

# Non-Public Schools and Home Schools in Tennessee



# Non-Public Schools

#### Non-Public Schools in Tennessee

- A non-public school is defined as a school that has been approved by the Tennessee Department of Education or a school accredited by, or a member of, an organization or association approved by the State Board of Education.
  - There are 5 categories of non-public schools in Tennessee.
  - As of 2017-18, there are 598 non-public schools in Tennessee.
- The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires school districts to provide equitable services to non-public/private school students, teachers, and other education personnel in some of its major grant programs. While non-public/private schools cannot receive direct funding from these federal grant programs, their students and teachers may be eligible to receive benefits, services, and materials with federal grant resources.



# Category I Non-Public Schools

- State Approved: Category I schools are approved by the Department of Education. These schools must follow all of the same rules and regulations as public schools.
  - This includes Category I-Special Purpose (Category I-SP) schools.
- Teachers in Category I schools must be licensed.
  - At least one teacher in a Category I-SP must be licensed in special education.
- State approval is granted annually by the Department.
- Annual monitoring:
  - The Department monitors all Category I schools annually for compliance in such areas as teacher licensure, academic standards, student assessments, and health and safety.
- There are 116 approved Category I non-public schools.



# Category II Non-Public Schools

- Agency Accredited: Category II schools are approved by a private school accrediting agency which has been approved by the Tennessee State Board of Education. Schools holding full accreditation status with an approved agency are considered approved by the Department of Education.
- Currently nine accrediting agencies have been approved by the State Board of Education.
- Teachers serving in Categories II schools must meet the licensure and certification standards set forth by their agency/association.
- There are 120 approved Category II non-public schools.



# Category III Non-Public Schools

- Regionally Accredited: Category III schools are accredited by AdvancEd or one of the following regional accrediting agencies:
  - Southern (SACS), North Central (NCA), & Northwest (NWAC)
    Associations
  - Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA)
  - New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)
  - Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)
  - National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) and affiliates (e.g., SAIS)
  - National Council of Private School Accreditation (NCPSA)
- Teachers serving in Categories III schools must meet the licensure and certification standards set forth by their agency/association.
- There are 146 recognized Category III non-public schools.



# Category IV Non-Public Schools

- Church-related Exempted: Category IV schools are church-related schools recognized by associations listed in T.C.A. § 49-50-801.
  - ACE (Accelerated Christian Education, Inc.)
  - ACSI (Association of Christian Schools International)
  - TN Alliance (Tennessee Alliance of Church-Related Schools)
  - TACS (Tennessee Association of Christian Schools)
  - TACRS (Tennessee Association of Church-Related Schools)
  - TANAS (Tennessee Association of Non-Public Academic Schools)
- Teachers in Category IV non-public schools are exempt from licensure requirements.
- There are 193 recognized Category IV non-public schools.



# Category V Non-Public Schools

- Acknowledged for Operation: Category V schools are considered to be "acknowledged for operation" and have minimal requirements.
- Category V teachers must hold a baccalaureate degree but are not required to have a teaching certificate.
- Category V schools must seek acknowledgement from the Department annually.
- The Department monitors all Category V schools annually for compliance in such areas as teacher credentials, student assessments, health, and safety.
- There are 23 acknowledged Category V non-public schools.



# **Legal Requirements**

- All categories of non-public schools must be conducted for the same length of term as public schools (6 ½ hour school days and 180 instructional days).
- Students enrolling in a non-public school must meet the same minimum age requirements (students must be five years old before August 15 to begin Kindergarten).
- Non-public schools must report to the local Director of Schools the names, ages, and residence of all pupils in attendance for that school year and must also report the names of students who have withdrawn or who have been absent for five unexcused days.
- Schools in Categories 1, 2, 3, and 1-SP are considered to be approved schools for pupils transferring from one school to another and transfer of credits and transcripts.
- Students who transfer from Categories 4 and 5 schools back to public school may be tested to determine grade level and number of credits.



# **Health and Safety Requirements**

- Students must be immunized prior to attendance at any school in Tennessee.
- Annual inspections by the Fire Marshal's Office are required for all categories of non-public schools.
- Non-public K–12 schools may establish a handgun carry policy for the school and school grounds.
- School personnel having knowledge of any child who is suffering from any physical or mental condition which reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect must report the harm immediately.
- School personnel who know or have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been sexually abused must report such knowledge or suspicion.



#### Non-public School Approval

- All categories of non-public school must apply to the Department for initial approval.
- The school approval window for opening a new non-public school runs from January – June each year for the following school year.
- Approval requirements differ dependent on category chosen but include such steps as:
  - State Fire Marshal Inspection
  - Health Inspection
  - Required Documentation
  - Onsite Visit





# **Home School**

# **Home School Options**

- A "home school" is a school conducted or directed by a parent or parents or a legal guardian or guardians for their own children.
- Tennessee recognizes three different types of homeschooling:
  - Independent Home School,
  - Category III Online School, and
  - Category IV Satellite School.
- In each type students receive most of their instruction at home, though in some instances students may be enrolled in non-public schools. Students who are enrolled in a satellite program of a church-related school, for example, are considered non-public school students.



# **Independent Home School**

- Independent home school students are those who register with the LEA through the Intent to Home School form.
- Parent must have GED or High School Diploma.
- Parent must provide instruction for at least 4 hours per day for the same number of instructional days as are required by state law for public schools.
- The Intent to Home School form must be completed and submitted to the LEA each year.
- Independent home school students must provide proof of immunization.



#### **Independent Home School Testing**

- Students in grades 5, 7, and 9 must participate in standardized assessments. Tests can be administered by either the Department free of charge, or by a professional testing service approved by the school district at the parent's expense.
- If a home school student in grade 9 is taking a course for which there is an end of course test, that student should be required to take that end of course exam.
- If the student falls more than 1 year behind grade level for 2 consecutive years, the Director of Schools may require the parent to enroll the child in a public or non-public school.



# **Category III Online Schools**

- Students enroll in an online program of a non-public school accredited by one of the following.
  - AdvancEd Southern (SACS), North Central (NCA), & Northwest (NWAC) Associations
  - Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA)
  - New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)
  - Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)
  - National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) and affiliates (e.g., SAIS)
  - National Council of Private School Accreditation (NCPSA)
- Parent qualifications, if any, are set by the school in which the child is enrolled.



# Category IV Satellite Schools

- Satellite or "umbrella" schools accept and enroll students although the parent teaches the child at home using the satellite school's specific guidelines.
- Parents must have a high school diploma or GED to teach grades 9–12.
- Students enrolled in Category IV church-related schools are not subject to any testing requirements.



# **Legal Requirements**

- Students may withdraw to home school at any point during the school year.
- Students must receive a minimum of four hours of instruction per day for 180 days per year required of public schools
- Attendance records must be sent to the Director of Schools at the end of the school year.
- Homeschool students may use public school facilities with the permission of the principal of the school, but they have no explicit right to use public school facilities.
- Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-3050, independent home school students may try out for athletics in school systems that are members of the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA).
- Students attending home school who transfer to public school may be tested to determine grade level and number of credits.



#### **LEA Responsibilities**

- LEAs are legally obligated to carry out the following activities relative to home school students:
  - Notify home schooling parents of their responsibilities under T.C.A. § 49-6-3050.
  - Collect and maintain file of students who have submitted the Intent to Home School form.
  - Document that parents have met the educational requirements of T.C.A. § 49-6-3050 and provide proof of student immunizations.
  - Examine test results each year and establish a plan of action as described by T.C.A. § 49-6-3050 for students who do not meet the required standards.
  - Document attendance records for home school students.
  - Annually provide the number of students in all categories of nonpublic schools and home school to the Department.





Districts and schools in Tennessee will exemplify excellence and equity such that all students are equipped with the knowledge and skills to successfully embark on their chosen path in life.