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**Category II and III Private School Accrediting Agencies Policy 3.500**

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**The Background:**

T.C.A. § 49-1-302(i) provides that the State Board of Education, through the Department of Education, shall “enforce standards for... programs operated by private schools as defined by § 49-6-3001(c)(3).” T.C.A. § 49-6-3001(c)(3) defines a private school, in part, as a “school accredited by, or a member of, an organization or association approved by the state board of education as an organization accrediting or setting academic requirements in schools...” Category II and III private schools are approved by an agency whose ability to accredit schools in Tennessee is approved by the State Board.

State Board of Education Rule 0520-07-02-.03 establishes the criteria for approval of Category II accrediting agencies for a period of five (5) years. This rule tasks the Department with developing and reviewing applications for interested agencies and recommending to the State Board whether each agency’s application should be approved or denied.

Under the current policy, nine (9) accrediting agencies are approved to accredit Category II schools. Eight (8) of these agencies reapplied for approval:

1. Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS)
2. Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)
3. Christian Schools International Accreditation Services (CSI)
4. Midsouth Association of Independent Schools (MAIS)
5. National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA)
6. Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (SUC)
7. Tennessee Association of Christian Schools (TACS)
8. Tennessee Association of Non-Public Academic Schools (TANAS)

The Catholic Diocese of Nashville (CDN) Schools Office elected not to reapply for approval because all CDN schools are required to receive accreditation through Cognia, an approved Category III accrediting agency.

In addition to the eight (8) agencies that reapplied, three (3) new agencies submitted applications:

1. Association of Christian Teachers and Schools (ACTS)
2. Expanded Educational Services (EES)
3. National Alliance of Christian Schools (NACS)

Agencies submitted applications to the Department in November and December 2023. The Department reviewed the applications and completed one (1) school leader interview for each applicant in January and February 2024. During the review process, EES withdrew its application from consideration due to misalignment with current agency goals.

After review of all applications, the Department recommends the following agencies for approval as authorized Category II accrediting agencies for the next five (5) year approval cycle (July 2024- through July 2029):

1. Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS)
2. Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)
3. Association of Christian Teachers and Schools (ACTS)
4. Christian Schools International (CSI)
5. Midsouth Association of Independent Schools (MAIS)
6. National Alliance of Christian Schools (NACS)
7. National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA)
8. Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (SUC)
9. Tennessee Association of Christian Schools (TACS)
10. Tennessee Association of Non-Public Academic Schools (TANAS)

**The Fiscal Analysis Impact:**

T.C.A. § 49-1-212 requires that the Department prepare a fiscal analysis of any policy, rule, or regulation proposed to the State Board of Education. This item has no financial impact on an LEA.

**Policy Justification:**

T.C.A. § 4-5-230 requires that justification for adopting an item as a policy instead of a rule be submitted to the chair of the Government Operations Committee. This item is proposed to be adopted as a policy because it defines or explains the meaning of a statute or rule and/or concerns only the internal management of state government that does not affect private rights or privileges.

**Connection to the [Master Plan](#):**

This item supports the State Board’s strategic focus on Engagement and Accountability outlined in the Master Plan by holds accrediting agencies accountable to rigorous and transparent standards for approving Category II private schools.

**The Recommendation:**

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