



Explanation of Non-public School Categories

The State Board of Education (SBE) has designated six types of non-public schools in Tennessee differentiated by their Tennessee Department of Education (department) approval status or by the relevant school accrediting/membership agency and applicable state requirements. Non-public schools are categorized as Category I, II, III, and V private schools, Category IV church-related schools, and independent home schools based upon the characteristics listed below.

A non-public school must:

- **Apply** to participate in the ESA program.
- **Meet** the requirements established by the department and the SBE for a **Category I, II, or III non-public school**.
- Seek to **enroll** eligible students.

Students must submit proof of enrollment in a participating non-public **Category I, II, or III school** before ESA funds can be used for tuition, uniforms, textbooks, or other allowable expenses. Refer to **p. 12** of our [ESA Family Handbook](#) for more information on allowable expenses.

Students may also submit enrollment in a **non-participating Category I, II, or III school** for a more limited use of funds. Refer to **page 13** of our [ESA Family Handbook](#) for more information on allowable expenses in a non-participating school. Students enrolled in a **Category IV, V, or independent home school** are not eligible for the ESA Program and will **not** have access to ESA funds.

This document is intended to help families understand eligible schools where ESA funds can be spent. See the [ESA Family Handbook](#) for further information regarding enrollment and uses of funds.

Non-public School Category	Description
1	Schools approved by the department.
2	Schools approved by an accrediting agency that has been approved by the SBE. Schools holding full accreditation status with an approved agency are approved by the department
3	Schools in this category are regionally accredited by one of the Category III regional accrediting agencies identified in State Board Policy 3.500 .

For more information on non-public school categories, please click [here](#).