



St. Constantine School: Application for SBE Approval as a Category IV Non-Public School

Pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated (“T.C.A.”) § 49-50-801 and State Board Rule 0520-07-02-.05, 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 complete and submit an application to the State Board’s Executive Director and meet any deadlines established by State Board staff. In accordance with State Board Rule 0520-07-02-.05, State Board staff shall review any complete and timely submitted application and provide a recommendation for approval or denial of the application to the State Board.

Background

The Saint Constantine School of Middle Tennessee (St. Constantine) is affiliated with the Orthodox Christian Church and aims to educate students through “classical, Christian, practical education.” According to the applicant:

Classical education combines the wisdom of the Church and the best of secular culture to teach a student to read well, write well, and think well. It is the methodology that Eton, Oxford, and Cambridge have used to produce leaders for centuries. A classical, Christian education teaches a student to learn to know and love the wisdom of the church and the culture from which they have come, while equipping them to face the unique challenges of living in the 21st century.

The organization currently operates school-age campuses in Houston, Texas; Dallas, Texas; and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In addition to plans to open a campus in Denver, Colorado, the applicant seeks to open a middle Tennessee campus for the 2026-27 school year, stating that “[a] group of local families in Middle Tennessee feel that the model Houston has developed will be both beneficial to and appreciated by local families.” The middle Tennessee campus will feature a preK-12 brick-and-mortar school where students will attend in-person classes 5 days per week. The applicant recently signed a lease on a building in Franklin, Tennessee.

The middle Tennessee campus will be operated by Saint Constantine School of Houston, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Review Process

Members of the SBE legal team evaluated the application using SBE’s scoring rubric for Category IV schools. The reviewers notified the applicant of any initial deficiencies and provided an opportunity to correct and resubmit the application materials. The Executive Director

reviewed the findings and met with the reviewers to discuss the application in order to determine her recommendation to the board.

Summary of Reviewer Findings

While the applicant corrected the SBE-identified deficiencies in their application materials, the reviewers determined that the St. Constantine application was incomplete and did not meet the requirements for SBE approval because the applicant was unable to provide proof of a passing fire marshal inspection, as required by State Board Rule 0520-07-02-.05(3)(c). At the time of writing, the applicant has recently signed a lease and hired an architect, making the structural changes needed to pass the fire marshal inspection. The applicant anticipates completing the renovations and obtaining the approved inspections by the end of July 2026, ahead of the school's planned opening the following month.

With the exception of the fire marshal report, the application was complete and met the requirements for approval. Specifically, the applicant submitted:

- A timely application utilizing the current SBE application.
- A cover letter with its rationale for application.
- The denominational, parochial, or other bona fide religious organization's IRS 501(c)(3) status letter.
- A document outlining the religious beliefs of the denominational, parochial, or other bona fide religious organization.
- A school handbook containing policies/procedures to:
 - 1) Comply with the requirement of T.C.A. § 49-6-3007 that the names, ages, and addresses of all pupils in attendance be reported to the director of schools of the public school district in which the student resides.
 - 2) Ensure students entering Kindergarten have reached five (5) years of age on or before August 15.
 - 3) Maintain an operating schedule that includes at least 180 instructional days of at least 6 ½ hours.
 - 4) Conduct criminal history records check prior to employment for any person applying for or holding a position as a teacher or any other position requiring proximity to school children.
 - 5) Comply with the requirement of Tennessee Dept. of Health rules and T.C.A. § 49-6-5001 that each child enrolled in school be vaccinated against disease, subject to any applicable exemptions set forth in state law or Dept. of Health rules.
 - 6) Comply with the reporting requirements set forth in T.C.A. § 49-5-417 and State Board Rule 0520-02-03-.09 with regard to any employee who possesses an active or expired Tennessee educator license.



- 7) Comply with T.C.A. § 49-6-3007(d) by keeping daily reports of attendance, verified by the teacher making the record, which shall be open to inspection by the director of schools of the district in which the school is located.
- 8) Comply with T.C.A. § 49-6-3007(e)(1) by providing written notice to the parent, guardian, or person having control of a student subject to compulsory attendance that the parent, guardian, or other person having control of the student must monitor the student's school attendance and require the student to attend school.
- 9) Comply with T.C.A. § 49-6-3009(k) by adopting a policy addressing compulsory attendance and truancy that describes the interventions that the school will employ for violations of compulsory attendance laws.
- 10) Construct, remodel, renovate, expand, or model school buildings or other structures in accordance with any state and/or federal requirements applicable to the school regarding building accessibility, which may include, but is not limited to, the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- 11) Comply with all fire safety regulations and procedures promulgated by the Tennessee Fire Marshal's Office.
- 12) Conduct at least one (1) fire safety inspection annually based on the fire safety inspection checklist developed by the Tennessee Fire Marshal's Office, and maintain copies of the inspection reports, including findings of non-compliance and actions taken to comply, for review by the Tennessee Fire Marshal's Office.
- 13) Comply with all rules and regulations and codes of the city, county, and state regarding planning of new buildings, alterations, and safety.

The school will not prepare or serve food, so documentation of a passing foodservice inspection was not required.

Reviewer and Executive Director Recommendation

At the time of writing, St. Constantine has met all requirements for Category IV church-related schools with the exception of a passing fire marshal inspection report. Accordingly, the reviewers recommend a conditional approval of the school, whereby SBE's approval is not effective unless and until SBE staff receive what they determine to be a passing fire marshal inspection report. The applicant understands they are not able to begin operation until SBE staff have approved their fire marshal submission. The Executive Director concurs with the recommendation.