



Opportunity Through Education

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## Memo

**TO:** Joint Education Interim Committee

**FROM:** Dicky Shanor, Chief of Staff

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**SUBJECT:** Wyoming Department of Education Interim Topic: State Education Administration

### **State Administration of Education**

*The JEIC Committee will study how the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE), the Wyoming State Board of Education (SBE), the Wyoming Charter School Authorizing Board (WCSAB), and the Professional Teaching Standards Board (PTSB) work together for public education in the state. The Committee will consider administrative efficiencies and statutory changes, if necessary.*

### **The WDE and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

The delivery of public education is a collaborative effort among many state and local governmental entities and additional educational organizations that supplement and support Wyoming students and districts as needed. At the center is the WDE, led by the elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction, who is given general supervisory control of the public school system in the Wyoming Constitution and other duties as assigned by law. The WDE acts as the operational hub, managing state and federal funding, providing technical support to school districts, staffing and appointing members to the WCSAB, staffing the SBE, appointing members to the PTSB, and implementing the laws passed by the federal government, the Wyoming legislature, and rules passed by the SBE.

### **The Wyoming State Board of Education**

Wyoming Statute 21-2-304(a), in conjunction with W.S. 21-2-202, establishes that the SBE and the WDE must work together. The SBE defines policies and standards, while the WDE, under the State Superintendent, provides technical assistance and enforces those policies, creating a shared accountability structure. The SBE is responsible for the long-term vision of Wyoming schools, specifically focusing on the "Educational Basket of Goods," which are the standards and requirements for what students must learn.

Linda Finnerty – *Chief Communications Officer* | Nathan Tedjeske – *Chief Innovations Officer*  
Trent Carroll – *Chief Operations Officer* | Nish Goicolea – *Chief Policy Officer*

The SBE sets the state's graduation requirements and oversees the school accountability system. By working closely with the WDE, the SBE ensures that the high-level policy goals are translated into measurable standards that the Department can then assess in classrooms across the state. The State Superintendent and the WDE provide technical assistance and support to school districts for compliance with the SBE's standards, rules, and regulations.

Wyoming Statute 21-2-204 (Wyoming Accountability in Education Act) requires a statewide education accountability system where the SBE establishes the rules for accountability and the WDE is responsible for implementing the assessment and evaluation process.

The Wyoming State Board of Education ultimately approves the:

- State Standards.
- State Assessment.
- State Accountability System.
- Accreditation Status of Schools.
- Statewide System of Support.
- Leader & Teacher Evaluation.
- Accreditation & District Assessment Systems.

While the SBE approves these programs or systems, the creation, implementation, and oversight typically go through the WDE. The SBE also serves as the State Board of Career and Technical Education.

### **The Professional Teaching Standards Board**

While the SBE focuses on what is taught, the PTSB focuses on who is doing the teaching. Wyoming Statute 21-2-202(a)(xvi) requires WDE to assist the PTSB in its duties and responsibilities. Wyoming Statutes 21-2-801 and 21-2-802 require data submissions from the PTSB to the WDE to ensure verification of proper educator licensing and school accreditation requirements. The PTSB sets licensing standards, often in conjunction with broader educational frameworks, and professional development, often supported by the WDE.

Operating as an independent, educator-led licensing board/agency, the PTSB ensures that every teacher and administrator in Wyoming meets professional and ethical standards. They work in tandem with the WDE by managing the certification data that districts need to ensure compliance with state law.

The WDE does not provide any staffing or technical assistance to the PTSB, as the PTSB is an independent state agency. In the majority of other states, the PTSB is integrated into their state department of education.

## **The Wyoming Charter School Authorizing Board**

The newest addition to the state entity landscape is the WCSAB. The WCSAB provides a pathway for innovation within the public system. Created to expand school choice, the WCSAB serves as a statewide authorizer for charter schools that might not otherwise be approved by local districts.

Wyoming Statutes 21-3-302.2, 21-3-301, 21-2-202(h), and 21-3-307(e) create the intersection between the WDE and WCSAB. WCSAB submits all received charter applications to the WDE for review of compliance and accreditation requirements, and then the WDE provides a report back to WCSAB. The WCSAB acts as the Local Education Agency (LEA) for any charter school authorized by WCSAB. The board works with the WDE to ensure these public charter schools receive proper funding and with the SBE to ensure they meet the same rigorous academic standards as traditional schools. This model allows for specialized educational models, like classical or Montessori programs, to exist while remaining accountable to the state's overall educational mission.

The WDE provides administrative and technical support for WCSAB, including a liaison to WCSAB.

## **Additional Educational Organizations**

There are additional education and health organizations and institutions that intersect with the WDE, districts, and students, including regional Child Development Centers, private schools, Boards of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES), and Institutional Facilities, such as the Boys and Girls Schools, and other entities that serve students, such as Cathedral Home, YES House, and the Wyoming Behavioral Institute (WBI). The WDE works with these organizations and other state agencies, such as the Wyoming Departments of Health and Family Services, to serve students.

These entities are not considered Local Education Agencies (LEAs) nor State Education Agencies (SEAs), but they partner with both. They often fall into a gray area of education and Wyoming statute, and as a result, face unique challenges. These organizations are not eligible for many state and federal grants, are not accredited by the state, and will face increasingly challenging competition for their workforce.