



## **Executive Summary**

# Sweetwater County School District #1

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## **Introduction**

Every school system has its own story to tell. The context in which teaching and learning takes place influences the processes and procedures by which the school system makes decisions around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The context also impacts the way a school system stays faithful to its vision. Many factors contribute to the overall narrative such as an identification of stakeholders, a description of stakeholder engagement, the trends and issues affecting the school system, and the kinds of programs and services that a school system implements to support student learning. <br><br> The purpose of the Executive Summary (ES) is to provide a school system with an opportunity to describe in narrative form the strengths and challenges it encounters. By doing so, the public and members of the community will have a more complete picture of how the school system perceives itself and the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement. This summary is structured for the school system to reflect on how it provides teaching and learning on a day to day basis.

## **Description of the School System**

**Describe the school system's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the school system serves?**

Sweetwater County is located in the high desert plains of southwestern Wyoming and is a community with a growing population of over 45,000 residents. This energy-rich region of Sweetwater County contains gas, oil, and coal industries, which continue to be the major driving force in the economy. Also, mineral extraction (trona) mines employ over 2500 people in Sweetwater County and generates approximately 67% of Sweetwater County revenue.

Rock Springs has a rich cultural heritage and is known for being "The Home to 56 Nationalities." In the late 1800's, immigrants from all around the world came to Rock Springs to work in the coal mines. The coal was used to power the steam engines for the Union Pacific Railroad. Currently, Bridger Coal and Black Butte Coal are excavating high-grade coal deposits that are used to generate steam and turn turbines to produce electricity for the northwestern United States.

Farson and Eden, Wyoming are located 40 miles north of Rock Springs, Wyoming. The population is over 600 people and it is located in high desert country at the foot of the Windriver Mountain Range. It is home to the Big Sandy Pony Express Station and home of the big ice cream cone. An extensive irrigation system makes this area a farming and ranching community. It also supports local gas and energy production.

Wamsutter is a small community located 70 miles east of Rock Springs in the Great Divide Basin of southwest Wyoming. It is known as the gateway to the Red Desert. It has approximately 450 residences and the driving force of the economy is natural gas and oil. Rapid growth and lack of housing provides unique challenges to this community and school.

Sweetwater County School District #1 (SCSD#1) is located on the eastern portion of the county, which includes the communities of Rock Springs, Farson, Eden, Reliance, Superior, Point of Rocks, and Wamsutter. In SCSD#1 there are a total of 14 schools located in the towns of Rock Springs, Farson, and Wamsutter.

SCSD #1 is one of the largest employers in Sweetwater County. Combined, the certified and classified staff total over 1100. Of the approximately 540 certified staff, there are 20 National Board Certified educators, and 35% of staff have a masters degree or higher.

In response to student growth within the district, 88 new teachers were hired for the 2013-2014 school year. For the 2014-2015 school year, 65 certified staff and eight building administrators have been added to the district. Also, a total of seven new district leadership positions including: Director of Special Services, Human Resources, Nutritional Services, Physical Plant, District Accountant, Informational Technology, as well as a Communication Coordinator, and Assistant Director of Special Services were hired. Additionally, in the last three years, the Superintendent, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Academic Officer, and Assistant Superintendent/Human Resources are new to their role. SCSD#1 has implemented a system to support our continually growing district; new teachers start the academic year one week early. This week supports the efforts of an intensive induction program in which teachers attend thirty hours of professional development. New teachers are assigned a mentor teacher who will work with them at least 60 hours throughout the school year. Mentor experiences have been positive with an overall rating of 94% satisfaction. Administrators are also partnered with a mentor with knowledge of their position. The mentor gives support and guidance throughout the year. Ongoing professional development trainings are utilized throughout the district to

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support all staff.

The district employs well over 600 classified staff. These staff include para-professionals, secretaries, custodial, maintenance staff, transportation and nutritional service providers. Traditionally, the turnover rate for classified staff has been higher than certified. During the 2013-2014 school year turnover rate for classified was 24%. For the 2014-2015 school year, part-time classified employees recently had their hours reduced to less than 30 hours to accommodate the new requirements of Affordable Care Act. In regards to the Affordable Care Act, district administration looked at every aspect to find the best financial move for the district. Informational presentations were held throughout the district to inform staff and answer questions. The district is working to overcome the difficulties of reduced availability of staff. One solution the district has provided is to extend the amount of working days in attempt to keep their salary schedule from being reduced. Students are our first priority and the district continues to seek options to support student learning and welfare.

In the last 10 years, our student population has grown 26%. For the 2014-2015 school year, student enrollment in SCSD#1 is 5700. This year, there are 74% White, 21% Hispanic, 2% Black, 1% American Indian and 1% Asian. The female population consists of 48%, and the male population is 52%. Currently 35% of the student population qualify for free and reduced lunch. The ELL population is currently at 8% and the Special Education population is approximately 14%

Student movement between K - 4 schools occurs frequently in SCSD#1. Because of this occurrence, transitions between K- 4 schools are virtually seamless due to the district wide pacing guides, reading placement pathways, common formative assessments, and consistent assessment practices.

The current ELL population is over 371 students, which make up 7% of our overall student enrollment. Home Language Surveys are administered to all incoming students. Students living in an environment with a second language are given the WIDA ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) or the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English from State to State (ACCESS) for ELLS Placement Test assessment to determine language proficiency. Students are transitioned out of the ELL program when they demonstrate proficiency in language acquisition skills, as defined by the state of Wyoming. Certified English language instruction teachers provide students additional language support through both a pull-out program and a push-in program. Additional services include: a parent liaison, translation services and monthly parent meetings. Also, the Title III program has a partnership with WWCC to assist ELL students with the transition from high school graduation to post-secondary education. This program helps ELL students understand the availability, the process of enrolling in college, and supports available to them in a post-secondary setting.

Schools in the district with school-wide Title I programs are Desert View, Overland, and Sage. Desert Elementary and Lincoln schools have Title I targeted assistance programs. Students in these schools are provided with extra interventions in math and reading to support academic growth. Title I funding provides these schools with additional staff, intervention, professional development, and parental involvement.

At Sweetwater School District # 1, we are committed the ideals found in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. IDEA ensures that all children with disabilities have available to them a free and appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. Sweetwater District #1 is committed to taking a sensible approach to educating students with disabilities: We enroll all, evaluate fairly, offer benefit, do it in the general education setting to the maximum extend possible, and partner with parents and students. During the 2012-2013 school year, 987 students received special education services in our district. Our committed and well-trained staff, look forward to providing quality services to students in the new school year.

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SCSD#1 is made up of the following schools:

7 Elementary (K-4) buildings located within Rock Springs

- Desert View Elementary School has approximately 378 students.
- Lincoln Elementary School has approximately 198 students.
- Northpark Elementary School has approximately 311 students.
- Overland Elementary School has approximately 333 students.
- Sage Elementary School has approximately 455 students.
- Walnut Elementary School has approximately 323 students.
- Westridge Elementary School has approximately 463 students.

Two Elementary (5-6) buildings located within Rock Springs

- Eastside Elementary School has approximately 442 students.
- Pilot Butte Elementary School has approximately 399 students.

One Junior High (7-8) building located within Rock Springs

- Rock Springs Junior High School has approximately 799 students.

One High School (9-12) building located within Rock Springs

- Rock Springs High School has approximately 1359 students.

One Alternative High School (9-12) building located within Rock Springs

- Independence High School has approximately 66 students.

K-8 Elementary/Middle School building/campus located in Wamsutter

- Desert Elementary School has approximately 40 students.
- Desert Middle School has approximately 12 students.

K-12 Elementary/Middle School/High School building/campus located in Farson

- Farson-Eden Elementary School has approximately 62 students.
- Farson-Eden Middle School has approximately 34 students.
- Farson-Eden High School has approximately 45 students.

In the past five years SCSD#1 has built and successfully opened three new elementary schools; Sage Elementary, Pilot Butte Elementary, and Eastside Elementary. Construction on three new schools will begin this 2014-2015 school year. The first of the new buildings will be built in Farson, 40 miles north of Rock Springs and will accommodate K-12 students. The second of the new buildings is Black Butte High School, an alternative project-based school being built on the Western Wyoming Community College Campus. Also, a new K-4 elementary school (Stagecoach Elementary) has begun construction and the anticipated move in date is fall of 2015.

## **System's Purpose**

**Provide the school system's purpose statement and ancillary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs. Describe how the school system embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students.**

Our vision statement was developed last year with stakeholder participation. Stakeholder group included community representatives, parents, students, certified staff, classified staff and administrators. The vision statement was presented to stakeholders, feedback was received and revisions were made. We are now using the vision statement to drive all decision and instruction in the district. The Sweetwater County School District #1 vision statement states: "As an innovative district, united with our community, we empower and inspire all students to academic excellence in pursuit of their interests and passions."

As an innovative district . . .

- All schools are utilizing social media to communicate with students, parents and staff.
- The district has an app available to all stakeholders making the website mobile device friendly.
- To meet ever-changing technology needs, Informational Technology provides cutting-edge technology for district students and employees.
- Sweetwater #1 has a district-wide unified communication plan.
- Multiple facets of communication are being put into place (District Video launch)
- Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (CIA) Professional Development
  - Project-based learning
  - Piloting reading programs
  - Piloting math programs prior to district adoption
- Custodial Services trains all new staff in the use of equipment, and chemicals to provide a safe clean environment for students. To ensure safety, staff must pass proficiency assessments in their work environment.
- Staff is required to complete online safety training modules to comply with district and state requirements.
- AESOP is a new program which streamlines human resources, payroll and substitute assignments.
- To meet the nutritional needs of growing students, Nutritional Services constantly evaluates and upgrades food choices.
- The maintenance department is implementing an electronic "Help-desk" tracking system for work orders.
- To compliment the interior, exterior cameras are being installed on all busses to increase the safe environment for all students.

united with the community . . .

- Community/Business partner has paired with each school and they provide support and guidance to schools.
- Academies at RSHS partner with local businesses and companies to allow students job shadowing opportunities as well as internships and job opportunities
- Sweetwater One Public School Foundation promotes and recognizes excellence in all Sweetwater County School District #1 schools. Parent and community support helps provide valuable enhancement and enrichment opportunities for students and teachers. As an independent, fundraising, Non-Profit organization, we rely on contributions from parents, corporations and community members to fund educational opportunities that move student experiences.... "Beyond the Basics".
- Community Fine Arts Partnership with Sweetwater #1 will be celebrating 75 years of the district art collection
- Parent Involvement in the district and all schools
- Continually building and maintaining community relationships
- Project-Based Learning model that supports internships in the community

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- Tiger Town Bash is sponsored in partnership with the city government
- BOCES Grants
- Life RU Ready
- Building availability for community sports and fundraising events
- Adult learning center--Option III

we empower and inspire all students to academic excellence

- Advanced Placement (AP) Classes
- Dual and Concurrent Enrollment with Western Wyoming Community College (WWCC)
- Project-Based Learning
- Systematic Intervention Plans
- After School Programs (BOCES/Bridges)
- PBIS Programs (Second Step, Stop and Think, Anti-Bullying)
- Professional Development to help teachers keep students at the forefront of educational learning
- Sweetwater One Public School Foundation
- Data Driven Organization
- Eye to Eye Partnership with WWCC students
- Parent Math night
- Quest Enrichment Program
- 21st Century Skills

in pursuit of their interests and passions.

- Fine Arts (Music, Art)
- RSHS Academies (Health, Energy, Fire and Law Leadership)
- Extra-Curricular Activities
- Career and Vocational Education
- After School Programs
- Sweetwater One Public School Foundation
- Project Based Learning

Sweetwater School District #1 system's purpose: To Provide a Quality Education for ALL Students. The school improvement goals for

Sweetwater School District #1:

- Improve student achievement
  - o Data driven decision making
  - o Wyoming Content and Performance Standards professional development in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math
  - o Data Dashboards
  - o Common Formative Assessments/Data team cycles and protocols
  - o Standards-based report cards for K - 6
  - o Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer monthly site visits and data review
  - o Principal PLC meetings
  - o Reading Placement Pathways
  - o Monthly data review meetings of reading intervention effectiveness
  - o Seamless transitions between K - 6 schools
  - o Learning Walks with administrators at school sites

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- o Model (Lab) classrooms
- o Formation of expert ELA and Math teacher teams

#### -Improve stakeholder communication

- o Unified communication plan
- o Utilizing social media to communicate with students, parents and staff.
- o Standardized logo usage guide
- o School stories to Board of Education
- o Student photos used throughout district to maintain students as our primary focus
- o Proactive Media Communication/Regular Press Releases
- o District and School Newsletters
- o Parent/Teacher Conferences
- o Regularly scheduled staff meetings
- o Chief Academic Officer (CAO) site visits
- o Developing relationships throughout the community
- o Regular meeting with the AdvancED Stakeholder Committee

SCSD#1 believes schools need to work in partnership with the community to provide a quality education through active support, involvement and two-way communication. All schools and well-trained professionals will provide a quality education for all students. Our vision is "As an innovative district, united with our community, we empower and inspire all students to academic excellence in pursuit of their interests and passions." Students are the first priority of Sweetwater #1.

A guaranteed and viable curriculum is delivered to all students based upon curriculum maps formulated by collaboration of all teachers. Providing high quality curriculum materials, innovative technology and extensive opportunities for student intervention and enrichment is the focus of district resources. Professional excellence is supported by extensive professional development in assessment, instructional strategies, professional learning communities (PLC), and core subject areas. SCSD#1 implements social skills curriculum for students and belongs to the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) network.

All schools have a community/business partner who is involved with each school. Many schools have multiple community and business partners. The ultimate partnership goal is for students to graduate with both a diploma and an associate's degree from the community college. SCSD#1 is a data-driven organization. Data from PAWS/SAWS/ACT/MAP/DIBELS as well as common formative and summative assessments are analyzed and decisions are made based on multiple data sources. Annual "AdvancED Stakeholder Surveys" and "Self Assessments" provide information and help drive the continuous improvement process.

## **Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement**

**Describe the school system's notable achievements and areas of improvement in the last three years. Additionally, describe areas for improvement that the school system is striving to achieve in the next three years.**

### Notable Achievements

-Rock Springs Junior High School was awarded a school improvement grant (SIG) for over \$1,000,000 and is focused on multi-tiered system of support focusing on research-based practice.

-Teacher Assistance Program (TAP) provides systematic mentor and training for new staff. The TAP program begins a week before school starts and continues throughout the year.

-Systematic reading interventions have been implemented district-wide K-12. Schools use district-wide placement pathways for consistent student placement into interventions. Pathways to Progress are a systematic way to ensure learning for all students.

-Instructional coaches are a resource to the district and individual school sites. They provide resources, support data protocols, model lessons, train staff and facilitate initiatives within the district.

-Professional Learning Communities (PLC) are implemented district wide. PLC work focuses on data-driven decision making, purposeful planning and data teams drive the right work.

-Students are profiled and systematic interventions are in place for all students. All students are regularly assessed to monitor progress through school Achievement Monitoring Process (AMP) and Data Teams.

-Sweetwater School District #1 has continually engaged in developing dual and concurrent courses with Western Wyoming Community College in which students may take and receive WWCC credit while also earning high school credit. The goal is for students to graduate with both a high school diploma and an associate's degree from the community college.

-With the implementation of My Big Campus, teacher and students interact in an efficient digital environment. Safe social media tools were implemented and facilitated student/student and student/teacher collaboration.

-Students are engaged in learning. Staff training focused on systematic implementation of technology to enhance learning and achievement for all students. Students participate in formative technology assessments to gauge and monitor their progress towards mastery.

-Chief Academic Officer monthly data review visits to all schools in the district.

-Instructional leadership PLC that is focused on school instructional rounds and "Driven by Data" book study.

-School presentations to school board. These presentations increase awareness and knowledge of school programs and student achievement data.

-District departments set SMART goals and write professional development action plans, which are differentiated to meet their goals. Surveys are given after each professional development/training to monitor progress.

-Common Formative Assessment (CFA) aligned to Wyoming Content and Performance Standards are being developed and pacing guides to ensure curricular continuity across all schools in the district.

-Data Teams training for staff fosters collaboration in their PLC's by analyzing assessment results, making decisions based on data and adjusting teaching strategies to meet the needs of all learners.

-Standards based report cards are aligned to the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards in grades K-6. Parent handbooks were developed to communicate the newly revised report cards.

-Rock Springs High School has successfully implemented an Energy Tech Academy and a Health Academy. These academies focus on helping students be college and career ready. Students engage in a focused curriculum based on academy requirements and participate in internships with local businesses.

-Rock Springs High School (RSHS) will begin a new Fire, Law and Leadership Academy this fall. These community partnerships that are

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built with businesses, colleges and stakeholders are invaluable.

- SCSD#1 Communication Plan is developed, communication standards have been set and initial implementation has begun.
- RSHS is on the Advanced Placement (AP) National Honor Roll for the second time. It is the only WY high school on the AP honor roll.
- The new Wyoming Accountability in Education Act (WAEA) accountability system reported one elementary school exceeding expectations, and three elementary schools and one junior high (RSJH) meeting expectations during the initial pilot year.

### Areas in need of Improvement

- Student achievement in both reading and math for all students.
- As a "district in improvement," Title I funds are used to support professional development on data team training, student engagement, write tools, PLC and common assessment work as well as principal mentoring.
- School Performance Reports (SPR) Schools in need of improvement include:
  - Six elementary schools
  - Two middle schools
  - Three high schools
- Moving towards the implementation of the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards will represent another challenge to the district. The increased rigor in both Math and Language Arts will challenge students and staff.
- Communication and involvement of stakeholders continues to be an area in which we can improve. SCSD#1 is striving to provide transparency and "two-way" communication opportunities with all stakeholders.
- Student advocacy continues to be a challenge in our district. Action plans have been put in place at every school and implementation will begin soon.
- Systematic professional development training for all support staff is also a concern of stakeholders in SCSD#1.

## **Additional Information**

**Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.**

Sweetwater Life RU Ready is a multi-disciplinary team consisting of County Health Officer, Public Health Department, Sweetwater County Prevention Management, members from School District #1 and #2, Rock Springs and Green River Police Departments, Rock Springs and Green River City Councils, Sweetwater County Sheriff's Department, Wyoming Highway Patrol, Southwest Counseling, Sweetwater Memorial Hospital, Western Wyoming Family Planning, Health care organizations, Rock Springs High School Health Academy, United Way of Southwest Wyoming, members of the Clergy, and any other interested parties.

SCSD#1 is teaming with Sweetwater Life RU Ready in October of 2014. This project is a "life-simulation" health fair for teens and parents designed to increase awareness of the consequences of the teen's behavior, to decrease motivation to participate in risk taking behavior, and to provide new opportunities for parent-teen communication. The Project is a community wide collaboration whose goal is to make safe and healthy choices the norm in Sweetwater County.

### **Goals**

1. Prepare youth to make informed decisions about life choices.
2. Provide parents and trusted adults with current information about life cycle behaviors from a teen perspective.
3. Encourage open, honest teen-parent discussion of these behaviors.