



**WYOMING  
STATE BOARD  
OF EDUCATION**

**Ryan Fuhrman** – Chairman  
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**To: Joint Education Interim Committee**  
**From: Ryan Fuhrman, Wyoming State Board of Education Chairman**  
**Date: June 1, 2022**  
**Subject: Wyoming Content and Performance Standards**

The Wyoming State Board of Education (SBE) continues to make a focused effort to gather input from a variety of Wyoming stakeholders and to network with organizations across the state. In addition to the formal opportunities for input within the current process for revising state standards, the board has collected input through the profile of a graduate initiative, networking with multiple education associations, establishing an input banner on the SBE website, setting up a general mailbox for public comments, and inviting guests to speak at regularly scheduled SBE meetings. The input collected through these various means has alerted the SBE to concerns regarding the review and revision of state standards, specifically in regard to the current “load” of the standards on teachers and students. The SBE is working to be responsive to the input they have received and recognizes the question of balancing the demands of a system driven by standards, assessment, and accountability with input that these demands can impact the things that are not as easily quantifiable.

### **Profile Listening Sessions**

The SBE completed the listening sessions during the first phase of the Profile of a Graduate initiative which included gathering input on the knowledge, skills, and mindsets that would lead to graduates finding success after high school. The board heard from over 800 participants throughout the Phase I process. In addition to discussing what a graduate needs in order to be life ready, participants also provided input on areas state and local systems should consider when looking to improve opportunities, experiences, and life-readiness for students. One area noted by stakeholders was the content load of the state standards and standardized testing expectations on students. There were discussions regarding the impact standards and testing have had on the learning experiences of students. Participants also noted the amount of standards as a barrier to providing students with the type and variety of learning experiences that stakeholders articulated they wanted for graduates.

### **Other Sources of Feedback**

Recent feedback regarding the standards revision process has also been provided through a request for public comment that was provided in a press release and education associations. Participants provided feedback on the standards process and suggestions for improvement. A summary of the feedback received may be found [here](#). Input has also been received through public comments and presentations made directly to the SBE at board meetings. The SBE has heard from the 2021 and 2022 Teachers of the Year who both spoke of the heaviness of the state standards, particularly on young children.

### **Identifying Opportunities in the Standards Adoption Process**

The SBE held a work session in January 2022 to provide the board with an in-depth review of the current standards review process. The board then formed a subcommittee to study the input received from various sources and make recommendations for improvement. Standards review work in

progress is paused while the board studies the standards review process. This includes the review of Physical Education, Health, Fine/Performing Arts, and English Language Arts standards.

The standards subcommittee of state board members worked closely with the WDE to review feedback from stakeholders and develop guiding questions for their work. The following questions became the top priority for the subcommittee:

1. What is the amount of content in the standards and amount of time it takes to deliver them?
2. How is/can input be collected that provides meaningful engagement from both the field of education and the general public?

The subcommittee developed and presented a straw design to the SBE in April. The straw design elements focus on the first priority dealing with the load of the standards by:

- Addressing performance standards
- Strengthening alignment between the state standards and state assessment
- Addressing the “load feeling” identified from stakeholder feedback
- Reviewing the guidance the SBE provides to each Standards Review Committee (SRC)
- Enhancing the role of curriculum directors in the standards review process and identifying an advisory group of curriculum directors charged with monitoring the whole picture of standards

The subcommittee will also look to its second priority question of promoting meaningful engagement from stakeholders within the standards review process. This review includes providing opportunities, communicating those opportunities, and demonstrating input is valued and impactful. Additionally, the subcommittee will evaluate the format and content of input surveys and their effectiveness in allowing for meaningful feedback.

### **Stakeholder Input in the Standards Adoption and Review Process**

Current Process	Recommended Additions
Phase I – Call for participants to serve on the Standards Review Committee (SRC)	Survey districts for their identified priority standards and to better understand challenges related to the ‘load’ issue
*Phase I – Educator and stakeholder input survey prior to start of the SRC work	SBE members take the same initial survey as community stakeholders and review public comments a month prior to the first Standards Review Committee meeting
Phase III - Online survey of draft standards recommended by SRC open to public and educators and presented in advertised public meetings	Establish an advisory group of curriculum directors to provide comments on standards for the SBE regarding their district’s teachers’ capacity to deliver the load of standards
*Phase IV - Rule promulgation with 45-day formal public comment period	

\*Meets statutory requirement

Attachments:

- Summary of input on standards process
- Memo to SBE on subcommittee straw design
- SBE guidance letter to Standard Review Committees

# State Standards Review Process

Public Comment

March 2022

## PURPOSE:

- The Wyoming State Board of Education is currently evaluating the process used to develop and revise state standards. These standards lay the foundation for teacher instruction and student expectations in all 10 content areas.
- The Board identified key questions the evaluation will address, which include the ***volume of state standards in relation to instructional time, methods for collecting and utilizing stakeholder input, and innovative approaches to developing standards that would have a positive impact on the challenges facing teachers and students in the classroom.***
- Opportunity for public comment was sent out via a press release with the Wyoming School Boards Association, Wyoming Association of School Administrators, and the Wyoming Education Association forwarding the public comment link to their respective members.

## PARTICIPANTS:

- Public comment was opened on January 20<sup>th</sup> and closed March 1st, 2022. **Fifty-seven surveys were submitted.** Some of those responses included feedback from multiple stakeholders. For example, one school district sent responses on behalf of four staff members.

QUESTIONS: The public comment form contained five (5) questions in the intro to give participants an idea of the type of questions the board may be considering. Participants were not 'surveyed' on these questions and may or may not have focused their comments to these specific areas.

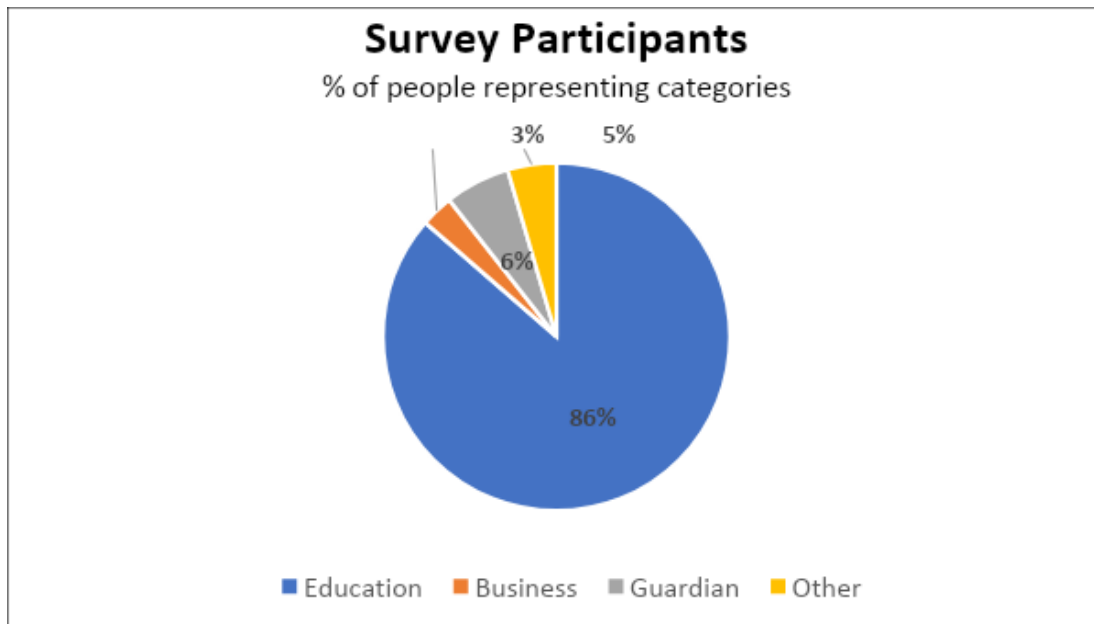
1. How many standards is the right amount or what percentage of the required instructional hours should be devoted to state standards (floor/ceiling)? How should this be monitored?
2. How is/can input be collected that provides meaningful engagement from both the field of education and the general public?
3. What are some innovative approaches to developing state standards that have an impact on current teaching/learning challenges?
4. Are updates needed to the Wyoming Standards Design Criteria?
5. Do all subjects need to be K-12? How should disciplines/strands within a subject area be treated?

(Results begin on next page)

RESULTS:

**Participants:** Participants were divided into specific categories and responses were tracked accordingly: **Educator, Education Leader, Other Educator, District Staff, Guardian, Business Professional, and Other.**

Participant Category	Self-Identified As...
<b>Educator (33)</b>	Teacher, Educator, P.E./Health Teacher, Title I Specialist, Art Teacher, Music Teacher, Classroom Teacher, SPED Teacher, High School Educator, Professional Educator, Former/Retired Educator
<b>Education Leader (12)</b>	Principal, Superintendent, District Administrator/Director, IF
<b>Other Educator (4)</b>	At Risk Coordinator, School District Employee/Staff, Para, WY Project Citizen State Coordinator, Substitute Teacher
<b>District Staff (8)</b>	School District Employee other than Educator, Education Leader, or Other Educator
<b>Guardian (4)</b>	Parent, Grandparent, Guardian
<b>Business Professional (2)</b>	Optometrist, Business Owner, Employer
<b>Other (3)</b>	Community Member, Former State Assessment Director, Board Member



(Results continued on next page)

**Responses:** The following list captures overarching themes from the comments received on the survey. In some cases, direct quotes are included to provide additional context.

- **General Comment**
  - “I’m excited by the prospect that SBE might be reexamining some of the restrictive elements of public education.”
  
- **Essential/Priority Standards**
  - embed reading, writing into **all** content areas
  - keep standards focused on **skills essential to a successful life** and preparation for living out in the world
  - implement K-12 **OR** grade band standards based on content area and the essential skills needed (“Student competency in reading, writing, and math are a priority.”)
  - primary grades **focus on foundational skills** (“We are trying to build skyscrapers without having a solid foundation in place.”)
  - identify **exploratory standards for exposure vs. performance standards for mastery** (“The core classes – and classes required for graduation – need standards. The others can have basic targets to show that a child is maturing and learning the content in an appropriate manner.”)
  - the goal of the K-12 content standards system should be to **provide a strong foundation** moving towards **application, problem-solving, and critical thinking** as students master foundational understanding
  - provide guidance on which standards should be mastered as well as standards that are exploratory (“There are far too many standards. **Prioritizing is essential** - and makes a significant difference in helping teachers to focus in on the essentials.”)
  - have **specific grade level K-12 standards for the four core areas** and construct grade-level bands (K-2, 3-5, MS, and HS) for all other content areas
  - **rethinking the bands (category) of standards within academic disciplines** might be an innovative way to address some of the teaching/learning challenges (“The categories might include executive functioning skills (academic/workplace behaviors and strategies for success that foster independence), content literacy (skills and strategies to help students can apply to any subject to unpack content), and disciplinary literacy (creating an identity within the community of the academic discipline of the class through active participation--behaving, thinking, reading, writing, speaking like people do within that community (e.g. ‘Think like a scientist/historian/author...’).”)
  
- **Stakeholder Representation/Input**
  - ensure **adequate teacher representation** throughout standards revision process (“It is important to get a cross-section of opinion on what should be taught to help all of our students become productive citizens. Please do not, however, overlook the expertise that on-the-ground educators can provide to the process of standards creation.”)
  - include **broad stakeholder involvement** (“I feel the following groups have valid data to offer that would direct educators to address needs: teachers, colleges/universities, chamber of commerce/local government, parents, major

industry leaders in WY.”)

- o town hall type meetings (not public hearing where no real dialogue occurs)
  - o WDE content reps need to visit districts to see innovative practices
  - o WDE content reps should have **stronger connection to schools, teachers, and IFs**
  - o change format of feedback surveys to **make them easier to understand/complete** (“If the format would include options to select (i.e. grade level/band, specific standards, etc...), the time required to respond to the survey might be diminished.”)
  - o **leverage existing partnerships** with Marzano as well as the curriculum directors association to hear Wyoming-specific concerns and receive guidance as part of revision process
  - o the process of developing the standards needs to come from many **more stakeholders than what is currently the norm** (“It’s not helpful to constantly choose the same people from the same regions of the state. There needs to be more variety and inclusion from everyone in the state.”)
  - o **publicly share results** of input received and the impact of that input (“It feels as though feedback such as what I’m providing right now has minimal to no impact on decisions that are made and ultimately it is the legislature that makes meaningful decisions for us when they are many times the least informed on the current state of education.”)
  - o collect **targeted feedback** (“Ask each district to have each school collect feedback from the stakeholders associated with each school. Then have the district compile that information and send it to the SBE.”)
  - o ask public about existing standards **before** revising them (“I think it would have been helpful in the beginning to have put out a survey to educators who teach that subject to give insight on their opinion of the existing standards and other standards and to report what it is they think is most important to focus on.”)
- **Quantity/Volume of Standards**
    - o too many standards; **too much non-essential material** (“The problem with most of the state standards is the same problem the NFL has with its rule book. Since standards are written by committee, like the rule book, too much non-essential material gets added, and the standards become too cumbersome and unwieldy. If the SBE can develop a system that culls the unneeded verbiage from the standards, it will go a long way ‘to developing state standards that have an impact of current teaching and learning challenges.’”)
    - o **content specialists are too ambitious**, want to include everything in standards (“I believe that the process of reviewing standards would be enhanced by using teams with broader backgrounds. It seems that often content specialists drive the process. Every content person feels strongly about their content. This leads to wanting to cover everything in every area. If standards teams were composed of content people from multiple disciplines, it would add balance to the process and a check on overdoing it. This would standardize the review process and help everyone begin with the end in mind.”)
    - o well-written standards **should not have to be "unpacked"** (current standards are too granular; “Teachers have spent a lot of time being asked to ‘unpack’ the standards because they are wordy and one bullet point will actually contain several skills.”)

- o standards **too vague** (only stated about social studies; “They don’t provide a teaching framework, curriculum suggestions, etc. They are also impossible to assess.”)
  - o content standards should **provide specific/concise** skills, understandings, and scaffolding for guidance
  - o performance standards should **align with state assessment** standards for assessed areas (“The biggest issue is that schools are held accountable to high stakes assessments like WY-TOPP and yet there are performance standards coming out of SBE that do not align with the summative assessment.”)
  - o **simplify the layout** of the standards (“The FPA document is a nightmare to navigate, I assume the other subjects with new standards may look just as terrible. Instead of layout the document by standard with every single subject under the FPA umbrella, it should be split up by subject then standard. We had to scroll through hundreds of pages just to figure to what our 4 standards were. It caused my colleagues who did not serve on the committee to panic.”)
- **Standards Implementation**
    - o conduct a “**standards audit**” to see what is being prioritized and taught across the state
    - o teachers **rushing to cover all standards rather than really teaching to mastery**; no time for real-world application (“There is so much pressure to cover all the standards that there is no longer any time to pursue unique interests of students or to slow down if needed because a particular group is not mastering a standard as quickly as you need them to. It is frustrating to both students and teachers to feel like an external schedule is controlling the pace of content rather than students’ mastery and interests.”)
    - o understand the **function of standards** (to guide, not direct or dictate; “Teachers don’t need to be told how to teach, but rather what the goal is.”)
    - o consider teacher shortages, other **challenges facing educators today** (“We cover other sick teachers daily. We zoom. We teach our students at home and school. We keep gaining more students. Tired of the ‘do more for less money...’”)
    - o **allow community/student needs determine what to teach** beyond essential/priority standards
    - o provide **options that are relevant to students** (“We need core subjects taught at every grade level, but students need options. Have English for students going post-secondary (focus on research papers, literary analysis...) and English for career readiness (grant writing, cover letters, resumes, meeting minutes...)”)
    - o **funding/resources should be provided to align with changes** that require an overall of the current system (“The biggest challenge to districts and educators is when the set of standards is substantially changed, when standards are worded broadly for interpretation and/or when new standards are added. This is especially challenging when comparable funding is not provided to districts for implementation (i.e. Computer Science standards).”)
    - o needs to be a **balance between accountability and trusting districts** and teachers as the professionals they are
    - o **monitoring should be left up to local school districts** (“State agencies should set priorities, request minimal monitoring documentation, and allow communities to educate their students.”)

CONSIDERATIONS: In determining potential changes to the standards revision process and/or the standards themselves, the following federal and state requirements need to be considered:

- **Federal**: state summative assessments need to be aligned to state standards and approved through a peer-reviewed process
- **State**: students are entitled to “a thorough and uniform education of a quality that is both visionary and unsurpassed”





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**To: Wyoming State Board of Education**  
**From: Mark Mathern, Chair, Ad Hoc Standards Review Committee**  
**Date: April 19, 2022**  
**Re: Recommended Straw Design for Modification to the Standards Review Process**

**Introduction:** The SBE voted on December 14, 2021 to delay adoption of the Wyoming Content & Performance Standards in the content areas of Fine & Performing Arts, Physical Education, and Health. One factor that played into this decision is testimony around the “load” of the standards on teachers, heard from elementary grade teachers in particular. An ad hoc committee, consisting of six (6) state board members plus the WDE Standards & Assessment Director, met four times in March and April of 2022. The purpose of the ad hoc committee was to identify areas of concern about the standards and the standards review process. At the first two meetings, members of the committee were first asked to identify the “story” surrounding the standards and then their “interests” in seeking solutions to areas of concern. Story included review of comments from a statewide survey about the standards, current documents capturing the standards, and the standards adoption process. From stakeholder feedback, the committee chose as its first priority addressing “the amount of content in the standards and amount of time it takes to deliver them.” At the third meeting, the committee worked two groups to brainstorm options for solutions, and each group built a straw design based upon the options identified in the previous meeting. The decision points about standards and the standards review process straw design follow.

### **Straw Design Elements**

- 1. Regarding performance standards:**
  - a. Identify the performance standards (PS) for all 10 content areas by 2023-24.
  - b. SBE may survey districts for a list of the standards districts have already prioritized.
  - c. Communicate that the PS are the state’s priority standards.
  
- 2. Regarding alignment between standards and state assessments:**
  - a. Any PS in a state tested area will be strongly considered to be on the state assessment blueprint (BP).
  - b. As a collective, the PS will have a greater percentage (weight) on the assessment BP.
  - c. Justification will be provided to the SBE if something is out of alignment between the BP and PS in any state tested area.

**3. Regarding the “load feeling” identified from stakeholder feedback:**

- a. The load-feeling feedback seems to be localized at the elementary level and may be greatly impacted by the implementation approach at each district level and dependent upon the size of the schools/district.
- b. A survey may help the SBE better understand the intricacies of local challenges and help the SBE understand the load feeling. The survey idea needs refinement and will be considered at a later date.
- c. SBE will provide intentional guidance/direction about load (i.e., total # of standards) and the need to focus on PS (i.e., how teachers spend their time) for each of the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards (WYCPS) at each grade in a content area. Intentional direction from SBE will include:
  - i. Grade level guidance and emphasis on what is tested
  - ii. 21-9-101(b)(ii) statute says grades 1-8 shall emphasize reading, writing, and math.

**4. Regarding SBE guidance provided to each Standards Review Committee (SRC) during a review cycle:**

- a. SBE will answer the same survey questions asked during the initial community input. The SBE will preview survey comments a month in advance of the first SRC meeting.
- b. SBE will gain background knowledge on upcoming standard areas that may inform the SBE when providing direction to SRC (e.g. SBE will receive the same packet, community survey responses, etc. as the SRC).
- c. SBE will ask all curriculum directors (CDs) to talk with their teachers, review the current standards, and then take a survey about current standards implementation. (The survey will include questions about capacity to deliver, volume and load, options to integrate, how have standards impacted the learning experience? Opinions on the best interest of students.)
- d. The SBE guidance to SRC will be more than a letter to include a welcome from the board, zoomed in, SBE expectations, big picture/goals, guardrails, facilitate a conversation of hopes, expectations, intentions.
- e. SBE will have a discussion to identify any specifics (including load and skills) to be communicated in writing to the SRC including any directions to provide the SRC prior to their work beginning.
- f. WDE Director of S&A will provide updates to SBE if SRC direction changes away from guidance provided by SBE during the standards review process.

**5. Regarding the role of Curriculum Directors (CDs) as providers of the whole picture:**

- a. An advisory group of CDs will be convened to comment on the implications of load and synergies of a set of standards for SBE consideration prior to their review.
- b. SBE will send SBE rep to CD state meeting to ask for CD involvement in each SRC being formed that year.

- i. SBE and WDE will provide a personal ask for individual CDs to be on SRC with specific tasks around whole picture interests. (e.g., capacity to deliver, volume, load, options to integrate, how does this impact learning experience? Best interest of students?)
- c. CD survey prior to a set of standards being reviewed (see 4.c. above)

**6. Regarding incorporations of skills into standards as defined by W.S. 21-9-101(b)(iii):**

- a. SBE will more explicitly state in the front matter of each standard's document the role of common core of skills in each content area.
- b. The SRC may link certain skills to certain standards
- c. More reflection is needed regarding common core of skills and the SBE may move this topic to another committee/subcommittee to
  - i. Create definitions of each skill
  - ii. Decide if and how these should be linked to PS?



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**Bill Lambert** – Treasurer

Greetings (INSERT COMMITTEE NAME) Standards Review Committee,

Thank you for volunteering your time and knowledge to the continued evaluation and refinement of Wyoming's standards. The Wyoming State Board of Education recognizes the central part your work will play in the development of quality standards. The perspective and experience that each of you bring is invaluable to creating a strong and robust K-12 system. You are the voice for the other educators and students who could not participate in this part of the process. (Please encourage them to share their perspective during public comment periods!)

We are at a unique time in the standards adoption process. Recent guidance has embarked the State Board on two separate but important tasks. The first, you will directly tackle during your work on this committee, the assigning of performance standards. The second, the identification of graduation standards, will take more time to complete. The State Board is in the process of asking stakeholders to imagine the type of graduate we want our K-12 system to produce. This Profile of a Graduate would ideally be used to help guide your work today, but it is still being developed. Therefore, as a board, we would like to give you some general guidelines to keep in mind as you work on the standards.

1. Create in your mind the three types of graduates (one headed to a university, one headed to a trade school, and one who will head straight into the workforce). Ask yourself, what is the foundation that our K-12 system will ensure each of them has when they begin their adult journey as citizens of our state and nation?
2. In a world where content knowledge is literally at our fingertips, how do we prepare our students to think? What skills and behaviors will help them now as learners and in the future as productive citizens?
3. How will the standards you help create assist our students to move past just learning about subjects? For example, how will the standards you help write help students not just learn about science, math, and history but learn how to analyze like a scientist, solve problems like a mathematician, and write like a historian?
4. Keep in mind that:
  - a. Wyoming State Statute § 21-2-304 directs the board to *prescribe uniform student content and performance standards for the common core of knowledge and the common core of skills specified under W.S. 21-9-101.*

b. Wyoming State Statute § 21-9-101 lists the following common core of skills:

- (A) Problem solving;
- (B) Interpersonal communications;
- (C) Computational thinking and computer applications;
- (D) Critical thinking;
- (E) Creativity;
- (F) Life skills, including personal financial management skills.

c. Wyoming State Statute § 21-2-304 also directs the board to *ensure that educational programs offered by public schools in accordance with these standards provide students an opportunity to acquire sufficient knowledge and skills, at a minimum, to enter the University of Wyoming and Wyoming community colleges, to prepare students for the job market or postsecondary vocational and technical training and to achieve the general purposes of education that equips students for their role as a citizen and participant in the political system and to have the opportunity to compete both intellectually and economically in society.*

5. When identifying the performance standards, remember that the state board is asking you to set the floor. It is up to districts and teachers to set the ceiling. All standards will need to be taught, but what standards do we need to provide students multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency through the district assessment system?
6. Don't forget that the standards you identify will be joining the other content areas that also had passionate teams, just like this, to prepare standards in their areas of expertise. Currently, there are over 1,700 separate standards a student will need to learn in their K-12 journey.
7. Federal guidance instructs the WDE to design our state assessments to test the "depth and breadth" of the standards. If you create a standard in a tested subject (math, reading, writing, and science), then it will have to be assessed on a state assessment. Under the ESSA and Wyoming Accountability in Education Act (WAEA), districts, schools, and teachers will be responsible for students demonstrating that they are proficient or advanced on these standards.
8. We support teacher passion and local control. A narrower set of standards will allow for more flexibility at the classroom level and allow for more discovery opportunities.
9. We support equity and a robust education system. A wider set of standards will ensure, regardless of community or classroom, a student will receive a similar quality Wyoming Education.
10. Keep a view of both the forest and the trees. We look forward to seeing what you will produce.

Sincerely,

The Wyoming State Board of Education