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VERMONT AGENCY OF EDUCATION

DISTRICT QUALITY STANDARDS

Rule Series 100

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1 National Life Drive, Davis 5
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Agency Leadership

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| Governor: | Phillip B. Scott |
| Secretary of Education: | Daniel M. French, Ed.D. |
| Deputy Secretary of Education: | Heather Bouchey Ph.D. |

AOE Purpose Statement

The Agency of Education implements state and federal laws, policies, and regulations so that all Vermont learners have equitable access to high-quality learning opportunities. The Agency accomplishes this mission through the provision of leadership, support, and oversight of Vermont’s public education system.

- By leadership, we mean developing a shared statewide vision and defining expectations for Vermont’s education system in order to achieve a coherent and consistent understanding of policy and its implementation at the local level.
- By support, we mean providing professional learning opportunities and technical assistance so that stakeholders can meet legal requirements, ensure fiscal accountability, and make data-informed decisions.
- By oversight, we mean data collection and monitoring to verify that state and federal resources are used appropriately and effectively to establish a high-quality education system so that each Vermonter has access to high-quality learning opportunities.

100 District Quality Standards

101 Statutory Authority

16 V.S.A. § 165(g); 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 127, Sec. 14

102 Statement of Purpose

As set forth in 16 V.S.A. § 165:

(g) In addition to the education quality standards provided in section (a) of this section, each Vermont school district shall meet the school district quality standards adopted by rule of the Agency of Education regarding the business, facilities management, and governance practices of school districts. These standards shall include a process for school district quality reviews to be conducted by the Agency of Education. Annually, the Secretary shall publish metrics regarding the outcomes of school district quality reviews.

The purpose of these rules is to improve school district quality as a means to support the State's goal, set forth in 16 V.S.A. § 165(a), "that all Vermont children will be afforded educational opportunities that are substantially equal in quality" and enable them to achieve or exceed the education quality standards approved by the State Board of Education.

The State has ultimate responsibility for ensuring all students receive substantially equal access to a quality education. This responsibility originates from the Vermont Constitution and is more fully described in 16 V.S.A. § 1.

To fulfill its responsibility, the State delegates considerable authority to school districts, supervisory unions (SU/SDs) and superintendents. Therefore, the State has an obligation to provide public assurance that its delegated authority is being implemented in a manner that will likely achieve its responsibility.

The standards provided in these rules describe the core elements of a quality education delivery system. They also describe the role of the Agency of Education in providing the necessary support and oversight to attain those standards, so all students receive substantially equal access to a quality education.

These rules are in addition to and, unless otherwise specifically stated, do not supersede other Rules adopted by the Agency of Education or the State Board of Education.

103 Definitions

As used in this Rule 100 Series, words have the meaning as defined or intended in Title 16, Vermont Statutes Annotated; provided, however, that as used in this Rule Series, the term:

103.1 “Board” means the board of an SU/SD and, if applicable, the board of each member school district within an SU.

103.2 “Governance” means the system and methods by which SUs/SDs are directed and overseen including the SU’s/SD’s structure, the processes for making decisions and for ensuring accountability, and the ways in which goals are set and achieved, risk is assessed and mitigated, and performance is maximized.

103.3 “Priorities” means the SU’s/SD’s agreed-upon understanding of the most important goals.

103.4 “Processes” means structures established by the SU/SD to support consistency, clear expectations, organization, and shared understanding for how the work will be accomplished.

103.5 “Protocols” means the SU’s/SD’s agreed-upon norms of behavior and interactions to promote transparency, predictability, and functional group dynamics.

103.6 “SU/SD” means a supervisory union, including a supervisory district (a single-district supervisory union), in connection with:

- (a) The duties it performs on behalf of the supervisory union itself; and
- (b) If applicable, the duties it performs on behalf of its member school districts or the duties for which it is responsible for ensuring performance on the member districts’ behalf.

110 District Quality Standards

As required by 16 V.S.A. § 165(g), each SU/SD shall meet or exceed the following district quality standards.

111 Business Operations

111.1 Budgeting and Accounting

The SU/SD follows consistent and financially sound processes to effectively manage its budget, maximize the use of funding, and ensure transparency of financial operations.

111.1.1 The SU/SD prepares and presents an annual budget which ensures compliance with federal and other budgeting requirements and

demonstrates a clear connection to established SU/SD goals and priorities and, if applicable, the goals and priorities of each member school district within the SU.

111.1.2 The SU/SD maintains accounting systems and records that ensure transparency and accountability for all funds, regardless of source, and provide complete, accurate, reliable, and timely data for reporting.

111.1.3 The SU/SD maintains accounting records in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and Governmental Accounting Standards Board principles (GASB).

111.1.4 The SU/SD records and reports information consistent with the most current version of the Vermont Agency of Education Uniform Chart of Accounts within the SU's/SD's accounting software.

111.1.5 The SU/SD employs grants management practices that enable it to effectively and efficiently spend its federal grant funds and prevent reversion of funds.

111.2 Risk Management and Internal Controls

The SU/SD maintains adequate internal controls to provide reasonable assurance the SU/SD and, if applicable, each member school district within the SU follow state and federal statutes and regulations.

111.2.1 The SU/SD completes required audits in accordance with established deadlines and communicates audit results with the SU/SD Board and, if applicable, the board of each member school district within the SU.

111.2.2 The SU/SD establishes, and complies with, a consistent records management process that adequately addresses all state, federal, and local requirements related to records and records retention.

111.2.3 The SU/SD takes adequate measures to safeguard protected information and other information designated as sensitive, consistent with applicable state and federal law.

111.2.4 The SU/SD implements and maintains effective procurement and contract administration processes.

111.2.5 The SU/SD has incorporated a risk management assessment, including liability insurance coverage and safe cybersecurity practices, into its operational processes.

111.3 Personnel Management

The SU/SD and, if applicable, each member school district within the SU, employs staff in accordance with state and federal law and implements equitable

and inclusive personnel practices that support effective recruitment and retention of staff.

111.3.1 The employer establishes clear and consistent policies and processes for equitable hiring of staff.

111.3.2 The employer ensures that all employees, volunteers, and other applicable staff have completed all required background check requirements in accordance with law.

111.3.3 The employer ensures that all positions that require professional licensing meet current licensing requirements throughout the duration of employment.

111.4 Data Management

The SU/SD ensures systems are in place for the efficient and purposeful collection, use, and sharing of data.

111.4.1 The SU/SD reports accurate and timely data as required by the Secretary of Education.

111.4.2 The SU/SD uses a single Student Information System for all public schools within the SU/SD as a data source for up-to-date educational records.

111.4.3 The SU's/SD's Student Information System meets interoperability requirements as specified by the Secretary of Education.

111.4.4 The SU/SD demonstrates purposeful use of data in identifying needs, evaluating program effectiveness, and communicating the current state of educational outcomes.

112 Facilities Management and Safety

112.1 Facilities Management

The SU/SD adequately maintains and cleans the facilities for which the SU/SD or, if applicable, a member school district is responsible, and has developed the plans necessary to ensure current and future operations.

112.1.1 The SU/SD maintains a comprehensive school facilities Operations and Maintenance Manual (OMM) for each building and other facility for which the SU/SD or, if applicable, a member school district is responsible.

(a) The SU/SD ensures that educational and program facilities are accessible, clean, safe, secure, well-lit, well-maintained, and conducive to student learning, including having adequate access to technology.

(b) The OMM describes regular cleaning routines and maintenance tasks such as the periodic cleaning/changing of HVAC filters and other mechanical systems to ensure good air quality.

(c) The SU/SD updates the OMM as changes to facilities or staffing occur and provides training to staff on how to implement the OMM.

112.1.2 The SU/SD maintains a five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for each building and other facility for which the SU/SD or, if applicable, a member school district is responsible and updates it annually.

(a) The CIP describes future capital development and improvement needs, including the need for adequate-sized facilities based on enrollment projections.

(b) The CIP also addresses the following categories in addition to capacity:

(i) Safety and security infrastructure;

(ii) Accessibility;

(iii) Technology infrastructure;

(iv) Capacity to deliver STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) programming; and

(v) Building systems' condition and performance, including energy efficiency improvements and indoor air quality to address the health and safety of students and employees.

112.1.3 The SU/SD designates a person with responsibility for facilities management with the SU/SD. The designee receives the necessary training and certification to ensure compliance with these standards.

112.2 Facilities Safety

The SU/SD ensures that the facilities for which the SU/SD or, if applicable, a member school district is responsible are safe, and maintains up-to-date operational plans to ensure staff and other stakeholders can respond to threats.

112.2.1 The SU/SD maintains a comprehensive Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) in the format prescribed by the Secretary.

(a) SU/SD leadership and, if applicable, the leadership of each member school district within the SU reviews and updates the EOP annually to ensure that it includes the essential processes, operations and assignments that are required to plan, prepare, mitigate, respond to, and recover from an emergency or disaster.

(b) The SU/SD ensures that all drills, practice exercises, and other emergency processes required by the EOP are conducted at each building or other facility.

112.2.2 The SU/SD ensures that each building and other facility has adopted an appropriate and layered approach to physical security measures to ensure each facility is a safe and secure environment.

112.2.3 The SU/SD ensures that all SU/SD staff and, if applicable, member school district staff within the SU/SD are trained in emergency operations including threat assessment protocols.

113 Governance

113.1 Governance Priorities

Through an equity lens, the Board of each SU/SD and, if applicable, of each member school district within the SU, adopts a vision and measurable goals to support continuous improvement and monitors student academic progress and wellness.

113.1.1 The Board follows an inclusive process to invite and incorporate community input into the vision and goals for the school system.

113.1.2 At least annually, the Board sets measurable goals and regularly reviews the progress toward those goals.

113.1.3 At least annually, the Board monitors student academic progress and wellness.

113.1.4 At least annually, the Board formally evaluates the performance of the superintendent, based in part on the superintendent's progress toward meeting agreed-upon goals.

113.2 Governance Protocols

The Board of each SU/SD and, if applicable, of each member school district within the SU, adopts, reviews annually, and revises as needed, operating protocols for how it does its work, and annually reads foundational documents such as articles of agreement.

113.2.1 The Board annually assesses its performance, including adherence to agreed protocols, processes, and policies.

113.2.2 The Board annually reviews whether and/or how its actions and contributions have impacted the school system's success in meeting goals.

113.2.3 The Board annually evaluates the effectiveness of community engagement and public communication efforts.

113.2.4 The Board undertakes its own continuous learning and development and provides members with opportunities for ongoing training and support to maintain and increase their skills and understanding.

113.3 Governance Processes

The Board of each SU/SD and, if applicable, of each member school district within the SU, establishes and follows inclusive, transparent, and predictable methods to conduct its work.

113.3.1 The Board discusses, adopts, and revises policies on a regular basis to ensure the system is supporting and meeting the needs of every student.

113.3.2 The Board ensures its annual budget aligns with its stated priorities and provides an equitable distribution of resources to help meet the needs and goals of every student.

113.3.3 The Board ensures its members are aware of conditions set forth in negotiated agreements and contracts.

113.3.4 The Board ensures its members understand and comply with Vermont statutes and regulations relevant to board work and public education.

113.3.5 The Board stays apprised of proposed legislation and policy-making that may affect its school system and students.

113.3.6 The Board maintains an ongoing relationship with locally elected officials.

130 Quality Assurance

131 District Quality Review Process

131.1 Self-Evaluation

131.1.1 Annually, the SU/SD shall evaluate its performance under each District Quality Standard set forth in Rule 110 above and the following Education Quality Standards (State Board Rule Series 2000):

- SBE Rule 2120.6 Curriculum Coordination
- SBE Rule 2121.3 Needs Based Professional Learning
- SBE Rule 2121.5 Tired System of Support
- SBE Rule 2123 State and Local Comprehensive Assessment System
- SBE Rule 2125 Continuous Improvement Plan

- SBE Rule 2121.4 Staff Evaluation
- SBE Rule 2120.8 Local Graduation Requirements
- SBE Rule 2122.2 Access to Instructional Materials

131.1.2 Annually, on or before a date determined and announced by the Agency, the SU/SD shall submit its self-evaluation electronically to the Agency.

131.1.3 The SU/SD shall conduct and submit its self-evaluation on a form developed by the Agency, which the Agency may update as necessary or as it deems advisable.

131.1.4 Based on the results of the SU/SD self-evaluation, the Agency may require the SU/SD to participate in training to improve its practices related to one or more District Quality Standards and/or Education Quality Standards listed above.

131.2 Three-Year Intermediate Reviews

131.2.1 The Agency shall evaluate each SU/SD's performance under the Education Quality Standards listed in 131.1.1 above by reviewing the state assessment proficiency scale scores of each SU/SD and each SU/SD's progress in achieving adequate growth in proficiency, including proficiency of historically marginalized student subgroups.

131.2.2 Not less than every three years, based on the evaluation in 131.2.1, the Agency shall identify for an intermediate review each SU/SD that the Secretary determines is not meeting Education Quality Standards or that is not making sufficient progress in improving student performance as required by 16 V.S.A. § 165(b). The Agency shall inform each SU/SD in writing whether it has been identified for intermediate review.

131.2.3 An SU/SD identified for an intermediate review will be evaluated by the Agency for compliance with the Education Quality Standards listed in 131.1.1 above. The Agency shall notify the SU/SD in writing of the outcome of its review not later than one year from the date of written identification in 131.2.2.

131.2.3.1 The notification shall identify any standard the SU/SD failed to meet.

131.2.3.2 The notification shall identify the specific actions the SU/SD must take to meet any standard it failed to meet and establish a deadline by which the action must be completed.

131.2.3.3 The notification shall identify the manner in which the SU/SD shall confirm that it has taken the identified actions (e.g., in writing, in an electronic meeting, at an in-person meeting).

131.2.3.4 The notification shall describe the technical assistance the Agency will provide to the SU/SD.

131.2.4 If an SU/SD fails to take corrective actions identified in the Agency's notification, within two years of the date of notification, then the Agency may make a recommendation to the State Board for one or more of the following actions, pursuant to the process described in 16 V.S.A. § 165(b):

- (a) the Agency shall continue to provide technical assistance for one more cycle of review;
- (b) the State Board shall adjust supervisory union boundaries or responsibilities of the superintendency pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 261;
- (c) the Secretary shall assume administrative control of an individual school, school district, or supervisory union, including budgetary control to ensure sound financial practices, only to the extent necessary to correct deficiencies;
- (d) the State Board shall close an individual school or schools and require that the school district pay tuition to another public school or an approved independent school pursuant to chapter 21 of Title 16; or
- (f) the State Board shall require two or more school districts to consolidate their governance structures.

132 Publication of “Metrics Regarding the Outcomes” of District Quality Reviews

132.1 Within 60 days of the deadline established for submission of the original self- evaluation in 131.1 above, the Agency shall publish on its website each SU/SD's measurements under the district quality standards.

132.2 Within 7 days of the written identification in 131.2.2 above, the Agency shall publish on its website a list of SU/SDs identified for a three-year intermediate review.

140 Effective Date

These rules will take effect on July 1, 2025.