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**Category II Non-Public School Accrediting Agencies**

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**The Background:**

In 1987, the State Board of Education created a method of approving non-public school accrediting agencies. Category II non-public schools are schools that belong to an agency whose accreditation process is approved by the State Board of Education. Approval of category II agencies lasts for a period of five (5) years.

Each prospective agency must submit various materials in the form of an application to the Tennessee Department of Education for review. The agency's rules, regulations and minimum standards must conform to the State Board of Education's Rules, Regulations and Minimum Standards. Additionally, at least one school accredited by the agency must undergo a site visit to monitor school approval documents and conformity with the standards presented to the state for review.

Previously Tennessee had recognized nine (9) accrediting agencies. Eight (8) of these agencies reapplied for approval:

1. Association of Christian Schools International
2. Catholic Diocese of Knoxville
3. Catholic Diocese of Nashville
4. E. A. Sutherland Educational Association
5. Mississippi Association of Independent Schools
6. Southern Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists
7. Tennessee Association of Christian Schools
8. Tennessee Association of Non-Public Academic Schools

Harding Academy of Memphis chose not to reapply as a recognized accreditation agency since all of their schools are now accredited by AdvancED (Category III).

Two new agencies applied for recognition as a category II accreditation agency:

1. Association of Classical & Christian Schools
2. National Lutheran School Accreditation

All applications for agency approval were received and reviewed by the Tennessee Department of Education during the fall of 2013. School site visits were completed in January of 2014.

Of the ten (10) submissions, nine (9) agencies demonstrated compliance with all rules, regulations and minimum standards for approval as category II accreditation agencies. The E. A. Sutherland Educational Association (EASEA) did not demonstrate to the

department that it meets the minimum rules, regulations, and standards for approval at this time.

While conducting a school site visit to Harbert Hills Academy, an EASEA accredited school, it was determined that the school failed to meet the minimum standards set forth in the Rules of the State Board of Education Chapter 0520-07-02-.03. In review of the daily student schedule, it was evident that students are scheduled for instruction for an amount of time less than the required 6.5 hours per day. Additionally, students are scheduled to work at an on-site nursing home as much as seven (7) hours per day during a normal school week (Monday – Friday) with no apparent connection to assigned classes. During an interview with Wanda Sarr (Director of Education, EASEA) and Steve Dickman (President, Harbert Hills Academy) it was stated that all EASEA schools operate utilizing the same basic school/work schedule for students. In addition, it was noted that Harbert Hills Academy was in violation of several EASEA accreditation standards which raised concerns over EASEA’s monitoring for compliance.

The Department of Education recommends the approval of the following schools as category II non-public school accrediting agencies for schools years 2014-2015 through 2018-2019:

Association of Christian Schools International  
Association of Classical & Christian Schools  
Catholic Diocese of Knoxville  
Catholic Diocese of Nashville  
Mississippi Association of Independent Schools  
National Lutheran School Accreditation  
Southern Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists  
Tennessee Association of Christian Schools  
Tennessee Association of Non-Public Academic Schools

The Department of Education recommends the denial of the E. A. Sutherland Educational Association as a category II non-public school accrediting agency.

**The Recommendation:**

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