval of all or part of any application or approved education program if the annual report or any other information available to the department indicates that conditions no longer warrant use of an exemption or funding from the school district's flexibility account under Iowa Code section 298A.2(2). Notice of revocation must be provided by the director to the school district or nonpublic school prior to the beginning of the school year for which participation is revoked.

**12.9(2)** *Annual report to the department.* Each school district or nonpublic school approved to participate in the flexible student and school support program will file an annual report with the department on the status of the program in a format prescribed by the department by May 31.

[**ARC 7787C**, IAB 4/17/24, effective 5/22/24]

**281—12.10(256) Independent accrediting agencies.** Notwithstanding Iowa Code section 256.11(1) through 256.11(12) and this chapter, a nonpublic school may be accredited by an independent accrediting agency that appears on a list maintained by the state board of education instead of being accredited by the state board.

**12.10(1)** *Compliance required by a nonpublic school.* Iowa Code section 256.11(16) is incorporated by this reference. New accrediting agencies must apply by November 1. New schools shall notify the department by April 1 if they wish to be included in the independently accredited list for the following school year. Each year the department will contact the approved accrediting agencies requesting an updated list of the schools that are accredited or in the accrediting process for the upcoming school year. This list is due to the department by April 1. A nonpublic school that participates in the accreditation process offered by an independent accrediting agency on the approved list published pursuant to this rule is deemed to meet the education standards of Iowa Code section 256.11 and this chapter. However, such a school shall comply with statutory health and safety requirements for school facilities. A nonpublic school accredited under this chapter shall abide by all state and federal laws and regulations. Notwithstanding Iowa Code section 256.11, the department is not precluded from enforcing compliance with all state and federal laws and regulations.

**12.10(2)** *List maintained by state board.* The state board will maintain a list of approved independent accrediting agencies comprised of at least six regional or national nonprofit, nongovernmental agencies recognized as reliable authorities concerning the quality of education offered by a school and shall publish the list of independent accrediting agencies on the department's Internet site. The list will include accrediting agencies that, as of January 1, 2013, accredited a nonpublic school in this state that was concurrently accredited under this rule and include any agency that has a formalized partnership agreement with another agency on the list and has member schools in this state as of January 1, 2013. Agencies that met this standard as of November 20, 2013, are the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS), Christian Schools International (CSI), Cognia, the National Lutheran Schools Association (NLSA), and the Association of Christian Schools International (ASCI).

**12.10(3)** *Criteria for recognizing an agency as a "reliable authority concerning the quality of education offered by a school."* In any decision to add an agency to the list maintained pursuant to subrule 12.10(1) or to remove an agency from the list pursuant to subrule 12.10(2), the following criteria may be applied:

*a.* Whether the agency's accreditation standards require a school to set high academic and nonacademic standards for all students, including preparation of students for postsecondary success.

*b.* Whether the agency's accreditation standards require a school to monitor and assess all students' progress toward high academic and nonacademic standards.

*c.* Whether the agency's accreditation standards require a school to recruit and retain properly licensed quality professional staff, and provide those staff members with ongoing professional development.

*d.* Whether the agency's accreditation standards set requirements for fiscal, data, and contract management.

*e.* Whether the agency monitors compliance with its standards and takes appropriate corrective action when standards are not met.

*f.* Whether the agency itself has appropriate fiscal, data, and contract management policies and procedures.

*g.* Any uncorrected citation of noncompliance by any governmental or nongovernmental agency or organization with jurisdiction or oversight of an accrediting agency listed pursuant to subrule 12.10(1).

*h.* Any uncorrected negative audit finding of an accrediting agency listed pursuant to subrule 12.10(1).

*i.* Any judgments, orders, decrees, consent decrees, settlement agreements, or verdicts concerning the agency listed pursuant to subrule 12.10(1) entered by any state or federal court of competent jurisdiction.

*j.* Whether the agency listed pursuant to subrule 12.10(1) continues to retain its nonprofit status.

*k.* Whether the agency listed pursuant to subrule 12.10(1) has received any form of recognition for innovation or excellence concerning its work.

*l.* Any other criterion used by the agency to determine accreditation.

*m.* Any other reports or findings sent to the nonpublic school regarding accreditation, including findings related to Iowa Code section 256.11.

**12.10(4)** *Removal of agency from approved independent accrediting agencies.* If the state board takes preliminary action to remove an agency from the approved list published on the department's Internet site pursuant to subrule 12.10(1), the department will, at least one year prior to removing the agency from the approved list, notify the nonpublic schools participating in the accreditation process offered by the agency of the state board's intent to remove the accrediting agency from its approved list of independent accrediting agencies. The department will give notice to the independent accrediting agency, along with an opportunity to respond. The notice will also be posted on the department's Internet site and contain the proposed date of removal. If a nonpublic school receives notice pursuant to this subrule and it chooses to remain accredited, the nonpublic school is to attain accreditation under this rule or otherwise attain accreditation in a manner provided by this chapter or Iowa Code section 256.11, not later than one year following the date on which the state board removes the agency from its list of independent accrediting agencies.

**12.10(5)** *Rule of construction: "at least six."* The obligation to maintain a list of at least six agencies in subrule 12.10(1) will not be construed to require the list to contain an agency that is not a regional or national nonprofit, nongovernmental agency recognized as a reliable authority concerning the quality of education offered by a school.

**12.10(6)** *Adoption by the department of standard procedures.* The department will adopt standard procedures, schedules, and forms for the implementation of this rule, including procedures for adding independent accrediting agencies from the list maintained by the state board pursuant to subrule 12.10(1) and removing agencies from that list pursuant to subrule 12.10(4).

[**ARC 7787C**, IAB 4/17/24, effective 5/22/24]

**281—12.11(256) High-quality standards for computer science.** Iowa Code sections 256.7(26) and 256.9(61) are incorporated by this reference. A computer science professional development incentive fund is established in the state treasury under the control of the department. The department may accept gifts, grants, bequests, and other private contributions, as well as state or federal moneys, for deposit in the fund. The department may disburse moneys contained in the fund for professional development activities or tuition reimbursement. Notwithstanding Iowa Code section 8.33, moneys in the computer science professional development incentive fund that remain unencumbered or unobligated at the close of

the fiscal year will not revert but remain available for expenditure for the purposes designated until the close of the succeeding fiscal year. The department may disburse those moneys in the following ways:

1. A school district or accredited nonpublic school, or a collaborative of one or more school districts, accredited nonpublic schools, and area education agencies, may apply to the department, in the manner prescribed by the department, to receive moneys from the fund to provide proven professional development activities for Iowa teachers in the area of computer science education.

2. A school district or accredited nonpublic school may apply to the department, in the manner prescribed by the department, to receive moneys from the fund to provide tuition reimbursement for Iowa teachers seeking endorsements or authorizations for computer science under Iowa Code section 256.146(19).

[**ARC 7787C**, IAB 4/17/24, effective 5/22/24]

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code sections 256.11, 280.23, and 256.7(21).

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◊ Two or more ARCs

1 Effective date of Chapter 4 delayed 70 days by Administrative Rules Review Committee at its meeting held April 20, 1988.

2 March 28, 2012, effective date of 12.3(3), 12.4(6), 12.4(14), 12.5(4)*"l,"* and 12.5(17) delayed 30 days by the Administrative Rules Review Committee at its meeting held March 12, 2012.

3 January 13, 2016, effective date of ARC 2312C [12.8(1)*"h"*] delayed until the adjournment of the 2016 General Assembly by the Administrative Rules Review Committee at its meeting held January 8, 2016.