



Accreditation = Accountability

A private school choice program would require all participating private schools to be accredited—what does that mean?



Background

In 1986, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) stopped accrediting private schools and authorized the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission (TEPSAC) to ensure that private schools **meet or exceed the standards required by public schools in Texas**. The 19 accrediting commissions recognized by the state of Texas serve 920 private, accredited, non-profit schools. Learn more at tepsac.org.

The Accreditation Process

Accreditation teams investigate all aspects of the school in multi-day school visits—**finances, health and safety, governance, curriculum, teacher qualifications—even how many books are in the library!** The team makes sure that the school meets the standards of the accrediting commission in each of these areas. After this visit, a comprehensive report is made and the team recommends accreditation, warned status, or no accreditation.

Yearly Requirements

Among other requirements, all accredited private schools must administer a **norm referenced test** every year and conduct a **financial audit**.

The relationship of TEPSAC with the Texas Commissioner of Education allows for the following activities related to accredited non-public schools:

- ▶ Transferability of student credits earned in accredited non-public schools to Texas public schools.
- ▶ Recognition of teacher service in accredited non-public schools for salary increment purposes in Texas public schools.
- ▶ TEPSAC meetings held biannually with TEA liaisons to ensure the ongoing integrity and quality of the process.

Accountability Among Accrediting Commissions

Every 10 years, each accrediting commission is evaluated by TEPSAC to make sure that they are holding their schools to, at a minimum, the standards of public schools in Texas. A commissioner from another agency attends a school visit and the meeting that determines the accreditation status of that particular school. The reviewing agency then brings a recommendation to TEPSAC for a vote to determine if the accrediting commission is still eligible to be a member of TEPSAC.

State-Recognized Accrediting Commissions

- Accreditation Commission of the Texas Association of Baptist Schools (ACTABS)
- American Association of Christian Schools (AACCS)
- American Montessori Society (AMS)
- Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)
- Association of Christian Teachers and Schools (ACTS)
- Association of Classical and Christian Schools (ACCS)
- Christian Schools International (CSI)
- Cognia
- Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS)
- International Christian Accrediting Association (ICAA)
- Lutheran Schools Accreditation Commission (LSAC)
- Middle State Association Commissions Elementary and Secondary Schools
- National Christian Schools Association (NCSA)
- Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS)
- Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools (SAES)
- Texas Alliance of Accredited Private Schools (TAAPS)
- Texas Catholic Conference Education Department (TCCED)
- Texas Seventh-Day Adventists (TSDA)
- Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation (WELSSA)