
Non-Public School Approval, Rule

The Background:

Current State Board rules on non-public schools allow the Department of Education to approve those schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Several distance education programs have been approved by SACS. Thus, those schools could be approved by the Department. However, programs that are accredited by other regional accrediting agencies (such as the Western Association of Colleges and Schools) would not satisfy the rule, merely because of their physical location.

To meet the accreditation needs of schools that serve areas covered by two or more regional accrediting commissions (such as distance learning programs), the regional accrediting agencies and some other nonpublic school accrediting agencies created an alliance called CITA. Schools obtaining CITA accreditation jointly receive regional accreditation (by, for example, SACS).

To rectify this discrepancy, the proposed rule revision replaces the phrases “the Southern Association of Schools” or “members of” such associations with the words “one of the five regional accrediting associations (e.g., the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools)” or “regionally accredited.”

The proposed revision also provides for the fact that students who are attending non-public schools often attend schools that are not within the geographical boundaries of their local school district. Thus, the requirement that students attending such schools (or the schools themselves) report attendance to the district “in which the school is located” is revised to require attendance be reported to the district “in which the student resides.”

The Master Plan Connection:

This item supports the Board’s *Master Plan* by improving the resources used to measure progress of students attending nonpublic schools.

The Recommendation:

Board staff recommends adoption of the rule revision on final reading. Department of Education staff concurs in the recommendation.

Non-Public School Approval Proposed Rule Revisions

Rule 0520-7-2 is revised by replacing the phrase “school is located” with the phrase “student resides” throughout the rule.

Subparagraph (c) of paragraph (1) of rule 0520-7-2-.01 Categories is revised by deleting the subparagraph in its entirety and substituting instead the following language so that as amended the subparagraph shall read:

- (c) Category III schools are those which are regionally accredited;

Rule 0520-7-2-.04 Category III: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools is revised by deleting the rule in its entirety and substituting instead the following language so that as amended the rule shall read:

Category III: Regional Accreditation

Schools in this category are accredited by one of the five regional accrediting associations (e.g., the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)) according to the procedures and criteria established by the association.

Subparagraph (c) of paragraph (2) of rule 0520-7-2-.05 Category IV: Exempted Schools is revised by deleting the subparagraph in its entirety and substituting instead the following language so that as amended the subparagraph shall read:

- (c) Observe all fire safety regulations and procedures promulgated by the Tennessee Fire Marshal's Office.