



Body of Evidence

September 2009

The Wyoming State Legislature and the Wyoming State Board of Education enacted high school graduation requirements stating that all students receiving a Wyoming high school diploma must master the common core of knowledge and skills. No single test is used to determine eligibility for graduation. Instead, the legislature and Board of Education have allowed each school district to design a system to determine if a student has met the graduation requirements. This system is called "Body of Evidence." It is a collection of a student's work proving his/her understanding of concepts and his/her ability to perform certain required skills.

The following characteristics must be included in this assessment system:

- The system must provide evidence about student achievement directly related to the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards;
- The system must provide students with multiple opportunities, using multiple formats, to demonstrate their knowledge and skills related to the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards;
- The Body of Evidence assessment system must answer two basic questions:
 1. Does the student know enough to graduate?
 2. Can the evidence support the answer to question #1?

The Common Core of Knowledge and Skills fall into nine content areas for which we have Wyoming Content and Performance Standards:

1. Language Arts
2. Social Studies
3. Mathematics
4. Science
5. Fine and Performing Arts
6. Physical Education
7. Health Education
8. Career/Vocational Education;
9. Foreign Languages.

In addition to meeting the standards in the common core of knowledge and skills, students must have completed 4 English credits, 3 mathematics credits, 3 science credits, and 3 social studies credits (including history, American government and economic systems and institutions). *These credits are also called Carnegie Units.*

Three levels of transcript endorsement will be awarded:

- **Advanced Endorsement:** A student must achieve an *advanced* performance level in 5 of the content areas and a *proficient* performance level in the other 4 content areas.
- **Comprehensive Endorsement:** A student must achieve a *proficient* level of performance in all 9 content areas.
- **General Endorsement:** A student must achieve a *proficient* level of performance in 5 of the 9 content areas.

The Body of Evidence must be designed and evaluated according to the following criteria:

- **Alignment** - Assessments must measure the state content and performance standards. A variety of assessment measures and formats will be used to maximize the match between standards and assessments.
- **Consistency** - The set of assessments should yield consistent decisions about students' performance related to the standards.
- **Fairness** - A Body of Evidence assessment system must be fair for all groups of students. Appropriate accommodations will be used so students with disabilities and Limited English Proficient students have as fair a chance as possible to demonstrate what they know.
- **Standard Setting** - Educational professionals will decide the process of setting acceptable scores (determining what's "good enough") in a fair and reasonable way.
- **Comparability** - The assessments included in the system should be similar across schools and classrooms within the same school district both within a given year and across years.

There are several ways for a district to design a Body of Evidence. Each district must select the approach that best matches its primary purposes. Some of these might be:

- **Course-Based & Common Assessment Approach** - adds some common measurements to help unify grades from different teachers across the district;
- **District-Based Approach** - relies on stand-alone assessments at key checkpoints in a student's high school career - could be at the end of specific courses or grades;
- **Multi-District Approach** - relies on cooperation among districts to produce high-quality measurements that can be used by several districts.
- **Standardized Assessment Approach** - the results of standardized assessments such as norm-referenced tests, district achievement tests, and the Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students (PAWS) could be included in a district's Body of Evidence, but these assessments could **NOT** make up the entire Body of Evidence for any subject area;
- **Mixed Models** - could allow districts to rely on the best features of these multiple approaches.

A committee of peers will review each district's Body of Evidence Assessment System and report each district's status to the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The committee of peers will be Wyoming educators who have successfully completed peer review training provided by the Wyoming Department of Education.

The Body of Evidence for students with special needs will include accommodations in accordance with their Individualized Educational Programs (IEP) or 504 Plans. The policies in the "Policies for the Participation of All Students in District and Statewide Assessment and Accountability Systems" are available from the Wyoming Department of Education. The accommodations may not significantly alter the form of the assessments used to measure student performance.

A Body of Evidence Consortium (consisting of more than 35 Wyoming school districts, the Wyoming Department of Education, and the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment) pools resources and ideas in designing and scoring performance assessments.

Districts will be able to use these resources to provide non-test-based methods for students to meet the graduation requirements. The activities-based method offers an opportunity for districts to use the activities/tasks to combine instruction and assessment.

The Wyoming Department of Education has published a number of example "assessment activities." There are also complete guidelines for managing the assessment activities. A social studies assessment activity might take a particular period of history for the students to explore in depth. The activities might include each student being assigned a person from history, doing research into how that person lived and worked, and then making a presentation to the class as if they are that person. Students also compile a portfolio and do a written report.

All the activities are evaluated in relation to how they meet the benchmarks and standards. This type of activity can cross subject matter to meet standards. The written materials can be evaluated by language arts standards, as well as social studies standards. The same holds true of a science assessment activity. Students must meet benchmarks and standards for science, but if math is involved, or language arts in the written report, then standards for those subjects could also be evaluated.

A consortium assessment activity may also show where the student has met standards in the common core of skills such as problem solving, interpersonal communication, or critical thinking.

Today's students are required to meet credit requirements, and to demonstrate that they have learned and can use skills and knowledge in a meaningful way. The Body of Evidence is a way for students to have many opportunities to demonstrate their level of proficiency. Teachers, administrators, and parents have concrete documentation to back up that proficiency from several different measurements through the Body of Evidence.

(Article adapted from Wyoming's Graduation Laws and the Body of Evidence - Scott Marion; Body of Evidence materials from the Wyoming Dept. of Education, and Park Co. School District #1 Body of Evidence Draft document.)

For more information: Contact your local school district's Curriculum and Instruction Coordinator, your local principal, or the Wyoming Department of Education at www.k12.wy.us .

Or call the Parent Education Network, toll-free: 1-877-900-9736, or log on to www.wpen.net.

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