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]