
Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs) and Specialty Area Programs (SAPs) Approvals

The Background:

This item contains action recommendations for Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs) and the Specialty Area Programs (SAPs) (SAPs are the endorsement programs – e.g., Elementary Education K-5) for the following existing EPPs (i.e., Aquinas College, Knox County EPP, TFA-Memphis, TN State University, and TN Tech University) and prospective EPP (i.e., LeMoyné-Owen College).

Comprehensive Reviews of Existing EPPs and SAPs

The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) is responsible for reviewing EPPs and SAPs. Once an EPP receives initial approval, the EPP must participate in a full-approval review process, managed by TDOE, 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 of recommendations made by TDOE must be approved by the State Board of Education pursuant to State Board Rule 0520-02-04.

Steps in the review process include:

- Reports prepared by the EPP that respond to the CAEP or AAQEP national accreditation standards and state specialty program standards;
- On-site review conducted by a state-selected and trained on-site review team using the Tennessee Comprehensive Review Handbook and, for EPPs seeking national accreditation, a nationally selected and trained CAEP or AAQEP on-site team;
- On-site review report submitted to the EPP;
- EPP response (rejoinder) to the on-site review report submitted to the Department;
- Evaluation of all reviews by the Tennessee Advisory Committee on Educator Preparation (ACEP); and
- CAEP or AAQEP accreditation/state approval comprehensive review occurs on a seven (7)-year cycle, which may include focused reviews during the interim period.

The Tennessee 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 TDOE 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 Accreditation and State Specialty Area Program Comprehensive Reviews

TN State University

This joint CAEP/state probationary review took place in spring 2025. The review team concluded that the EPP meets expectations on CAEP standard 5. Some minor and one major stipulations were cited. Reviewed specialty area programs are recommended for several approval outcomes: full approval, full approval - minor stipulations, and probationary approval – major stipulations. In accordance with State Board Rule 0520-02-04-.04, because the provider met expectations on all standards but falls below expectations on one (1) or more components across multiple standards, the provider is recommended for full approval, minor stipulations for the initial-licensure level. The provider is recommended for full approval, full approval – minor stipulations, and probationary approval – major stipulations for specialty area programs.

TN Tech University

This joint CAEP/state review took place in spring 2025. The review team concluded that the EPP meets expectations on all CAEP standards. No critical deficiencies were cited. The provider is recommended for full approval. All reviewed specialty area programs are recommended for full approval.

State-Managed EPP and SAP Comprehensive Reviews

Aquinas College

This state-managed full approval review took place in the spring of 2025. The review team concluded that the EPP meets expectations on CAEP standards 1-5. In accordance with State Board Rule 0520-02-04-.04, because the provider met expectations on all standards, the provider is recommended for full approval. The provider is recommended for full approval for all specialty area programs.

Knox County EPP

This state-managed full approval review took place in the spring of 2025. The review team concluded that the EPP meets expectations on CAEP standards 1-5. In accordance with State Board Rule 0520-02-04-.04, because the provider met expectations on all standards, the provider is recommended for full approval. The provider is recommended for full approval for all specialty area programs.

Teach for America (TFA)-Memphis

This joint CAEP/state review took place in spring 2025. The review team concluded that the EPP meets expectations on CAEP standards 2, 3, and 4, with minor stipulations in standards 2 and 4. The EPP did not meet expectations on standards 1 and 5, with stipulations in both standards. All reviewed specialty area programs are recommended for full approval, minor stipulations. In accordance with State Board Rule 0520-02-04-.04, because the provider meets expectations on three (3) or more standards but falls below expectations on one (1) or more standard(s), the provider is recommended for probationary approval, major stipulations. The provider is recommended for full approval, minor stipulations for specialty area programs.

New EPPs and SAPs Seeking Initial Approval

In accordance with the Educator Preparation Rule 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 as leading to licensure. Providers may submit a revised proposal for consideration during the next review period.

LeMoyne-Owen College

The Tennessee Department of Education reviewed the LeMoyne-Owen College 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 Rule 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 Tennessee Department of Education review team concluded that LeMoyne-Owen College does not meet expectations on the initial EPP proposal and should be denied initial approval to proceed with implementation of the new EPP and specialty area programs.

LeMoyne-Owen is therefore recommended for denial of 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 Tennessee Department of Education recommends approval of this item on first and final reading. The SBE staff concurs with this recommendation.