

Chapter 180-55 WAC

PRIVATE SCHOOL ACCREDITATION

DRAFT Proposed Rules December 5, 2024

**WAC 180-55-005 Purpose and authority.** (1) **Purpose.** The provision of school accreditation procedures for approved private schools by the state board of education is designed to serve the following purposes:

(a) Support the state board's long-term vision of a performance-based education system by aligning school accreditation requirements to continuous improvement of student learning, achievement, and growth;

(b) Promote educational excellence and equity for every student through enhancement of the quality and effectiveness of the school's educational program in safe and supportive learning environments;

(c) Promote staff growth and commitment to the learning of every student;

(d) Build stronger links with families, parents, and the community by reaching consensus about educational expectations through family, parent, and community involvement;

(e) Provide a statement of accountability to the public;  
and

(f) Validate effective practices and positive impacts on student learning in private schools through an external appraisal process.

(g) Protect the health, safety, and well-being of children who are served in residential private schools through accreditation or licensing of residential facilities.

(2) **Authority.** The authority for this chapter is RCW 28A.305.130~~(5)~~.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 28A.305.130(6), 28A.150.220(4), and 28A.305.140. WSR 06-23-012, § 180-55-005, filed 11/2/06, effective 12/3/06; WSR 05-08-015, § 180-55-005, filed 3/28/05, effective 4/28/05; WSR 04-04-093, § 180-55-005, filed 2/3/04, effective 3/5/04; WSR 02-18-056, § 180-55-005, filed 8/28/02, effective 9/28/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 28A.305.130(6). WSR 91-04-015, § 180-55-005, filed 1/28/91, effective 2/28/91. Statutory Authority: 1990 c 33. WSR 90-17-009, § 180-55-005, filed 8/6/90, effective 9/6/90. Statutory Authority: RCW 28A.04.120(4). WSR 81-08-027 (Order 2-85), § 180-55-005, filed 3/26/81.]

**WAC 180-55-015 Definitions.** (1) An "accredited school" is a state board of education approved private school that meets statutory requirements and rules established by the state board of education, and one that has satisfactorily completed the accreditation procedures described by the state board of education pursuant to RCW 28A.305.130(5) and WAC 180-55-005 through 180-55-020.

(2) "Approved private school" shall mean a nonpublic school approved by the state board of education pursuant to chapter RCW 28A.305.130, 28A.195 RCW and chapter 180-90 WAC.

(3) "Approved residential private school" means a nonpublic school or nonpublic school district approved by the state board of education pursuant to RCW 28A.305.130, chapter 28A.195 RCW, and chapter 180-90 WAC that provides sleeping and living facilities or residential accommodations for enrolled students.

~~(4)~~ "Accredited" status shall be assigned to state board of education approved private schools that:

(a) Complete and meet fully state board of education requirements for accreditation as described in WAC 180-55-020; or

(b) Participate and qualify in accordance with standards and procedures established by recognized accrediting bodies or recognized accrediting processes ~~recognized by the state board of education.~~

(5) "Accredited Residential Program" is a supplemental accreditation of a Residential Private School by an accreditor recognized by the state board of education for the purpose of accrediting student living accommodations.

(54) "School improvement plan" shall mean the same as described under WAC 180-16-220 (2) (b) and (d).

(65) "Continuous improvement process" shall mean the ongoing process used by a school to monitor, adjust, and update its school improvement plan.

(76) "Self-review" shall mean the same as described under WAC 180-16-220 (2) (c).

~~(87)~~ "Appraisal" shall mean an objective, external appraisal of a school's self-review activities and school improvement plan pursuant to WAC 180-55-020(5).

~~(98)~~ "Recognized accrediting body" shall mean an organization recognized by the state board of education and listed on the state board website.

~~(109)~~ "Recognized accrediting process" shall mean the state board of education process managed through the educational service districts for approved private schools.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 28A.305.130(6), 28A.150.220(4), and 28A.305.140. WSR 06-23-012, § 180-55-015, filed 11/2/06, effective 12/3/06; WSR 05-08-015, § 180-55-015, filed 3/28/05, effective 4/28/05; WSR 04-04-093, § 180-55-015, filed 2/3/04, effective 3/5/04; WSR 02-18-056, § 180-55-015, filed 8/28/02, effective 9/28/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 28A.305.130(6). WSR 91-04-015, § 180-55-015, filed 1/28/91, effective 2/28/91. Statutory Authority: 1990 c 33. WSR 90-17-009, § 180-55-015, filed 8/6/90, effective 9/6/90. Statutory Authority: RCW 28A.04.120(4). WSR 84-11-050 (Order 8-84), § 180-55-015, filed 5/17/84; WSR 81-08-027 (Order 2-85), § 180-55-015, filed 3/26/81.]

**WAC 180-55-017 Criteria for state board of education**

**recognition of accrediting bodies.** (1) ~~(a) A recognized accrediting body shall meet the definition of such pursuant to WAC 180-55-015(8).~~

(~~a~~b) Accrediting bodies recognized by the state board of education shall verify that standards for approved private schools seeking accreditation through them meet or exceed the school accreditation standards pursuant to WAC 180-16-220.

~~(b) Prior to being considered by the state board for recognition for the specific purpose of accrediting state board approved private schools, accrediting bodies~~ Accrediting bodies recognized by the state board of education for the specific purpose of accrediting state board approved private schools, prior to being considered by the state board for recognition, shall have their accreditation standards verified for compliance under (~~1~~b) of this ~~subsection~~section by a private school advisory committee established by the superintendent of public instruction pursuant to RCW 28A.195.050. If verified, the committee may recommend the accrediting body to the state board for recognition.

(~~ce~~) A list of recognized accrediting bodies will be maintained on the website of the state board of education. The listing shall include an additional designation for accrediting bodies that are recognized for purposes of accreditation of student living accommodations at approved residential private schools.

(d) A recognized accrediting body must notify the board of any substantive changes to their accreditation standards or procedures and provide a copy of any revised standard when they are published.

(2) Private schools must be approved by the state board of education prior to being recommended by a state board of education recognized accrediting body or process for state accreditation consideration.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 28A.305.130(6), 28A.150.220(4), and 28A.305.140. WSR 06-23-012, § 180-55-017, filed 11/2/06, effective 12/3/06; WSR 05-08-015, § 180-55-017, filed 3/28/05, effective 4/28/05.]

WAC 180-55-xxx Criteria for accreditation of a residential private school student living accommodations.

(1) A recognized accrediting body that accredits student living accommodations at approved residential private schools may be recognized for the purpose of accrediting student living accommodations if the state board of education determines that the accrediting body's accreditation standards related to student living accommodations examine criteria comparable to the criteria established in negotiated rules developed by the department of children, youth, and families, to implement RCW 74.15.325. The standards for accreditation must be determined to be comparable and must address the needs of children and youth during noninstructional hours, including but not limited to:

- (a) space allotted to each child or youth for sleeping,
- (b) developmentally appropriate privacy requirements,
- (c) personal storage,
- (d) nutritional needs,
- (e) cleanliness and hygiene of living quarters,
- (f) social-emotional well-being during noninstructional hours,
- (g) health and wellness accommodations,



(h) compliance with the Americans with disabilities act,  
and

(i) physical safety.

(2) Accreditation of a residential program is a supplemental accreditation status. An accreditor recognized by the state board of education for the purpose of accrediting student living accommodations must also meet the criteria in WAC 180-55-017.

An appropriately recognized accreditor may accredit the residential program only for schools that are fully accredited for their academic program by the same accrediting body.

**WAC 180-55-yyy Process to request recognition by the State Board of Education.**

(1) Entities that wish to be recognized for the purpose of accrediting approved private schools must contact the state board of education to identify materials necessary for review by the private school advisory committee, established by the superintendent of public instruction pursuant to 28A.195.050 and, if applicable, consultation with the department of children, youth, and families.

(2) The private school advisory committee will review the materials provided and verify that the accrediting body's accreditation standards meet the requirements of this chapter. If verified, the committee may recommend the accrediting body to the state board for recognition. State Board of Education, in consultation with the department of children, youth, and families when applicable, retains final authority to recognize the accrediting body.

**WAC 180-55-020 Prerequisite to application for accreditation by approved private schools—Types of accreditation—Conditions—Effective periods—Administration of accreditation procedures.** (1) Certification by the state board of education of compliance with private school approval requirements under chapter 28A.190 RCW and chapter 180-90 WAC shall be prerequisite to a private school's application to the state board of education for accreditation under WAC 180-55-015 (3) (b) .

(2) **Standard accreditation - six years**, shall be granted to an approved private school after a satisfactory external

appraisal of the school's self-review activities and school improvement plan, and approval by the state board of education of the appraisal findings and recommendations by the external site appraisal team.

(3) **Conditional accreditation - one year**, for an approved private school where the external appraisal identifies omissions, inaccuracies or weaknesses in the building's self-review activities, or school improvement plan or continuous improvement process.

(4) **Application**. Application for school accreditation shall be made to the state board of education or other body or entity designated by the state board of education. Such application shall be submitted jointly by the appropriate officials of the private school and governing board, in accordance with procedures and timelines established by the state board of education.

(5) (a) **External appraisal**. The state board of education, or other body or entity designated by the state board of education, shall direct an external appraisal process for approved private school accreditation purposes. The state board may place yearly

limits on the number of schools that may participate in the external appraisal process using the state board accreditation option. The external appraisal shall be conducted by persons external to the approved private school. The external site appraisal team shall include, but is not limited to, certificated teachers and administrators who may earn continuing education clock hours pursuant to WAC 180-85-033(2).

(b) The external appraisal shall focus on the provisions of WAC 180-16-220 (2) (b), (c) and (d), and 180-55-005(1). The appraisal shall focus on an analysis of the school's self-review activities, the school's improvement plan and its progress and impact, in particular relating to WAC 180-55-005 (1) (c), and the school's continuous improvement process.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 28A.305.130(6), 28A.150.220(4), and 28A.305.140. WSR 06-23-012, § 180-55-020, filed 11/2/06, effective 12/3/06; WSR 04-04-093, § 180-55-020, filed 2/3/04, effective 3/5/04; WSR 02-18-056, § 180-55-020, filed 8/28/02, effective 9/28/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 28A.305.130(6). WSR 91-01-068, § 180-55-020, filed 12/14/90, effective 1/14/91. Statutory Authority: RCW 28A.04.120(4). WSR 84-11-050 (Order 8-84), § 180-55-020, filed 5/17/84; WSR 81-08-027 (Order 2-85), § 180-55-020, filed 3/26/81.]