



*Wyoming Department of Education*  
**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Wyoming State Scholars Initiative Encourages  
Rigorous High School Coursework**

**Cheyenne** – A new program offering incentives for high school students to complete more rigorous coursework was announced Thursday by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jim McBride and educators.

Students who complete coursework under the Wyoming State Scholars Initiative will receive awards and recognition and may qualify for significant financial aid. The program seeks to improve chances for success by better preparing students for college and the workforce and potentially reducing the costs of postsecondary education.

“Becoming a Wyoming Scholar will provide further opportunities for our young people to access higher education or get a better start on a fulfilling career,” Dr. McBride said. “This program really throws the door open for more college aid and more career options.”

The initiative is the result of a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Vocational and Adult Education issued through the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) and administered by Wyoming’s new P-16 Education Council.

Currently, Wyoming students need a minimum of 13 core credits for graduation: 4 years of English, 3 years of math, 3 years of science, and 3 years of social studies. To become a Wyoming Scholar, a student needs to take only 2.5 additional credits: another 0.5 credit of social studies and 2 credits of foreign language, for a total of 15.5 credits.

To qualify to become a Wyoming Scholar AND attain the highest level of the Hathaway Scholarship Program, students will need to take 4 years each of English, math and science, 3.5 credits of social studies, and 2 credits of foreign language – a total of 17.5 credits.

In addition to potential financial aid, students who attain Wyoming Scholar status receive certificates and medals honoring their achievements. Businesses are now being sought to partner with the program to provide mentoring, internships, scholarships and employment for Wyoming Scholars.

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Like the Hathaway Success Curriculum, which took effect with this year's high school freshman class, eligibility under the Wyoming State Scholars Initiative is tied to completion of specified courses. Unlike Hathaway, SSI is not tied to grade-point average or ACT scores.

A graduate can qualify for both Hathaway and SSI, but a student who doesn't qualify for Hathaway could still be eligible for aid such as federal Academic Competitiveness Grants by completing the SSI course of study. The new program leaves ample time for students to pursue electives.

"The correspondence between the goals of the Wyoming State Scholars Initiative and the Hathaway Scholarship Program and Success Curriculum is remarkable," University of Wyoming President Tom Buchanan said. "The SSI grant support will definitely advance education across all sectors in our state. We are extremely pleased that we were able to play a role in the acquisition of the grant funding and look forward to the improvement in academic preparation it will provide students whether they be entering the state's workforce or the University."

Paul Crips, a science teacher at Carey Junior High School in Cheyenne, said that Ray Kroc, founder of McDonald's, summed it up best when dealing with change and trying new things: "You are either green and growing or ripe and rotting."

Added Crips, "We need our kids to look upon their futures in Wyoming embracing the notion that they are green in learning but always growing and exploring. Science and mathematics education make all possibilities happen. That is an equation for success."

The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that six of the 10 fastest growing occupations in America over the next decade will require an education beyond high school. The U.S. still ranks among top nations in the educational attainment of older adults (ages 35-64) but drops to seventh in the educational attainment of younger adults (ages 25-34). Unless this trend changes, the proportion of the U.S. workers with high school diplomas and college degrees will decrease and the personal income of Americans will decline over the next 15 years.

Wyoming ranks sixth nationally in percentage of citizens 25 or older with a high school diploma. However, Wyoming ranks 47th for the percentage of residents 25 and older with a bachelor's degree or higher.

The State Scholars Initiative seeks to improve Wyoming's ranking. Additionally, the program aims to reach a substantial number of students who may be lost in the middle of the educational spectrum – between students from affluent families who are already college bound and the lowest-performing students who receive help from programs such as those mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

**-MORE-**

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“This program puts another tool in our educational toolbox,” McBride said. “It is our hope that the Wyoming Scholars Initiative will spur more of our high school students to challenge themselves, reduce their need for remediation once they reach college, and position themselves for a satisfying career.”

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*If you would prefer to receive this and other announcements or press releases in electronic format, please contact Public Information Officer Tim Lockwood at (307) 777-6386 or by e-mail at [tlockw@educ.state.wy.us](mailto:tlockw@educ.state.wy.us)*

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