

Nonpublic Schools, Rules

The Background:

2009 Public Chapter 329 requires state agencies to consider any student who has received a high school diploma from a Category IV (church-related) school “as having all the rights and privileges of a high school diploma awarded by a public school system.”

Current language in Board rule 0520-07-02-.05(1) may cause confusion in light of that statutory change. Thus, the proposed revision removes this potentially confusing sentence: “Exempt schools are not state approved unless they voluntarily request to be associated with a non-public school accrediting agency, seek full state approval, or approval from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).”

The revision also updates the listing of accrediting organizations to match the listing in T.C.A. § 49-50-801.

Also, because two of the regional accrediting agencies—the Southern and North Central Associations—merged into a parent organization, AdvancEd, the rule has been revised to simply state that Category III schools are those accredited by one of the regional accrediting agencies, instead of “one of five” such agencies.

The Master Plan Connection:

This item ensures that students have access to sufficient resources in nonpublic schools that satisfy state laws and regulations for compulsory attendance.

The Recommendation:

The SBE staff recommends adoption of this item on final reading.

Proposed Rule Revision

Rule 0520-07-02-.04 Category III: Regional Accreditation is amended by deleting the present language in its entirety and replacing it with the following

Schools in this category are accredited by one (1) of the ~~five (5)~~ regional accrediting associations (e.g., the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)) according to the procedures and criteria established by the association.

Rule 0520-07-02-.05 Category IV: Exempted Schools, paragraph (1) is amended by deleting the present language in its entirety and replacing it with the following:

Schools in this category are exempt from regulation regarding faculty, textbooks, and curriculum. T.C.A. § 49-50-801 defines a church related school as "a school operated by denominational, parochial or other bona fide church organizations, which are required to meet the standards of accreditation or membership of the Tennessee Association of Christian Schools, the Association of Christian Schools International, the Tennessee Association of Independent Schools, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the Tennessee Association of Non-Public Academic Schools, the Tennessee Association of Church Related Schools or a school affiliated with Accelerated Christian Education, Inc."