R277. Education, Administration.
R277-410. Accreditation of Schools.
R277-410-1. Definitions.

A. "Accreditation" means the formal process for internal and external review and approval under the Standards for the Northwest Accreditation Commission, a division of Advance Education Inc., (AdvancED).

B. "AdvancED" means the provider of accreditation services based on standards, student performance and stakeholder involvement and is a nonprofit resource offering school improvement and accreditation services to education providers.

C. "Board" means the Utah State Board of Education.

D. "Elementary school" for the purpose of this rule means grades no higher than grade 6.

E. "Junior high school" for purposes of this rule means grades 7 through 9.

F. "Middle school" for the purpose of this rule means grades no lower than grade 5 and no higher than grade 8 in any combination.

G. "Northwest" means the Northwest Accreditation Commission, the regional accrediting association of which Utah is a member. Northwest is an accreditation division of AdvancED.

H. "Secondary school" for the purpose of this rule means a school that includes grades 9-12 that offers credits toward high school graduation or diplomas or both in whatever kind of school the grade levels exist.

I. "State Council" means the State Accreditation Council, which is composed of 15- 20 public school administrators, school district personnel, private and special purpose school representatives, and USOE personnel. The members are selected to provide statewide representation and volunteer their time and service.

J. "USOE" means the Utah State Office of Education.

R277-410-2. Authority and Purpose.

A. This rule is authorized under Utah Constitution Article X, Section 3 which vests general control and supervision of public education in the Board, by Section 53A-1-402(1)(c)(i) which directs the Board to adopt rules for school accreditation, and Section 53A-1-401(3) which allows the Board to adopt rules in accordance with its responsibilities.

B. The purpose of this rule is to specify accreditation procedures and responsibility for public schools for which accreditation is required or sought voluntarily and for nonpublic schools which voluntarily request AdvancED Northwest accreditation.

R277-410-3. Accreditation of Public Schools.

A. The USOE has responsibility to facilitate accreditation by the Board for Utah public schools. The Board is not responsible for the accreditation of nonpublic schools, including private, parochial, or other independent schools.

B. Utah public secondary schools, as defined in R277-410-1H and consistent with R277-481-3A(2), shall be members of AdvancED Northwest and be accredited by AdvancED Northwest.

C. Utah public elementary and middle schools that desire accreditation shall be members of AdvancED Northwest and meet the requirements of R277-410-5 and R277-410-6. AdvancED Northwest accreditation is optional for Utah elementary and middle schools.

D. All AdvancED Northwest accredited schools shall complete and file reports in accordance with AdvancED Northwest protocols.

E. If a school includes grade levels for which accreditation is both mandatory and optional, the school shall be accredited in its entirety.

R277-410-4. Accreditation Status; Reports.

A. The Board accepts the AdvancED Northwest Standards for Quality Schools as the basis for its accreditation standards for school accreditation.

B. The Board requires Utah public schools seeking accreditation to satisfy additional specific Utah assurances in addition to required AdvancED Northwest standards.

C. A school shall complete reports as required by AdvancED Northwest and submit the report to the appropriate recipients.

D. A school shall have a complete school evaluation and site visit at least once every five years to maintain its accreditation.

E. The USOE may require on-site visits as often as necessary when it receives notice of accreditation problems, as determined by the USOE, AdvancED Northwest, or its State Council.

F. The school's accreditation status is recommended by the State Council following a review of the report of the school's External Review. Final approval of the status is determined by the AdvancED Commission and approved by the Board.

R277-410-5. Accreditation Procedures.

A. The evaluation of secondary schools for the purpose of accreditation is a cooperative activity in which the school, the school district, the USOE, and AdvancED Northwest share responsibilities. A school's internal review, development, and implementation of a school improvement plan are crucial steps toward accreditation.

B. A school seeking AdvancED Northwest accreditation for the first time shall submit a membership application to AdvancED. The accepted application shall be forwarded to the AdvancED State Director.

(1) If a school’s application for membership is accepted, the school is granted provisional accreditation status for two years and shall have an accreditation visit in year three of the school’s operation. A school may request an accreditation visit prior to year three if the school has sufficient student and financial data.

(2) Following a visit by at least two qualified educators verifying a school's compliance with accreditation standards and approval by the AdvancED Commission, the school shall then receive accreditation.

C. AdvancED Northwest accredited schools shall be subject to:

(1) compliance with AdvancED Northwest membership requirements;

(2) satisfactory review by the State Council, AdvancED Northwest Commission and Board approval;

(3) a site visit at least every five years by an external review team to review the internal review materials, visit classes, and talk with staff and students as follows:

(a) The external review team shall present its finding in the form of a written report in a timely manner. The report shall be provided to the school, school district superintendent or local charter board chair, and other appropriate parties.

(b) AdvancED staff shall review the external review team report, consult with the State Council and the AdvancED Commission shall grant accreditation status if appropriate.

D. Following review and acceptance, accreditation external review team reports are public information and are available upon request.

R277-410-6. Elementary School Accreditation.

A. Elementary schools desiring accreditation shall be members of AdvancED Northwest and meet the standards required for such accreditation as outlined in this rule.

B. The accreditation of Utah elementary schools is optional; interested elementary schools may apply to AdvancED Northwest for accreditation.

C. Accreditation shall take place under the direction of AdvancED Northwest.

R277-410-7. Junior High and Middle School Accreditation.

A. Junior high and middle schools desiring accreditation shall be members of AdvancED Northwest and meet the standards required for such accreditation as outlined in this rule.

B. The accreditation of Utah middle schools is optional; interested middle schools may apply to AdvancED Northwest for accreditation.

C. Public junior high and middle schools that include grade 9 shall be members of AdvancED Northwest and be visited and assigned status by Advanced Northwest.

D. The AdvancED Northwest accreditation standards provided in this rule are applicable to junior high and middle schools in their entirety if the schools include grade 9 consistent with R277-410-6C.

R277-410-8. Board Accreditation Standards.

A. Board accreditation standards include AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools and Utah-specific requirements. Each standard requires the school to respond to a series of indicator statements and provide evidence of compliance as directed.

B. AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools.

(1) Purpose and Direction

(2) Governance and Leadership

(3) Teaching and Assessing for Learning

(4) Resources and Support Systems

(5) Using Results for Continuous Improvement

C. Utah-specific assurances include essential information sought from schools to demonstrate alignment with Utah law and Board rules. Utah-specific assurances are available from the USOE Teaching and Learning Section.

R277-410-9. Transfer or Acceptance of Credit.

A. Utah public schools shall accept transfer credits from accredited secondary schools consistent with R277-705-3.

B. Utah public schools may accept transfer credits from other credit sources consistent with R277-705-3.

KEY: accreditation, public schools, nonpublic schools
Date of Enactment or Last Substantive Amendment: June 9, 2014
Notice of Continuation: August 1, 2012
Authorizing, and Implemented or Interpreted Law: Art X Sec 3; 53A-1-402(1)(c); 53A-1-401(3)