
2026 Category IV Church-Related Non-Public School Applications

The Background:

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-50-801 and State Board Rule 0520-07-02-.05(4), church-related schools operated by “denominational, parochial, or other bona fide [religious] organizations” may apply directly to the State Board of Education (“State Board”) for approval if they are not accredited by or members of one of the accrediting or membership agencies set forth in T.C.A. § 49-50-801(a). Schools seeking approval directly from the State Board must submit a completed application to the State Board’s Executive Director for a recommendation for approval or denial. The Tennessee Department of Education is charged with monitoring SBE-approved Category IV schools for continued compliance with applicable state and federal laws, including State Board rules.

The State Board received 5 applications during the application window from January 1 to March 1, 2026. State Board staff evaluated each school’s application using the Board’s Category VI Church-Related Schools Application Rubric and worked closely with each applicant the opportunity to correct any deficiencies in the application materials. During the review process, State Board staff regularly collaborated with the Tennessee Department of Education’s non-public schools and legal teams to ensure cross-agency alignment on Category IV school requirements.

Ahead of today’s meeting, State Board staff drafted their findings and recommendations, copies of which have been provided to Board members and posted on the State Board’s website for review.

The Executive Director recommends as follows:

1. Beaver Ridge Hybrid School – Approve
2. Emmanuel United Methodist Kindergarten – Approve
3. Titus 2 Academy – Approve
4. St. Constantine School of Middle TN – Conditionally Approve
5. St. Paul’s Kindergarten and Day School – Approve

Connection to the [Master Plan](#):

This item supports the State Board’s strategic focus on Engagement and Accountability outlined in the Master Plan by ensuring SBE meetings promote transparency, accountability, and effective implementation of education policy.

The Recommendation:

Rule 0520-07-02-.05(4) only authorizes the Board to approve church-related schools not accredited by or members of the agencies enumerated in Rule. Because the abovementioned applicants have met each of

the Board's requirements for approval or conditional approval, State Board staff, including the Executive Director, recommend the Board approve or conditionally approve the schools on first and final reading.