



Category IV Church-Related Schools
2027-28 SY Application for Tennessee State Board of Education Approval

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-50-801 and State Board of Education (SBE) Rule [0520-07-02-.05](#), church-related schools “operated by denominational, parochial, or other bona fide [religious] organizations” may apply directly to the SBE 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 SBE must complete and submit this application to the SBE’s Executive Director. Completed applications should be sent electronically to Sara Morrison at Sara.Morrison@tn.gov. Only fully complete applications will be reviewed. Once reviewed, SBE staff will make a recommendation to the SBE members for approval or denial based on the information submitted with the application. The school will be notified of the staff’s recommendation and the date of the SBE meeting at which the recommendation will be presented. School representatives may request to speak at the meeting by following the process outlined in SBE Rule [0520-09-01-.02](#).

In accordance with SBE Rule [0520-07-01-.04](#), church-related schools approved by the SBE are subject to monitoring by the Tennessee Dept. of Education (Department) to ensure compliance with applicable law and rules. Information regarding the Department’s monitoring process is available [here](#). Church-related schools approved by the SBE may have their approval revoked by the SBE for non-compliance.

I. School Information

School name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Name of Principal/Head of School: _____

E-Mail: _____

School website: _____

Tennessee public school district in which the school is located: _____

School grade bands: _____

Number of (non-parent) teachers employed or anticipated: _____

Number of students enrolled or anticipated: _____

Is the school already in operation? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Will this school operate a satellite/umbrella program for children whose parents teach them at home pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-3050(a)(2)-(3),¹ a regular school program, or both?

☐ Satellite/umbrella program only ☐ Regular school program only ☐ Both

Does the school provide or offer a physical location (i.e., room or building) to be used by students and/or school staff for schooling or school-related functions? ☐ Yes ☐ No

¹ Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-3050(a)(2)-(3), a satellite/umbrella program is a “Home schools that teach kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12), where the parents are associated with and where students are enrolled with a church-related school, as defined by § 49-50-801, that are supervised by the church-related school’s director and that administer or offer standardized achievement tests.” “A parent-teacher may enroll the parent’s home school student or students in a church-related school, as defined in § 49-50-801, and participate as a teacher in that church-related school. Such parent-teacher shall be subject to the requirements established by the church-related school for home school teachers.”



II. Denominational, parochial, or other bona fide religious organization

Name of denominational, parochial, or other bona fide religious organization ("organization") operating the school: _____

Organization contact person: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____

Telephone #: _____ E-Mail: _____

Organization website: _____

III. Accrediting or membership agency

Is the school already accredited by or a member of one of the agencies listed in T.C.A. § 49-50-801(a)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, name of accrediting or membership agency: _____

Address of accrediting or membership agency: _____

Telephone number of accrediting or membership agency: _____

Website of accrediting or membership agency: _____

Expiration date of current accreditation or membership: _____

IV. Certifications

The following certifications shall be completed by all applicants:

As Principal/Head of School of _____, I certify that the school:

1. Complies 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. Ensures students entering Kindergarten have reached five (5) years of age on or before August 15 pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-201(b)(3), unless the principal or head of school finds through evaluation and testing, at the request of the parent or legal guardian, that a child who is five (5) on or before September 30 is sufficiently mature emotionally and academically to enter Kindergarten and the school has a policy permitting testing by the principal or head of school to obtain early admission to Kindergarten.
3. Maintains an operating schedule that includes the minimum number of instructional days (180) and the minimum number of hours per day for grades 1-12 (6 ½) and for kindergarten (4). In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-3004, a school that exceeds the required six and one-half (6 ½) hours of instructional time per day for the full academic year shall be credited with the additional instructional time in amounts up to, but not exceeding, thirteen (13) instructional days each school year. Such excess instructional time shall be used in accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-3004(e)(1). Schools that are unable to meet the required 180 instructional day requirement due to natural disaster or serious outbreak of illness affecting or endangering students or staff during the school year may request a waiver of the minimum instructional day requirement from the schools accrediting or membership agency (if applicable) or the Commissioner of Education.



4. Conducts a 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. Criminal history records checks shall also be required for any person or employee of the person, corporation, or other entity who contracts with a school and who will have direct contact with school children or access to the grounds of the school when children are present. The criminal history records check shall be fingerprint based or social security number based and shall also include a check of the Tennessee and National Sex Offender Registries and the Tennessee Dept. of Health Abuse Registry. Schools shall also search the Tennessee educator licensure database (TNCompass) to determine if an applicant for a teaching position or any other position requiring proximity to school children has had a Tennessee educator license suspended or revoked for misconduct. A Category IV school is not required to conduct a criminal history records check as set forth in SBE Rule 0520-07-02-.05(3)(i) for a parent-teacher who is instructing their own children.
5. Complies 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. This requirement does not apply to a student who is enrolled in a Category IV umbrella home school and is taught at home by a parent-teacher in accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-3050(a)(2) or (a)(3).
6. Complies with the reporting requirements set forth in T.C.A. § 49-5-417 and SBE Rule 0520-02-03-.09 with regard to any employee who possesses an active or expired Tennessee educator license.
7. Complies with T.C.A. § 49-6-3007(d) by keeping daily reports of attendance, verified by the teacher making the record, that shall be open to inspection at all reasonable times by the director of schools of the local education agency (LEA) in which the school is located, or the director's duly authorized representative.
8. Complies 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. The written notice must inform the parent, guardian, or other person having control of a student that a student who accumulates five (5) days of unexcused absences during the school year is subject to progressive truancy interventions and that continued unexcused absences may result in a referral to juvenile court.
9. Complies 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 the compulsory attendance laws. The policy shall provide that the director of schools or the attendance supervisor in the LEA where the student's home of record is located will be notified in the event that a student at a nonpublic or church-related school is expelled or withdraws from school.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date _____
Principal/Head of School



The following certifications shall **ONLY** be completed by applicants meeting the definition of “educational occupancy” in [Tennessee Division of Fire Prevention Rule 0780-02-03-.01\(1\)\(e\)](#):

As Principal/Head of School of _____, I certify that the school:

10. Complies with all rules and regulations and codes of the city, county, and state regarding planning of new buildings, alterations, health, and safety.
11. Complies with all fire safety regulations and procedures promulgated by the Tennessee Fire Marshal’s Office.
12. Conducts 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. Constructs, remodels, renovates, expands, or modifies 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.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date _____
Principal/Head of School

V. Attachments

In support of the application, please attach the following documents:

1. Cover letter addressed to the Executive Director of the SBE explaining the reasons for the application and any additional relevant information.
2. A copy of the denominational, parochial, or other bona fide religious organization's **application to the United States requesting IRS 501(c)(3) status and a copy of the IRS letter approving such status.**
3. A document outlining the religious beliefs of the denominational, parochial, or other bona fide religious organization verifying that the organization operating the school is a bona fide religious organization (e.g., bylaws, charter, etc.).
4. School/Student Handbook or other documentation evidencing that the school has policies/procedures to ensure it meets each of the requirements outlined in Part IV of the application (Certification).
5. For schools meeting the definition of “educational occupancy” in [Tennessee Division of Fire Prevention Rule 0780-02-03-.01\(1\)\(e\)](#), a copy of the most recent inspection fire and electric inspection conducted by the Tennessee Dept. of Commerce & Insurance. A request for this inspection must be made through the Tennessee Dept. of Education by emailing Private.Schools@tn.gov.
6. For schools preparing and serving food on site, a copy of the most recent food service establishment inspection report conducted by the Tennessee Dept. of Health. A request for this inspection is made through the local health department.
7. Optional attachments: Any other explanatory material you think would be helpful to the SBE in evaluating the school's application (e.g., annual report, bylaws, etc.).



VI. Attestation:

I certify that the foregoing information as well as any information submitted as an attachment to this application is true and correct.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____
Principal/Head of School

Date