



Alternative Schools Guidebook



Wyoming Department of Education

122 W. 25th St., Ste. E200 | Cheyenne, WY 82002
P: 307-777-7675 | F: 307-777-6234 | edu.wyoming.gov

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Purpose and Goal	3
Components for Establishing Alternative Schools.....	3
Applications.....	3
Approval.....	3
Review.....	4
Reconfiguration.....	4
Evaluation.....	5
Annual Accreditation.....	5
Facility Location Adjustments.....	5
Accountability.....	5
Alternative School Funding	5
Virtual Education Programs.....	6
Contact Information.....	6
Submission Timeline.....	6

Introduction

The Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) is committed to ensuring that all districts receive guidance to support the development of alternative schools that will meet student needs, accreditation, and accountability requirements. Alternative schools are outlined in state statute under both duties of the state school board (WS. 21-2-304(vi)) and the state superintendent (WS. 21-2-204(ii)) in regard to accountability as it pertains to performance measures and determinations.

In addition to the duties enumerated above, the sixty-second Wyoming legislature enacted legislation providing for the approval of new alternative schools to be “included in a district’s configuration of schools under the block grant funding model.” This legislation amends Wyoming Statute 21-13-309 and requires an application to be approved by the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE).

Purpose and Goal

As of July 1, 2019, alternative school applications can once again be accepted by the WDE. The goal of this guidebook is to provide guidance of the processes for applications, approval, review, reconfiguration, and annual accreditation, as well as evaluation for alternative schools.

Components for Establishing Alternative Schools

Applications

For the purposes of the application, Alternative School is defined as a secondary school (grades 6–12) established by a school district to offer at-risk curriculum with a continuum of learning supports and intervention resources to students with educational needs that the district finds are not appropriately being met by other schools in the district system. The purpose of the Alternative School Application is to provide the opportunity for school districts wishing to establish an alternative school to apply for and gain approval.

Applications will be accepted for new alternative schools as well as any changes of current alternative school configurations from school districts during the application window, January 1 through March 1 each year. Applications received during this application window will be read and evaluated as they are received.

Approval

The following describes the documentation that is required when completing the application online for approval. Communication of the final decision will be returned by June 1.

- Purpose of the proposed alternative school
- Description of At-Risk Program (referring to a curriculum, continuum of learning supports and classroom interventions to address the needs of at-risk students within the district)
 - Criteria used to identify at-risk students.
 - Individual learning plans.
 - Research-based quality learning supports and classroom interventions.
 - Strategies used to address dropout prevention.

- Data-based predictors are used to identify students at risk of dropping out of school.
- Evaluation Plan
 - Process to determine effectiveness of the at-risk program (referring to a curriculum, continuum of learning supports and classroom interventions to address the needs of at-risk students within the district)
 - Charts, graphs, or other graphics to illustrate the data collected and analyzed.
 - Description of how the district will meet evaluation of the effectiveness of the curriculum, continuum of learning supports, and classroom interventions.
 - Description of how the district will evaluate the effectiveness of meeting the needs of the students attending the alternative school.
- School Facility
 - Space to be used for the proposed alternative school.
 - Evidence of approval by the School Facility Commission.

Review

Applicants must submit a full proposal to the WDE. The application must include an acknowledgment of the signature of the authorized official.

School districts receiving approval will be required to report annually to the WDE regarding progress in meeting educational objectives. The district will use the Alternative School Statement of Evaluation & Annual Assurances template submitted through the WDE district accreditation system. In addition, an evaluation of the effectiveness of at-risk programs (referring to a curriculum, continuum of learning supports, and classroom interventions to address the needs of at-risk students within the district) must be conducted at least every two (2) years by the school district, with results reported to the WDE through the accreditation processes.

Approved alternative schools will be funded through the Wyoming funding model starting the funding year following the first year of operation. Pursuant to W.S. 21-13-309(v)(B), approved alternative schools will be resourced in accordance with the at-risk funding model using data provided from the previous school year.

Reconfiguration

The WDE recognizes that there might be situations where changes in configuration may need to be made by the school district and offers the opportunity for school districts to request and gain approval for these changes in their alternative schools

Applications will be accepted for any changes of current alternative school configurations by the school district during the window, January 1 through March 1 each year. Applications received during this window will be read and evaluated as they are received. If approved, alternative schools will go back through the review process.

For information on applications for reconfiguration or other changes, districts should contact the Wyoming Department of Education. A reconfiguration application link, along with a checklist of assurances for the new configuration, will be provided upon request. Districts will also need to complete the WDE903 submission to the department by May 1st to ensure reconfiguration for the following school year for approved applications.

Evaluation

As part of the review process of new and changed alternative schools, districts are required to report annually to the WDE regarding progress in meeting educational objectives. The district will use the Alternative School Statement of Evaluation & Annual Assurances template submitted to WDE by November 1. In addition, an evaluation of the effectiveness of at-risk programs (referring to a curriculum, continuum of learning supports, and classroom interventions to address the needs of at-risk students within the district) must be conducted at least every two (2) years by the school district, with results reported to the WDE through the accreditation processes by the superintendent. Assurances should be based on the indicators of school-level performance for alternative school accountability in W.S. 21-2-204(n): academic achievement and growth, readiness for college and careers, measures of school quality, including climate, and measures of engagement, including implementation of student success plans.

Annual Accreditation

After two (2) evaluation cycles by the school district (a total of 4 years), through the evaluation processes, demonstrating academic progress or success of the alternative school's educational programs (referring to a curriculum, continuum of learning supports, and classroom interventions to address the needs of at-risk students within the district), the WDE will forward relevant documentation to the School Facilities Department for the consideration of including the alternative school in the district's five-year plan for long-range facility planning per W.S. 21-15-116. After the two evaluation periods, alternative schools will then enter the accreditation cycle of the district, including onsite peer review and annual accreditation. Further information regarding reporting requirements and forms will be made available by the WDE after a school is approved.

Facility Location Adjustments

Facility location adjustments for alternative schools prior to entering the district's long term facility plans, specifically when the district seeks to house them in a separate facility due to the inability to collocate with a similarly configured school, must be submitted to WDE for State Construction Department approval prior to any changes to the location to ensure compliance with W.S. 21-13-309 (m)(v)(B)(IV)(4).

Accountability

For information on accountability for alternative schools, districts should contact Sean McInerney, Accountability Division Director, at sean.mcinerney@wyo.gov.

Alternative School Funding

Alternative school leaders are encouraged to work with their district business manager and local school board for funding. WDE utilizes an alternative funding model to allocate funds to districts for the alternative school. Communication with the local leadership is essential for specific resource allocation. All other questions can be directed to Leslie Zimmerschied, School Foundation Program Supervisor, at leslie.zimmerschied@wyo.gov.

Virtual Education Programs

District leadership and Alternative School leaders should work with Jessica Hooper, Virtual Program Consultant, at WDE for information on virtual programs that may be used throughout the district and as a platform for the alternative school. Virtual programs are authorized by W.S. 21-2-202(a)(xxxi), W.S. 21-13-330, W.S. 21-2-202(a)(i), and outlined in Chapter 41 Rules. All questions can be directed to jessica.hooper@wyo.gov.

Contact Information

For information and all questions about alternative schools, please contact Micah Becker, Accreditation Consultant - Alternative Schools, at the Wyoming Department of Education. Needed documentation and all online links will be provided upon request, please email micah.becker@wyo.gov.

Submission Timeline

January 1 - March 1	Window Opens for New Applications & Reconfiguration
May 1	Reconfiguration Request Due (if necessary)
June 1	Final Decision on Application Communicated
November 1	Annual Assurances Due through Accreditation Processes