
Educator Preparation Providers (EPP) and Specialty Area Program (SAP) Approvals

The Background:

This item contains action recommendations for Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs) and Specialty Area Programs (SAPs) (SAPs are the endorsement program – e.g., Elementary Education K-5) for the following existing EPPs (Lee University, Rhodes College, Cumberland University) and prospective EPP (Teach Wilson County).

Comprehensive Reviews of Existing EPPs and SAPs

The Department of Education is responsible for the review of EPPs and SAPs. Once an EPP receives initial approval, the EPP must participate in a full-approval review process, managed by the Department, within three to five (3-5) years.

Once an EPP receives full approval status, the EPP may maintain its approval status through the national CAEP (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation) accreditation pathway, AAQEP (Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation) accreditation pathway, or through the state-managed comprehensive review process every seven (7) years. Action recommendations made by the Department must be approved by the State Board of Education pursuant to State Board Rules 0520-02-04.

Steps in the review process include:

- Reports prepared by the EPP that respond to the national accreditation standards and state specialty area program standards;
- A site review conducted by a state-selected and trained site review team using the Tennessee Comprehensive Review Handbook and, for EPPs seeking national accreditation, a nationally selected and trained CAEP or AAQEP site team;
- A site review report submitted to the EPP;
- An EPP response (optional rejoinder) to the site review report submitted to the Department;
- An evaluation of all reviews by the Tennessee Advisory Committee on Educator Preparation (ACEP); and
- Details from any focused or interim reviews conducted during the interim period between review cycles.

The Department of Education recommendations for existing EPPs and SAPs fall into one (1) of five (5) categories:

- Full Approval: Exemplary Status,
- Full Approval,
- Full Approval: Minor Stipulations,
- Probationary Approval: Major Stipulations, or
- Denial of Approval.

For EPPs seeking CAEP or AAQEP accreditation, the initial accreditation status is translated to an EPP state approval recommendation by the Department and reviewed by the ACEP. CAEP or AAQEP advanced

accreditation decisions are not considered in recommendations to the State Board, as advanced-level programs are reviewed as SAPs, and each receives a separate status recommendation.

Joint CAEP or AAQEP Accreditation and State Specialty Area Program Comprehensive Reviews

Lee University

This AAQEP review took place in spring 2025. The AAQEP Accreditation Commission concluded that the EPP meets expectations on all AAQEP standards. No critical deficiencies were cited. **The provider is recommended for full approval and initial accreditation.**

State-Managed EPP and SAP Comprehensive Reviews

Lee University

This specialty area program review took place in the fall of 2024. The review team concluded that the EPP meets expectations on all SAPs. **All reviewed specialty area programs are recommended for full approval.**

Focused Reviews

The Department of Education is responsible for the review of EPPs and SAPs. If an EPP receives a comprehensive review outcome of probationary approval, major stipulations, the EPP shall participate in a focused review within three (3) years of receiving probationary approval from the State Board.

Rhodes College

This focused review took place in fall 2024. The review team concluded that the EPP meets expectations on all reviewed standards (standards 1, 3, 4, and 5). The review team concluded that standard 5 was met with a minor stipulation. All reviewed SAPs met expectations. **The provider is recommended for full approval, minor stipulations. All SAPs are recommended for full approval.**

EPP Status Changes

Educator Preparation Rule 0520-02-04 states that, for EPPs with full approval, minor stipulations status, the Department may recommend to the State Board removal of the minor stipulations for the remainder of the approval period of the EPP if the EPP has adequately addressed the areas in need of improvement. To be eligible for the removal of the minor stipulations, the EPP must submit to the Department a plan for addressing the areas in need of improvement; the plan is subsequently reviewed and approved by the Department. The Department requires annual progress monitoring in which the EPP submits evidence to demonstrate that progress is being made toward the action plan goals.

Cumberland University

Department reviewers reviewed the EPP action plan and subsequent evidence provided during annual progress monitoring reviews since 2021. The Department concluded that the EPP meets expectations in the areas in need of improvement and recommends removal of the minor stipulations. **The provider is recommended for a status change to full approval.**

New EPPs and SAPs Seeking Initial Approval

In accordance with the Educator Preparation Rules 0520-02-04, after review of a proposal for initial approval of an EPP, the Department shall recommend to the State Board one of the following:

- a) Initial approval. If initial approval is awarded, providers may begin enrolling and subsequently recommending candidates for licensure in approved specialty areas; or
- b) Denial of initial approval. If initial approval is denied, providers may not recommend candidates for licensure or identify programs leading to licensure. Providers may submit a revised proposal for consideration during the next review period.

Teach Wilson County

The Department of Education reviewed the Teach Wilson County proposal for a recommendation of initial approval as a new EPP and associated SAPs in multiple endorsement areas. The review considered key components of the State Board of Education Educator Preparation Rules 0520-02-04, Educator Preparation Policy 5.504, and Literacy and Specialty Area Standards Policy 5.505 related to initial EPP and SAP approval.

The Department review team concluded that Teach Wilson County meets expectations on the initial EPP proposal and should be granted initial approval to proceed with implementation of the new EPP and recommend eligible educator preparation candidates for endorsements in CTE-Occupational. ***Teach Wilson County is therefore recommended for initial approval.***

Connection to the [Master Plan](#):

This item supports the State Board's strategic focus on Teachers and Leaders outlined in the Master Plan by ensuring EPPs are reviewed regularly and held to high standards to best prepare teacher candidates.

The Recommendation:

The Department of Education recommends approval of this item on first and final reading. The SBE staff concurs with this recommendation.