

281—12.1 (256) General standards.

12.1(1) *Schools and school districts governed by general accreditation standards.* These standards govern the accreditation of all prekindergarten, if offered, or kindergarten through grade 12 school districts operated by public school corporations and the accreditation, if requested, of prekindergarten or kindergarten through grade 12 schools operated under nonpublic auspices. Each school district shall take affirmative steps to integrate students in attendance centers and courses. Schools and school districts shall collect and annually review district, attendance center, and course enrollment data on the basis of race, national origin, gender, and disability. Equal opportunity in programs shall be provided to all students regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation as defined in Iowa Code section 216.2 as amended by 2007 Iowa Acts, Senate File 427, section 1, gender identity as defined in Iowa Code section 216.2 as amended by 2007 Iowa Acts, Senate File 427, section 1, socioeconomic status, disability, religion, or creed. Nothing in this rule shall be construed as prohibiting any bona fide religious institution from imposing qualifications based upon religion when such qualifications are related to a bona fide religious purpose.

12.1(2) *School board.* Each school or school district shall be governed by an identifiable authority which shall exercise the functions necessary for the effective operation of the school and referred to in these rules as the “board.”

12.1(3) *Application for accreditation.* The board of any school or school district that is not accredited on the effective date of these standards and which seeks accreditation shall file an application with the director, department of education, on or before the first day of January of the school year preceding the school year for which accreditation is sought.

12.1(4) *Accredited schools and school districts.* Each school or school district receiving accreditation under the provisions of these standards shall 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 of education in accordance with Iowa Code subsections 256.11(11) and 256.11(12).

12.1(5) *When nonaccredited.* A school district shall be 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 shall be nonaccredited on the date established by the resolution of the state board, which shall 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: set by annual hours or days of instruction.* The board of directors of a school district and the authorities in charge of an accredited nonpublic school shall adopt a school calendar that sets the number of days or hours of required attendance for student instruction, staff development and in-service time, and time for parent-teacher conferences. Prior to adopting the school calendar, the board of directors of a school district shall hold a public hearing on any proposed school calendar. The board and authorities in charge of an accredited nonpublic school shall notify the department annually of their decision to have a calendar based on days or based on hours. The length of the school calendar does not dictate the length of contract hours or days of employment for instructional and noninstructional staff. Time recorded under either a days or hours calendar system may include passing time between classes but shall exclude the lunch period. Time spent on parent-teacher conferences shall be considered instructional time. The school calendar may be operated any time during the school year of July 1 to June 30 as defined by Iowa Code section 279.10 as amended by 2013 Iowa Acts, House File 215, section 81. A minimum of 180 days or 1,080 hours of instruction shall be set in the school calendar, for school districts and accredited nonpublic schools beginning no sooner than a day during the calendar week in which the first day of September falls, and shall be used for student instruction. However, if the first day of September falls on a Sunday, school may begin any day during the calendar week preceding September 1. These 180 days shall meet the requirements of

“day of school” for those districts or accredited nonpublic schools that are utilizing a schedule based on days, defined in paragraph 12.1(8) “a,” “minimum school day” defined in subrule 12.1(9), and “day or hour of attendance” defined in subrule 12.1(10). (Exception: A school or school district may, by board policy, excuse graduating seniors up to five days or 30 hours of instruction after school or school district requirements for graduation have been met.) If additional days are added to the regular school calendar because of inclement weather, a graduating senior who has met the school district’s requirements for graduation may be excused from attendance during the extended school calendar. A school district may begin employment of instructional and noninstructional staff, for in-service training and development purposes, earlier than the first day of school. A school or school district choosing a schedule based on hours shall follow the definition of “hour of school” set forth in paragraph 12.1(8) “b.”

12.1(8) *Day and hour of school.*

a. Day of school. A day of school is a day during which the school or school district is in session and students are under the guidance and instruction of the instructional professional staff. School shall be considered in session during parent-teacher conferences as well as during activities such as field trips if students are engaged in programs or activities under the guidance and direction of the instructional professional staff. All grade levels of the school or school district must be operated and available for attendance by all students. An exception is if either the elementary or secondary grades are closed and provided that the time missed is made up at some other point during the school calendar so as to meet the minimum of 180 days or 1,080 hours of instruction for all grades 1 through 12.

b. Hour of school. For schools or school districts adopting a calendar based on a 1,080-hour minimum schedule, an official hour of school is an hour in which the school or school district is in session and students are under the guidance and instruction of the instructional professional staff. For purposes of this rule, an “hour” is defined as 60 minutes. The calculation of minimum hours shall exclude the lunch period. Passing time between classes may be counted as part of the hour requirement. School shall be considered in session during parent-teacher conferences as well as during activities such as field trips if students are engaged in programs or activities under the guidance and direction of the instructional professional staff. All grade levels of the school or school district must be operated and available for attendance by all students. Schools or school districts have flexibility on how they can reach the threshold of 1,080 hours of instruction but must keep annual documentation of how they met that standard. The school calendar may include more than or less than or may equal the 180-day schedule. The hours included in an individual day under an hours format may vary.

12.1(9) *Minimum school day.* A school day, for those utilizing a school calendar based on days, shall consist of a minimum of 6 hours of instructional time for all grades 1 through 12. The minimum hours shall exclude the lunch period. Passing time between classes may be counted as part of the 6-hour requirement. School shall be considered in session during parent-teacher conferences as well as during activities such as field trips if students are engaged in programs or activities under the guidance and direction of the instructional professional staff.

12.1(10) *Day or hour of attendance.* A day or hour of attendance shall be a day or hour during which students were present and under the guidance and instruction of the instructional professional staff. When staff development designated by the board or by authorities in charge of an accredited nonpublic school occurs outside of the time required for a “minimum school day,” students shall be counted in attendance.

12.1(11) *Kindergarten.* The number of instructional days or hours within the school calendar and the length of the school day for kindergarten shall be defined by the board or by authorities in charge of an accredited nonpublic school that operates a kindergarten program.