

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Standardized Testing for Non-Public Schools

#### 1. ***What tests are non-public schools required to administer?***

Non-public schools are subject to the approval requirements established by the [Rules of the State Board of Education \(SBE\) Chapter 0520-07-02](#) for the school's designated category. Schools approved under Categories I, II, III, and V must administer "a nationally standardized achievement test covering the areas of English language arts and mathematics to each student in third (3<sup>rd</sup>) through eleventh (11<sup>th</sup>) grades." Category IV church-related schools are not required to administer a nationally standardized achievement test, although some church-related schools choose to do so.

#### 2. ***What is a nationally standardized achievement test?***

A standardized achievement test is a uniform assessment given in a controlled environment. Students taking a standardized assessment receive the same set of instructions and respond to the same questions (or selection of questions from a bank of questions), which are then scored in a standard, uniform, manner.

Generally, there are two types of standardized tests: criterion-referenced or norm-referenced. Criterion-referenced tests compare a student's responses to a standard set of responses (criterion), often using cut scores to determine a student's level of proficiency of expected learning standards. Results can be compared to other students of the same age or grade level; however, the score itself is not calculated using other students' performances, but as a percentage of the total number of questions. A norm-referenced test compares the student's performance relative to their peers, or a norm group. Students respond to standardized questions, and the final score is issued as a percentile rank, which compares the test-taker to other students who took the same test, usually distributed on a bell curve.

To be nationally standardized, the test has been given to a large number of students across demographic types and geographic regions, whose scores create a normative sample to which cut scores or percentile rankings are determined. Updates to normative samples can vary by testing publisher, so using the most current test is recommended to ensure it is reflective of the general population.

#### 3. ***Does the Tennessee Department of Education (department) or the State Board of Education maintain a list of approved nationally standardized achievement tests?***

There is no established list of approved nationally standardized achievement tests for non-public schools. Non-public schools are encouraged to thoroughly research the selected assessment to ensure it is a nationally standardized test and to consult with the school's governing board and/or attorney to finalize the selection.

**4. Which standardized achievement tests are commonly administered by approved non-public schools in Tennessee?**

Although this list is not exhaustive, non-public schools in Tennessee have reported using the following assessments:

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| • ACT Aspire  | • SAT/PSAT  |
| • California Achievement Test (CAT)   | • Stanford Achievement Test (SAT-10)                |
| • Classical Learning Test (CLT)   | • Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) |
| • Comprehensive Testing Program (CTP)<br>– Educational Records Bureau (ERB) | • TerraNova   |
| • Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)/Iowa Assessment                          | • Wechsler Individual Achievement Test              |
| • MAP Growth Test   | • Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement             |

**5. Who should a non-public school contact if they are interested in administering the TCAP?**

Non-public schools interested in administering the TCAP should email [Denette.Kolbe@tn.gov](mailto:Denette.Kolbe@tn.gov). Schools may also visit the department's [Assessment Logistics LiveBinder webpage](#), which contains a tab specifically for non-public schools. Begin by selecting the *TCAP Welcome Overview* from the orange menu on the left side of the page.

**6. What is the non-public school required to do with student scores on standardized tests?**

[SBE Rules 0520-07-02](#) for each category of non-public school (except Category IV) directs how test results are to be shared and maintained. Category I, II, III, and V non-public schools must communicate results to parents and teachers. Category I non-public schools must keep the results as part of a student's permanent record. Category II, III, and V non-public schools must keep the results on file at the school for at least one (1) calendar year.

**7. Are non-public schools permitted to provide testing accommodations for students with disabilities?**

Schools should adhere to the testing protocols established by the testing publisher for the selected assessment. However, Categories I, II, III, and V non-public schools are permitted to "identify alternate assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities." [[SBE Rules 0520-07-02](#)]

Students and schools participating in scholarship or savings account programs, such as the Education Freedom Scholarship Program, Individualized Education Account Program, or Education Savings Account Program, may be subject to additional requirements. Requirements established by other programs do not exempt a school from any of the rules established by the State Board for the [approval](#) and [administration](#) of non-public schools.

**8. Who can I contact if I have additional questions?**

Schools with additional questions may contact the department at [Private.Schools@tn.gov](mailto:Private.Schools@tn.gov) or, if appropriate, the school's accrediting or membership agency.