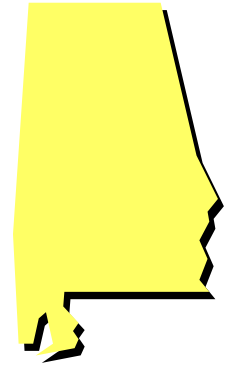


ALABAMA



ACCREDITATION, LICENSING & APPROVAL

All private schools in Alabama must register with the state. Private schools also must be licensed by the state unless they are church-affiliated or religious private schools.

Applies to all private schools

- All private schools must register with the state annually and must report statistics on the number of students, the number of instructors, attendance, course of study, length of term, cost of tuition, funds, value of property and the general condition of the school.
- No school may be granted a certificate of registration unless all of the following requirements are satisfied: the school employs and maintains at least one competent instructor for every 20 students in attendance, with a minimum of two instructors if the school has more than 20 students, and one instructor and one on-call instructor if the school has fewer than 20 students; the school possesses apparatus and equipment sufficient for the proper and complete teaching of all subjects in its curriculum; the school keeps a daily attendance record of each student; the school maintains regular classes and instruction hours, establishes grades and conducts examinations before issuing diplomas; the school requires a term of training for a complete course with the minimum number of hours therein prescribed; the school certifies that all furniture, equipment, tools, appliances, floors and ceilings are kept in a clean, sanitary and safe condition.
- Private schools, except church schools or non-profit schools organized by parents or an educational entity, must hold a certificate issued by the state superintendent of education showing that the school conforms to state regulations.
- Schools must apply for a license to run a K-12 school. Applications must be accompanied by a financial statement acceptable to the state Department of Education; a copy of the school's current catalog, brochure or bulletin (see below); and a fee of \$250 for each private school, plus \$100 for each extension or branch campus. The fee for license renewals in subsequent years is \$100.
- The catalog, bulletin or brochure mentioned above must be published in sufficient quantities for distribution to all enrollees and regulatory authorities and must include the following information: name, address and telephone number of the school, including all campuses in Alabama; identifying data such as volume number and date of publication; ownership of the school; names of the governing body members, officials and faculty of the school, indicating position held and appropriate educational and/or occupational credentials of each person; an historical statement establishing the origin of the school; accreditation, licenses, endorsements or affiliations in the format prescribed by the appropriate accrediting commission or other agency; purpose of the school; objectives of the school; mode of operation or procedures used by the school in achieving the stated objectives; admission requirements and procedures with required documentation for entry; credentials awarded and graduation or completion requirements; facilities and/or equipment available to support courses or programs of study; school calendar and legal holidays; basis for awarding academic credit by quarter hours, semester hours or clock hours and procedures for awarding credit for prior education and/or experience; academic policy, including that governing the grading system, progress reports and procedures for evaluating student achievement of stated objectives; tuition and fee policy, including charges for fees, books, laboratories and supplies; cancellation and refund policy; student disciplinary policy, including conditions of forced withdrawal; housing facilities and policy, if applicable; attendance policy; student grievance policy; and the curriculum outline of each program and/or course, including titles, objectives and major subject outlines or description of each course giving units of measurement in credit hours, clock hours or approximate time of completion. When prepared for the brochure, the above may be in abbreviated form. Course prerequisites must be clearly stated.

- Upon satisfactory review of a school, the state Department of Education issues a license to be publicly displayed on the school premises. The license is valid for two years.
- All K-12 schools, except church schools or non-profit schools organized by parents or an educational entity, must establish financial stability by a surety acceptable to the state Department of Education in the sum of not more than \$10,000. The surety must be continuous and must be conditioned to provide indemnification to any student suffering loss as a result of any fraud or misrepresentation in the procuring of his or her enrollment.
- Instruction in private schools (except church schools) must be by people holding certificates issued by the state superintendent of education.
- Schools that undergo a transfer of ownership must be reviewed to determine that minimum standards remain in effect. The license to run a school may not be transferred. Financial stability of the new ownership must be established.
- A license to run a school may be placed on probation, suspension or revocation if the holder of the license solicits or enrolls students or administers instruction through fraud, deception or misrepresentation.
- No person may present materials, sell courses or solicit students for enrollment outside the boundaries of the licensed school facilities unless an agent's permit is first secured by the school from the state Department of Education. No person shall be issued an agent's permit to represent any private school until the state Department of Education has issued a license for the school.

TRANSPARENCY & REPORTING

Applies to all private schools

- The principal teacher of each private school must keep a register of attendance that clearly indicates every absence of each child from such school for a half day or more during each school day.
- Private schools that cease operations must place student academic, attendance and financial aid records in the office of the appropriate school administrator, where a repository shall exist to safeguard these records and make them available to authorized people upon request
- Adequate records as determined by the state Department of Education must be kept to show attendance and student progress. Records must be furnished to prospective employers and other interested parties upon request of the student. Safeguards must be provided to protect student records from damage, loss or compromise by unauthorized people as mandated by federal and state statutes.
- A student enrollment agreement or contract shall be used to set forth clearly all conditions for enrollment, completion of courses of instruction, itemized course cost, terms of payment and other conditions the school may establish. Conditions for forced withdrawal for academic or disciplinary reasons shall be stated. Contracts establishing installment payments with interest charges shall be in compliance with state lending and usury statutes and must be certified by the state Banking Department.
- All school officers, except those in church schools, must make and furnish all reports that may be required by the state superintendent of education, the county superintendent of education or the local board of education.
- At the end of the fifth day after the opening of public schools, the principal teacher of each private school, except church schools, must report to the county superintendent of education or the city superintendent of schools the names and addresses of all children ages seven to 16 who have enrolled; thereafter, throughout the compulsory attendance period, the principal teacher must report at least weekly the names and addresses of all children ages seven to 16 who enroll in the school; who, having enrolled, were absent without being excused; or whose absence was not satisfactorily explained by the parent, guardian or other person having control of the child. The enrollment and attendance of a child in a church school shall be filed with the local public school superintendent by the

child's parent on a form provided by the superintendent, which must be countersigned by the administrator of the church school and returned to the public school superintendent by the parent. Should the child cease attendance at the church school, the child's parent must, by prior consent at the time of enrollment, direct the church school to notify the local public school superintendent that the child is no longer in attendance.

- Private schools that cease operation must, within 10 calendar days of closing, notify the state superintendent of education of the action by letter and/or facsimile; submit a list to the state superintendent of education containing the name, home address, telephone number and course/program of each student enrolled in the school on the date the school closed; and submit a written plan to the state superintendent of education explaining in detail how the school will arrange for the continued education of its students, how tuition refunds will be handled, how other contractual agreements with students will be resolved and where student records will be stored.
- The following items must be maintained currently and accurately at all times by each private school at each location: a course outline or syllabus for each licensed course or program of study; copies of each current catalog, bulletin, brochure, promotional material and advertisement; each student's permanent record showing admission date(s), attendance, transcript of academic progress, tuition payments, financial aid and termination or completion; each student's application for admission showing name, address, age, date enrolled and other pertinent information with documents supporting accomplishment of prerequisites established for each course; each student's enrollment agreement or contract; a copy of the certificate of completion, diploma or transcript of credits for each student completing a course or program of study; and personal data of each administrator, director, supervisor, instructor and agent of the school, including a copy of certificates of completion, diplomas and transcripts of relevant educational and/or occupational experiences.
- Policies on course cancellation, tuition fees and refunds must be clearly stated in each private school catalog, bulletin or brochure. Students may cancel enrollment at any time by complying with the notification procedures established by the school. Refunds of unearned prepaid tuition, fees and other charges must be made in the following manner within 30 days of termination: if cancellation occurs within 72 hours of the enrollment date, all money paid by the prospective student shall be refunded; if cancellation occurs after 72 hours of the enrollment date, but before classes begin or correspondence materials are delivered, a refund shall be made of all money paid except the registration fee; if cancellation occurs after classes begin or after shipment of correspondence materials, a pro rata refund will be made of all unearned prepaid tuition, fees and charges for books and supplies not issued to the student. Once books and supplies are issued and received by students, these become the property of students and refunds may be made only at the discretion of the private school; a full refund is due students whose contracted educational services are denied by the school as a result of economic or academic fraud.
- Each private school is required to use a student enrollment agreement or contract for courses or programs of study. The enrollment agreement or contract must set forth clearly all conditions for enrollment in and completion of courses of instruction, itemized costs, terms of payment and other conditions the school may establish. A copy of the signed contract with all attachments must be provided to each enrolled student. Enrollment by minors must be co-signed by an adult.

CURRICULUM & ACADEMICS

Applies to all private schools

- Instructors and supervisors must have the educational background and experience necessary to successfully fulfill the educational objectives of the assigned course or program of study.
- The English language must be used in giving instruction.

- Instruction must be offered in the branches of study required to be taught in public schools.
- Adequate space, equipment, instructional material and instructor personnel must be available to provide training of good quality.
- No licensed private school, no public school and no college or university subject to the state Board of Education may accept credits from a school that was not licensed, exempted from licensure or entitled to an exemption.
- The curriculum, instruction and each course provided by private schools must be consistent in quality and content with similar public school programs and standards established for specific programs by the state Department of Education.
- Each private school must offer only the courses approved in its registration materials by the state Department of Education. Any proposed changes subsequently made in the courses outlined must be approved by the department before being implemented.
- No private school may sell, award, grant or confer any earned or honorary degree, diploma or certificate unless prior permission has been granted in writing by the state superintendent of education.
- References appropriate to the courses offered must exist in adequate numbers in a library or resource room to support academic preparation at the academic or occupational level for each course offered.
- Each private school must provide facilities, equipment, tools, machines, instructional aids and materials in adequate quantity, quality and variety to meet the educational needs specified in the stated objectives of each course.
- The site and facilities of a private school must provide adequate and appropriate space to accommodate the proposed instructional program and to provide program support services as necessary.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Applies to all private schools

- The boards of education and the governing authority of each private school must require each student who is otherwise entitled to admittance to kindergarten or first grade, whichever is applicable, or any other entrance into an Alabama public or private school, to present a certification of immunization or testing for the prevention of communicable diseases designated by the state health officer.

MISCELLANEOUS

- For each private school bus operated on public highways and used only for the purposes of the school, regardless of whether any compensation may be charged to any passenger, a license tax or registration fee of \$13 is required.



This list was compiled by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice based on publicly available laws and regulations. In each state we sought the assistance of the state's Department of Education in ensuring the accuracy of our information. However, given the enormous volume of relevant laws and regulations, some errors or omissions may still occur. The Friedman Foundation welcomes suggestions for corrections or additions to this list. For more information on the regulation of private schools, see "Fifty Educational Markets: State Laws and Regulations Governing Private Schools" by Friedman Foundation Senior Fellow Chris Hammons.