

AESD Accreditation FAQs

Updated 3/13/25

Overview:

- Washington State's nine Educational Service Districts (ESDs), through the Association of Educational Service Districts, have designed a collaborative, research-based accreditation process to ensure that the state's high schools are meeting high quality standards.
- Northwest ESD 189 is the lead organization for statewide AESD Accreditation.
- The process is personalized and adaptable to meet the specific needs of each school, including private, comprehensive, alternative, middle, online, specialized.

1. What are the chief reasons schools request AESD accreditation and how is it different from other accreditation processes?

The AESD Accreditation process is aligned to school improvement planning and complementary to the school's ongoing improvement efforts. Schools can achieve recognized six-year accreditation that leverages existing school improvement efforts rather than adding a separate initiative.

AESD Accreditation aligns accreditation requirements to the continuous improvement of student learning, achievement, and growth using a Cycle of Inquiry to focus action and improvement planning. The process involves active participation and input from a wide range of stakeholders – including staff, parents, and community representatives – and the end product meets Washington State's school improvement plan requirement.

2. Is accreditation required?

No. Accreditation is a voluntary process that a school undertakes to confirm it is providing a high quality and rigorous education for its students.

3. Why is it important for a school to go through the accreditation process and be approved as an accredited school?

Findings from the [Value of Accreditation Process](#) study indicate that although Washington State's accreditation is a voluntary process, it emerges as a significant criterion for specific programs and memberships that high schools consider vital in their offering of high quality and rigorous programs and opportunities for their students. There are universities and outside agencies that require high schools to be accredited. Based on the findings in this study, every high school should complete the accreditation process and maintain their accredited status to ensure that their students' futures are limitless, and their opportunities are boundless. A student's future endeavors should not be impacted by their high school's non-accredited status.

4. When would a school request provisional accreditation?

AESD offers provisional accreditation for one year to schools currently accredited through another institution, enabling a school to complete the AESD Accreditation process during the following school year. Provisional accreditation is requested from a high school or school district under the following conditions:

- The district and its high school wish to move and break from another accreditation process to the AESD accreditation process and have one year remaining as an accredited school.
- The high school's accreditation is about to lapse, and the administration requests a buffer year prior to going through the full renewal process.
- The high school administration has experienced an unforeseen change and will not be able to fully participate in the accreditation process as planned.

5. Why would a school request a deferral to the next school year?

- A school may not be fully engaged in the accreditation process and has not made significant progress prior to Site Visit.
- The Site Visit was not successfully completed based on the Accreditation Coach and Site Team's evaluation.
- There has been a significant change with leadership prior to the State Panel Accreditation presentation and there is no one to assume the lead for the process.
- There was a change in district leadership and priorities for the current school year.
- There was an unforeseen health issue or leave (e.g., maternity/paternity; administrative leave) for school leadership and there is no one to assume the lead for the process.

6. What is the difference from requesting a provisional accreditation vs. a deferral of the accreditation process to the next school year?

- A provisional accreditation request comes when the school and/or district is moving from a different accrediting entity to AESD Accreditation, prior to going into the full accreditation process. At that time the school will begin with initial accreditation with WA AESD Accreditation process. It may also be requested if the school has new administration, and the new administrator does not realize their school is up for accreditation for the current school year.
- A deferral is requested when the school is already a part of WA AESD Accreditation process and the district, school or AESD Accreditation Coach recognizes that the school will not be able to be fully engaged in the process or be successful by the State Panel final presentations in May.

7. What are the critical elements in the AESD Accreditation process?

- Three documents are critical to the successful completion of the AESD Accreditation process:
 - First and foremost, the school's SIP with SMART goals is the most critical document as it drives the entire accreditation process.
 - Second is the F-7 Executive Summary report completed by the school administrator.
 - Third is the F-6 Coach's Summary Report completed by the AESD Accreditation Coach.
- The in-person Site Visit of the school is critical to the successful completion and being able to move forward to the final element of the AESD Accreditation process.
- The State Panel Presentation is the final element of the AESD Accreditation process. It is this panel's approval that is the final step for the school. Once the panel recommends approval, an

official letter is sent to the school's superintendent verifying the school's successful completion of the accreditation process.

8. What is a cycle of inquiry and how does it connect to the AESD Accreditation process?

A cycle of inquiry is a six-step process that a school uses to build and implement their SIP. The SIP is the critical document and focus for the school and its efforts to improve student learning and well-being.

The six stages are:

Getting Ready: The school team involved in the process know and understand the process, how they authentically engage in that process, and how data and research drive their instructional and systemic decisions in service to student achievement and well-being.

Identifying Issues and Collecting Data: The school team collects and review a wide variety of data from multiple sources to support and inform the plan for improvement.

Analyzing Data, Determining Needs and Setting Goals: This stage organizes data in a way that helps discover vital information to improve student achievement. Data is integrated and analyzed from a systems perspective to search for deeper understanding and to determine potential relationships.

Reviewing Research Base and Determining Realistic Solutions: In this stage research is conducted and reviewed to determine best practices for each SIP goal. Through a shared process, relevant resources are reviewed and major findings are highlighted with staff, students, parents, and community who will then review and respond to findings, culminating in draft solutions.

Creating a Data-Informed and Student Achievement and Well-Being Focused Plan: The school team drafts a broad outline of sequential steps to accomplish the specific goals which is then shared with critical members of the school community for their input. A final draft of the plan will be created using input from all involved.

Continuous Monitoring and Adjusting: The school team develops a system of formative and summative assessments with a general timeline. Appropriate school teams monitor ongoing data and make recommendations for possible plan adjustments.

9. How much time does the AESD accreditation process take?

The AESD Accreditation process is designed to be completed over one school year. After receiving accreditation, there will be a review at year three to check in on progress towards the school's goals, celebrate successes, and recalibrate as needed.

10. What is the timeline for the Initial or Renewal Accreditation Process?

The following is a general timeframe for the initial or renewal accreditation process:

September	Coaches reach out to schools and set initial meeting (in-person or on Zoom) • Discuss components of Accreditation as outlined in Initial Principal Meeting Coaching Tool • Discuss meeting schedule • Determine Site Visit • Share State Panel Presentation tentative dates and sites
August - October	School develops and completes SIP for senior leadership and Board approval, communication plan developed • Post current school year's SIP to AESD folder.

November - February	School is working on SIP goals, monitoring and adjusting actions as needed • Evidence is added to AESD folders • Determine Site Evaluation visit date and time • Discuss teams for site visit (school admin, teacher group, parent group, student group)
February - mid-April	Principal writes F-7 and uploads to AESD folder • Additional evidence of actions added to AESD folder • Site visit occurs • Coach writes F-6
Mid-April to early May	Principal revises F-7 as needed • Coach revises F-6 as needed • Principal sends F-7 Report and SIP to the Accreditation Administrative Assistant by end of first week of May • Coach sends F-6 Report to the Accreditation Administrative Assistant by end of first week of May
2nd and 3rd weeks of May	State Panels occur. • West Side: typically, the 2nd week of May • East Side: typically, the 3rd week of May

11. When would a school not receive final approval for accreditation (initial or renewal)?

- A school would not receive final approval for accreditation if the State Accreditation Panel deemed that the school did not provide evidence that they have met the foundational requirements on the Foundation Rubric: Data, Student-focused, Research-based Foundation and Actions, Collaboratively Determined

12. Can a private school participate in the AESD Accreditation process?

- Yes, private schools/learning academies can participate if they are OSPI-approved.

13. Can a private Christian school request a dual accreditation through a Christian organization and AESD? What are the steps?

Yes.

- The private school would need to be an approved private school with the Washington State Board of Education.
- The private school would commit to a contract with NWESD 189 AESD Accreditation and meet all the requirements of our accreditation process.
- The private school would complete the accreditation process with the private school accreditation of their choice that meets their school needs and requirements

14. What are the three different types of Accreditation?

- Initial – the first time a school is accredited through the AESD Accreditation process for a six-year period
- Renewal – each subsequent time a school is accredited through the AESD Accreditation process for a successor six-year period
- Provisional – an initial, temporary accreditation status when a school is transitioning from another accreditation entity to the AESD Accreditation process

15. What is the third-year review and what are important details about the review?

- The third-year review is a check-in with the school's local ESD and is an opportunity for the school leadership to share with their local ESD the progress the school is making towards its SIP goals and the recommendations provided to them from their State AESD Panel and coach at the end of the Initial or renewal accreditation process. It is also an opportunity for the local ESD to ask questions and provide guidance to the school leadership for the next three years.
- Below is a general timeline of activities preparing a school for their third-year review:

Timeline for Accreditation Third-Year Review

August – September	NWESD Accreditation Administrative Assistant emails coaches with their list of schools due for third-year review along with this timeline
September	NWESD Accreditation Administrative Assistant emails principals and coaches re: third-year review; documents enclosed (letters to schools, Third-Year Review Process, Participation Evidence, Initial Report Recommendations/Responses, Foundational Requirements)
September -October	Coach reaches out to principal and meets to discuss accreditation third-year review check-in and timeline
October – late November	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Principal and leadership team complete required documents• Coach meets with principal to review documents and provide feedback• Coach discusses presentation format
Local ESDs determine dates for third-year presentations. These vary and may not be the same as the previous year's dates. Please check for specific panel presentation dates.	Two weeks prior to local ESD's Panel Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools have uploaded completed documents to school folder in AESD Accreditation online workspace• Schools email completed documents to NWESD Accreditation Administrative Assistant• Coach emails completed Cover Letter to NWESD Accreditation Administrative Assistant• NWESD Accreditation Administrative Assistant sends documents to local ESDs
Panel Presentation to Local ESD (date and time determined by local ESD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School presents to local ESD panel• Panel sends commendations and recommendations to NWESD Accreditation Administrative Assistant• NWESD Accreditation Administrative Assistant sends commendations/recommendations to schools

16. Who should participate in the self-evaluation of the SIP and the process used to develop it?

Ideally, all stakeholders who would otherwise be involved in the School Improvement Planning process would participate. This could include district and building administrators, building leadership teams, teachers, support staff, students, parents, and community members.

17. What type of training does my school team need to get started?

Each school will be assigned a dedicated AESD Accreditation coach who will support your team from start to finish and provide all necessary training and resources to complete the process.

18. How do we get started?

Email accreditation@waesd.org or contact your regional Educational Service District for more information.