WYOMING
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

TO:	Joint Education Interim Committee
FROM:	Megan Degenfelder, Chief Policy Officer Laurel Ballard, Student & Teacher Resources Team Supervisor
DATE:	June 6-7, 2018
SUBJECT:	Virtual Education

In order to review the impact of virtual education students on school accountability metrics, the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) has provided background information on virtual education programs, an update on recent changes to accountability and performance reporting for full-time virtual education students, and school accountability metrics.

Virtual Education Programs
Pursuant to W.S. § 21-2-202(a)(xxxi), virtual education programs for K-12 students are delivered by Wyoming school districts through approval by the Wyoming Department of Education. School districts have a considerable amount of flexibility around what type of virtual education program they provide. Districts may elect to provide either part-time or full-time virtual education (or both) to students within their district only, or to students who reside in other areas of the state as well. When a district opts to provide virtual education to students living in other areas of the state, the program is defined as statewide.

Full-time virtual education means a student is provided more than fifty percent (50%) of their required education from a single school district virtual education program. Pursuant to W.S. § 21-13-330(g)(ii), full-time virtual education students must be enrolled in, and assigned to, a brick and mortar school within the district providing the full-time virtual education program. The district providing the program receives the student's full average daily membership.

As with all virtual education programming, including statewide virtual education programs, districts can accept or deny students into the program depending on whether students meet their program eligibility criteria. Accepting students in virtual education programs is not mandatory and is up to district discretion based on established enrollment requirements, including a process to verify if virtual

1

education course(s) are appropriate to the learning capabilities of the individual student as described in the Chapter 41 Virtual Education Rules Section 3(g)(ii)(I).

Separate Accountability and Performance Reporting
In 2017, changes were made to the statute regarding virtual education based on recommendations made to the Joint Education Interim Committee by the Distance Education Task Force (DETF). The DETF, formed in 2015 per House Enrolled Act No. 101, was charged with the review of distance education to provide greater transparency in administering distance education programs.

Several options were considered by the DETF, including the formation of a 49th school district to house all statewide virtual education programs or allowing each school district to house its own virtual school, potentially as a type of alternative school. The DETF did not recommend either of those options, as they anticipated it would result in significant increases in cost, and potentially require the development of an additional cost-based funding model. However, the DETF did recommend that full-time virtual education student performance results be separated from the non-virtual students assigned to the same school in order to provide transparency in assessment and reporting on accountability metrics.

The 2017 statutory revisions included the addition of reporting full-time virtual education students as a subgroup in the W.S. § 21-2-204(j)(ii) Wyoming Accountability in Education Act statutes, and also require the Wyoming Department of Education to, at a minimum, allow for the disaggregation of assessment data and other measures of academic performance of students attending full-time virtual education programs from students physically attending class in a school facility per W.S. 21-2-202(a)(xxxi)(E).

The recommendation on separate reporting was intended to provide school and program administrators, WDE, and other stakeholders a means to better understand and improve virtual education programming and student outcomes and identify the supports, professional development, and other resources that may be needed for students.

Reporting on the virtual education subgroup began in the 2016-17 school year. Disaggregated data including "Virtual Education" and "Non-Virtual Education" as subgroups is now publicly available for PAWS, ACT, and WY-ALT results. Additionally, school and district administrators have access to Growth and Equity subgroup reports.

The 2016-17 graduation rates are not yet available for the "Virtual Education" subgroups. Cohort based graduation rates for a newly defined subgroup typically require collection of data for four full years following introduction of the subgroup. In the case of the virtual education subgroup, the first applicable cohort consists of students entering 9th grade for the first time in 2017-18. The critical requirement is the ability to categorize students against the new subgroup definition when exiting any time during the four years leading up to expected graduation in 2020-21.

School Accountability Metrics

Statewide virtual education programs are held accountable through the brick and mortar schools in which full-time virtual education students are assigned. Under the Wyoming Accountability in Education Act, schools receive a school performance rating of either Exceeding, Meeting, Partially Meeting, or Not Meeting Expectations. The most recent data on school accountability metrics is from the 2016-17 school year. Of the six schools that offer statewide virtual education programs, two were Meeting Expectations, two were Partially Meeting Expectations, and two were Not Meeting Expectations.

Various indicators are used to determine school performance ratings. In 2016-17, the indicators for schools that serve grades 3-8 were achievement (in reading, math, and science), growth, and equity. The indicators for schools that serve grades 9-12 are achievement (in reading and math), growth, graduation rate, and additional readiness. Each individual school has targets to meet for each indicator and they are rated as either meeting or below targets.

The metric for achievement is based on student performance on the statewide summative assessment. In 2016-17, this was PAWS for students in grade 3-8 and the ACT Plus Writing for students in grade 11. Based on cut scores set by the Professional Judgement Panel, students scores are categorized as Advanced, Proficient, Basic, or Below Basic. A higher percentage of proficiency indicates better student performance on the assessment.

The metric for growth is student growth percentiles, which indicate how an individual student's performance on the statewide summative assessment, compared with that of all Wyoming public school students from that particular year, in the same grade, who had similar math/reading scores in previous years. Lower growth percentile indicate less improvement by students over the past year than their academic peers, and higher growth percentiles indicate more improvement by students over the past year than their academic peers.

The metric for equity is the student growth percentile for any student who scored in the bottom quartile in reading or math or both. Basically, this is the same metric as the growth indicator, except it is focused on the performance of the lowest performing students in the state.

The metric for graduation rate is the four year on-time graduation rate.

Lastly, there are several metrics for additional readiness, including grade nine credits earned, statewide summative assessment scores, and eligibility for the Hathaway Scholarship.

Attached is a chart of school performance rating information for the schools that offer full-time virtual education programs, which includes a breakdown of contributing indicator ratings. Also attached is a chart comparing the achievement indicator of virtual to non-virtual students. The comparisons show that sometimes virtual education student results are higher, sometimes they are close to the same, and sometimes they are lower. Any number of variables may be responsible for the differences in the results.

2016-17 School Performance Ratings for Schools with Statewide Virtual Programs

School	School Performance Rating	Achievement	Growth	Equity	Graduation Rate	Additional Readiness	Participation Rate
Big Horn County School District No. 1 Rocky Mountain Elementary School (29% virtual students)	Meeting Expectations	Meeting Targets	Meeting Targets	Meeting Targets	N/A	N/A	Met
Niobrara County School District No. 1 Lusk Elementary School (55% virtual students)	Not Meeting Expectations	Below Targets	Below Targets	Below Targets	N/A	N/A	Met
Big Horn County School District No. 1 Rocky Mountain Middle School (43% virtual students)	Meeting Expectations	Meeting Targets	Meeting Targets	Below Targets	N/A	N/A	Met
Niobrara County School District No. 1 Lusk Middle School (69% virtual students)	Partially Meeting Expectations	Meeting Targets	Meeting Targets	Below Targets	N/A	N/A	Met
Big Horn County School District No. 1 Rocky Mountain High School (60% virtual students)	Partially Meeting Expectations	Below Targets	Meeting Targets	Meeting Targets	Below Targets	Below Targets	Met
Niobrara County School District No. 1 Niobrara County High School (71% virtual students)	Not Meeting Expectations	Meeting Targets	Below Targets	Below Targets	Below Targets	Below Targets	Docked

2016-17 Accountability Indicator Data for Schools with Statewide Virtual Programs

Table 1. Rocky Mountain Elementary School Virtual Student Data Compared to Non-Virtual Student Data

	Math	Reading	Science	All
Percent Difference in Proficiency on PAWS Grades 3-5	-25%	-14%	-23%	-25%
Percentile Difference in Growth on PAWS Grades 3-5	-14.0	-26.0	N/A	-22.5

Table 2. Lusk Elementary School Virtual Student Data Compared to Non-Virtual Student Data

	Math	Reading	Science	All
Percent Difference in Proficiency on PAWS Grades 3-5	-19%	+10%	+2%	-3%
Percentile Difference in Growth on PAWS Grades 3-5	-4.0	-3.0	N/A	-7.0

Table 3. Rocky Mountain Middle School Virtual Student Data Compared to Non-Virtual Student Data

	Math	Reading	Science	All
Percent Difference in Proficiency on PAWS Grades 6-8	-15%	-3%	-27%	-12%
Percentile Difference in Growth on PAWS Grades 6-8	-9.0	-0.5	N/A	-6.0
Percentile Difference in Equity on PAWS Grades 6-8	+11.0	-7.5	N/A	-7.0

Table 4. Lusk Middle School Virtual Student Data Compared to Non-Virtual Student Data

	Math	Reading	Science	All
Percent Difference in Proficiency on PAWS Grades 6-8	+9%	+14%	+4%	+11%
Percentile Difference in Growth on PAWS Grades 6-8	-6.5	-15.0	N/A	-13.5
Percentile Difference in Equity on PAWS Grades 6-8	-21.0	-27.0	N/A	-26.0

Note: Cells shaded in green indicate areas where full-time virtual students performed better than non-virtual students.

WYOMING
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

2016-17 Accountability Indicator Data for Schools with Statewide Virtual Programs (Cont'd)

Table 5. Rocky Mountain High School Virtual Student Data Compared to Non-Virtual Student Data

	Math	Reading	Science	Writing	All
Percent Difference in Proficiency on ACT Plus Writing	-29%	+20%	-5%	+5%	-2%
Percentile Difference in Growth on ACT Plus Writing	+3.0	+19.5%	N/A	N/A	+10.5

Table 6. Niobrara County High School Virtual Student Data Compared to Non-Virtual Student Data

	Math	Reading	Science	Writing	All
Percent Difference in Proficiency on ACT Plus Writing	+3%	+3%	-3%	-6%	-1%
Percentile Difference in Growth on ACT Plus Writing	+13.0	+21.0	N/A	N/A	+13.5

Note: Cells shaded in green indicate areas where full-time virtual students performed better than non-virtual students.

WYOMING
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION