# **05-071 STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION, *a joint rule with the***

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**Chapter 138: STATE ACCREDITATION STANDARDS AND PROCESSES**

SUMMARY: This rule establishes standards for accreditation of elementary, middle/junior high, secondary, and vocational schools. Procedures to qualify for state accreditation are included as are the requirements for monitoring progress toward recommendations which result from the accreditation process.

PART 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

138.01 General Objectives

Accreditation standards are intended to encourage excellence in school programs. The rule includes such components as the quality and variety of instructional programs; the credentials, experience and general performance of staff; and the adequacy of school facilities. The rule also includes the five correlates of effective schools on which the standards are based. These correlates are school climate, instructional leadership, high expectations, clear and focused goals, and measuring results.

138.02 Definitions

Approved School. "Approved School" means any school that is fully or provisionally approved by the Department.

Accreditation council. "Accreditation Council" means a council appointed by the Commissioner composed of equal membership from the Department and the field as well as the chairperson of the visiting committee as a nonpermanent member. Permanent members are appointed for three year terms on a staggered basis.

Commissioner, "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Education.

Department, "Department" means the Department of Education.

Elementary School, "Elementary School" means that portion of a school that provides instruction in any combination of kindergarten through grade 8.

Middle/Junior Rio School. "Middle/Junior High School" means that portion of a school that provides instruction in at least two consecutive grades 5 - 9.

Secondary School. "Secondary School" means that portion of a school that provides instruction in at least two consecutive grades 9 through 12.

School Improvement, Plan(SIP). "SIP" means the School Improvement Plan required under Department regulation, Chapter 125, Section 125.23.

Vocational Region/Center. "Vocational Region/Center" means any public institution that provides vocational education to secondary students.

138.03 Accreditation Process Mandate

All school administrative units operating a secondary school shall undergo the Department accreditation process on a five-year cycle as established by the commissioner starting in the 1989-90 school year.

Any approved elementary, middle/junior high, secondary school or vocational region/center may through its board, make application to participate in the Department accreditation process. The Department will have the responsibility for establishing the schedule and scheduling accreditation visits.

138.04 Accreditation Standards

CLEAR and FOCUSED GOALS. The school has a clearly written statement reflective of the needs, beliefs and values of the school community. The statement is supported by written goals and objectives and is consistent with the unit's philosophy. The statement shows evidence of long and short-range planning and assures the involvement of teachers, administrators and community in the process of its development and evaluation.

COMMUNITY/SCHOOL RELATIONS. The school shall have a written, collaboratively planned program of community outreach which encourages parent/guardian and community involvement in the educational process toward the achievement of the school's goals and objectives. School goals,, procedures, and student progress are regularly discussed with and communicated to parents/guardians and citizens.

CURRICULUM. The school demonstrates evidence of a well planned and periodically evaluated curriculum which consistently results in exemplary educational programming. The curriculum, based on the philosophy and goals of the unit, shows a direct relationship between and among subject areas while preserving the specific objectives of each discipline.

FACILITIES. The school plant, site, and equipment are sufficient to support the programs of the school. They are maintained to ensure the safety and health of all occupants and offer an effective setting for the delivery of high quality programs and services to all students.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS. Teachers and administrators have high educational and behavioral expectations for all students. Students demonstrate measurable improvement in academic achievement, life skills development, self discipline, interpersonal growth, and attitudes toward work. The staff demonstrates its belief that all students can learn essential skills and beyond.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP/MANAGEMENT. The school administration effectively manages and provides leadership which promotes the achievement of educational excellence. Instructional leaders make decisions based primarily on instructional and curricula goals. Instructional leaders set high expectations from goals, monitor student progress and direct resources to meet these goals.

INSTRUCTION. The school demonstrates a carefully coordinated effort to provide instructional processes which have consistently resulted in a learning environment which promotes excellence. A variety of instructional techniques is used by a majority of the teachers. Teachers strive to meet the instructional needs of all students. A school-wide agreement exists about the importance of the instructional program and learning time is maximized by well-planned activities.

MONITORING STUDENT PROGRESS. The school frequently and carefully measures, with a variety of methods, student progress toward all goals. These data are disaggregated (i.e. sorted by meaningful subgroups such as male/female, free and reduced hot lunch, or courses of study) and are used to evaluate programs, direct instruction, and redirect resources.

SCHOOL CLIMATE. The school has a climate which promotes individual self-esteem, high expectations for achievement, acceptance of the differences between people, and a positive attitude toward learning. The climate enhances and encourages learning and staff consistently models appropriate behaviors.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT. The school has a carefully planned staff development program guided by sound educational theory that promotes exemplary practices. This program., which is outlined in a written plan, evolves from the instructional and curricula goals of the school and has developmentally appropriate activities available for new and experienced staff.

138.05 Basic School Approval

All schools must be approved to obtain Department accreditation.

138.06 Accreditation through the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)

Secondary schools may go through the NEASC accreditation process to meet the requirements of 20-A MRSA section 4512(5) provided that:

A. A Department member may serve as a member of the NEASC visiting team;

B. A copy of the final NEASC team report is sent to the Department by the principal upon receipt by the school;

C. A copy of all follow-up reports is sent to the Department.

138.07 Accreditation through the Department of Education.

A. The department accreditation process includes six phases:

1. self-study;

2. visitation / validation;

3. action planning / school improvement plan;

4. implementation / monitoring;

5. re-accreditation visit; and

6. implementation / monitoring.

B. Phase One -- Self-Study (Year 1)

The schools will complete a self-study in which teachers, administrators, students, and citizens with an interest in the school evaluate the school's performance based on its philosophy, goals, and Department standards.

All self-studies will include specific evidence which demonstrates that the school meets each accreditation standard. Self-study materials shall be supplied by the Department.

C. Phase Two -- Accreditation Visit (Year 2)

The Visiting Team:

A team of educators will visit the school following the completion of the self-study. The size of the team will be at least one member for every 100 students or portion thereof plus the chairperson. The team will have at least one representative from the Department. Schools may request that team members have specific skills and experiences. The Commissioner will make the final decision on all team members.

The Visit:

The visit validates the degree to which the school meets Department accreditation standards. The visiting team will be in the school for at least three days with additional time scheduled outside regular school hours. The self-study is the primary document used during the visit. The visit will include classroom visits and meetings with school board members, community members, students and administrators.

The Visit Report:

The visiting team will write a report which refers to all Department standards and includes for each:

1. Perceptions;

2. Commendations; and

3. Requirements for achieving accreditation.

D. Phase Three -- Action Planning / School Improvement Plan (Year 2)

Following the visit and review of the visiting team's report, the school will develop an action plan to address the requirements contained within the report. This plan, following the format of the SIP, will be submitted to the Department. The Department may require changes in the plan as a condition of achieving accreditation.

E. Phase Four -- Implementation / Monitoring (Year 3-5)

The school will implement the action plans and conduct an annual review based upon the goals of the plan to determine whether or not they are yielding results or need modification. As goals are accomplished, new goals should be added. The annual update will be submitted to the Department as part of the SIP.

F. Phase Five -- Re-accreditation Visit (Year 5)

A Department team will conduct a follow-up visit during the fifth year of the process. This visit will review and update the completion of and the progress towards established goals. An additional five years of accreditation may be granted by the Commissioner through this visit.

G. Phase Six -- Implementation / Monitoring (Year 6-10)

The school will continue to provide yearly updates focusing on progress toward established goals to the Department through the SIP.

138.08 Awarding of Accreditation

A determination of the accreditation status of a school will be made by the Commissioner after review and consideration of the following criteria:

A. The recommendation of the visiting committee.

The performance level of the school, as determined by the visiting committee, in relationship to the Department standards, must be found acceptable. This performance level will be determined by a vote of the visiting committee at the conclusion of the visitation and after review and discussion of the self-study. The committee shall maintain high standards and expectations in determining the performance level of the school.

B. The recommendation of the Accreditation Council.

The responsibility of the Accreditation Council, after reviewing the report of the visiting committee along with the action plan of the school, will be to recommend an accreditation status for the school to the Commissioner.

138.09 Cost of Accreditation

The costs of the visiting team for housing, meals and travel will be paid by the host school for all nondepartment personnel. Also the cost of self-study materials and the printing and distribution of the final report will be the responsibility of the host school.

138.10 Appeal Procedure

Schools may appeal a decision of non-accreditation to the commissioner, in writing, within 60 days of the official notification of non-accreditation. The decision of the Commissioner shall be final.

138.11 Waivers

Secondary schools may request that the Commissioner waive the requirement to undergo the accreditation process in extenuating circumstances. Each request will be judged by the Commissioner on its merits.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 20-A MRSA §§ 4511 - 4516

EFFECTIVE DATE:

September 17, 1989 - filing 89-360 accepted September 12, 1989, replaced Chapter 125 Part 2

EFFECTIVE DATE (ELECTRONIC CONVERSION):

May 19, 1996

AMENDED:

July 29, 2001 - Section 17(D) added (major substantive filing)

NON-SUBSTANTIVE CORRECTIONS:

September 4, 2001 - minor punctuation and spelling only

October 5, 2001 - removed Section 17(D) and restored it to Chapter 125

APAO WORD VERSION CONVERSION (IF NEEDED) AND ACCESSIBILITY CHECK: July 15, 2025