

Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

August 13, 2026

Agenda Item: K-12 Accreditation and Monitoring: Risk Assessment Process Overview

State Board Goal(s): Goals 1-3

State Board Role/Authority: Iowa Code section 256.11 charges the State Board with adopting rules for accrediting all public schools in Iowa. To become or remain accredited, school districts, including public charter schools serving as their own local educational agency, must comply with Iowa Administrative Code rule 282–12, the General Accreditation Standards.

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Division of PK-12 Learning

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Attachment(s): One

Recommendation: It is recommended the State Board hear and discuss this information.

Background: The Department of Education is committed to supporting the continuous improvement of schools as they continue to work to meet the learning needs of all students. The purpose of the Risk Assessment process is to support continuous improvement through collaborative observation, data analysis, and technical assistance.

Phase I monitoring consists of annual monitoring by the Department of all accredited schools and school districts for compliance with state and federal school laws, regulations, and rules adopted by the State Board. The K-12 Desk Audit and Risk Assessment are considered part of Phase I monitoring.

A Risk Assessment complements the desk audit and aims to:

- Provide clear criteria for identifying districts needing additional support;
- Strengthen oversight between desk audits and intensive ESSA monitoring;
- Deliver targeted, data-informed support to districts; and
- Promote continuous improvement and compliance with Iowa Code section 256.11

K-12 Accreditation and Monitoring Risk Assessment Site Visits and Support



Department of Education

Rationale

Iowa Code section 256.11 charges the State Board with adopting rules for accrediting all public schools in Iowa.

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Levels of Support and Monitoring

Level of Support	Criteria	Type of Monitoring & Support	Support Team
Universal/Phase I	100% of districts	Universal K-12 Desk Audit	School Improvement Consultants
Targeted/Phase I	Districts identified based on the greatest risk demonstrated on the transparent risk assessment tool	On-site monitoring visit (Year 1); continued monitoring or virtual technical assistance (Year 2, if needed)	Department Team
Intensive	Continued noncompliance not remedied after Phase I (including from the Division of PK-12 Learning or the Division of Special Education) or as directed by the State Board or School Budget Review Committee	On-site monitoring visit and ongoing technical assistance based on the needs of the district	Department Team
	Graduation rate below 66% and/or lowest 5% on ESSA accountability measures	On-site visit, including monthly school improvement support, monitoring and technical assistance	ESSA Consultants and Department Team

Risk Assessment Data Collection

Based on risk indicators identified through the desk audit and additional data measures, selected districts will receive additional monitoring and support as part of the accreditation process.

A total of **63 points** is possible in the Risk Assessment scoring process.

Scoring

Category	Criteria
Student Outcomes (35 points 55%)	Iowa School Performance Profile ○ Priority rating (10 points) or ○ Needs Improvement rating (5 points)
	Chronic Absenteeism ○ Above 20% (5 points)
	State Indicators ○ English language arts proficiency below state average (5 points) ○ Mathematics proficiency below state average (5 points) ○ Science proficiency below state average (5 points)
	Student Safety ○ Based on district size and reporting patterns for bullying/harassment (5 points)

Scoring (cont.)

Category	Criteria
Phase I Monitoring (20 points 32%)	Risk indicators: ○ Corrective actions for two consecutive years (10 points) ○ Unresolved or overdue corrective actions within the past two years (10 points)
Infrastructure (8 points 13%)	Board of Educational Examiners ○ Founded ethics violations over two years (2 points)
	Staffing ○ Teaching outside endorsement above state average (2 points) ○ Staff retention below state average (2 points)
	Enrollment ○ Net negative open enrollment (2 points)

Additional Data

- Assessment Monitoring Findings
- Desk Audit and Corrective Action Findings
- Iowa School Performance Profile Rating
- Student Group Data

Site Visit

6-8 members of the Department team conduct the full-day site visit.

Schedules are created collaboratively with district administration.

The team uses an observation tool for classroom observations focused on the following:

- Learning Environment
- Instructional Materials
- Instructional Strategies
- Student Engagement

Summary Report

A summary report is provided to the district which includes the following:

- Key Observation Findings
- Needed Actions
- Next Steps

Example: Key Observation Findings

Summary of Key Observation Findings

The on-site review identified several strengths across the district, including:

- Positive and respectful learning environments
- School-wide expectations clearly displayed and understood
- Highly visible administrators and teachers
- Strong willingness to facilitate change for school improvement

The review also identified opportunities for growth, including:

- Improving high school course opportunities for students
- Improving consistency of HQIM implementation across all grades
- Improving professional development to focus on HQIM and best practices
- Increasing student engagement and productive struggle
- Strengthening alignment between standards, instruction and student tasks

Example: Needed Actions

The Department review team has determined the following needed actions:

- Priority 1: Complete the “Offer and Teach” directive corrective action for high school course offerings in English and Mathematics.
- Priority 2: Strengthen instructional coherence through HQIM implementation, standards and learning targets and formative assessments.
- Priority 3: Increase student engagement through discourse, productive struggle and rigorous tasks.

Based on the classroom observations, data analysis and leadership conversations summarized in this report, the Department developed the needed actions for the district. These actions are intended to support continuous improvement efforts and are expected to be incorporated into the district’s 2026–27 action plan.

Example: Next Steps

Summary of Next Steps

1. Include needed actions from this report in the district's action plan.
2. Collaborate with the Department for implementation and monitoring of the plan.
3. Collaborate with the Department for professional development support.

The Department will provide additional support to the district through the Risk Assessment monitoring process. The next steps the district and Department will take are explained below.

The district will be expected to include the needed actions provided in this report in their action plan. The Department School Improvement Consultant assigned to the district will visit with school leaders to support and monitor the implementation of the action plan. Additional classroom observations may be a part of the follow-up visits. The district and the Department will collaborate on opportunities for professional development support.

Ongoing Support

School improvement consultants will provide ongoing engagement through:

- Technical assistance to ensure regulatory compliance.
- Targeted professional development to close achievement gaps and foster safe learning environments.
- Responsive on-site visits tailored to district needs and requests.

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