

IOWA



ACCREDITATION, LICENSING & APPROVAL

Applies to all private schools

- Private schools may seek accreditation if they wish.

Applies only to accredited private schools

- The state Board of Education sets rules and a procedure for accrediting schools, including public and private schools.
- To maintain accreditation, private schools must annually complete accreditation compliance forms adopted by the state board and file them with the state Department of Education.
- The department annually monitors all accredited schools for compliance with accreditation standards. The department conducts site visits to address accreditation issues identified in a desk audit. These visits may be conducted by an individual departmental consultant or may be a comprehensive site visit by a team of departmental consultants and other educational professionals. The purpose of a comprehensive site visit is to determine that a district is in compliance with minimum standards; provide a general assessment of educational practices in the school; and make recommendations for improving educational practices above the level of minimum compliance. The department establishes a long-term schedule that includes visits to all accredited schools at least once every five years.
- After visiting the school, the accreditation committee determines whether the accreditation standards have been met and makes a report to the director of the department, reporting strengths and suggestions for improvement for each accreditation standard, with a recommendation as to whether the school should remain accredited. The accreditation committee must advise the school of available resources and technical assistance to enhance strengths and improve areas where improvements were suggested. The school must be provided with the opportunity to respond to the accreditation committee's report. The director reviews the report and the school's response and provides a report and recommendation to the state Board of Education. The board determines whether the school remains accredited.
- A private high school or combined junior-senior high school designed to qualify graduates for matriculation at accredited four-year or equivalent liberal arts, scientific or technological colleges or universities is placed on a special accredited list of college-preparatory schools. This signifies accreditation of the school for that purpose only, if at least 80 percent of students graduating from the school within the four most recent calendar years have been accepted by accredited four-year or equivalent colleges or universities (excluding foreign students, graduates entering military or alternative civilian service and graduates deceased or incapacitated before college acceptance).

TRANSPARENCY & REPORTING

Applies to all private schools

- Private schools must appoint a school improvement advisory committee to make recommendations to the school's Board of Education and other authorities. The advisory

- committee must consist of members representing students, parents, teachers, administrators and representatives from the local community, which may include representatives of business, industry, labor, community agencies, higher education or other community constituents. To the extent possible, committee membership must have balanced representation with regard to race, sex, national origin and disability. The board must involve parents, students, instructional and non-instructional professional staff and community members in the development and revision of disciplinary policies where practicable or unless specific policy is mandated by legislation. The policies must relate to the educational purposes of the school. The policies must include, but are not limited to, the following: attendance; use of tobacco; the use or possession of alcoholic beverages or any controlled substance; bullying and harassment of or by students and staff; violent, destructive and seriously disruptive behavior; suspension, expulsion, emergency removal, weapons and physical restraint; out-of-school behavior; participation in extracurricular activities; academic progress; and citizenship.
- Each school advisory board must adopt by written policy a system for maintaining accurate records. The system must provide for recording and maintaining the minutes of all board meetings, coding all receipts and expenditures and recording and filing all reports required by the Iowa code or requested by the director of the state Department of Education.
 - Each board must require its administrative staff to establish and maintain a system of student records. This system must include a permanent office record and a cumulative record for each student. The permanent office record is a historical record of official information concerning the student's education. At a minimum, the permanent office record must contain evidence of attendance and educational progress, serve as an official transcript, contain other data for use in planning to meet student needs and provide data for official school and school district reports. This record is to be permanently maintained and stored in a fire-resistant safe or vault, or it may be maintained and stored electronically with a secure back-up file. The cumulative record must provide a continuous and current record of significant information on student progress and growth. It reflects information such as courses taken, scholastic progress, school attendance, physical and health record, experiences, interests, aptitudes, attitudes, abilities, honors, extracurricular activities, part-time employment and future plans. It is the "working record" to be used by the instructional and professional staff to understand the student. At the request of a receiving school or school district, a copy of the cumulative record must be sent to officials of that school when a student transfers.

Applies only to accredited private schools

- Once a year, within 10 days from receipt of notice from the secretary of the local school district, an accredited private school must furnish to the secretary a certificate and report in duplicate of the names, ages and grade levels of each student who was of compulsory attendance age during the preceding year. Additional reports that cover the period since the last preceding report also may be requested. In addition, the report must identify all students of compulsory attendance age who were truant as defined by law or school policy and the number of days of truancy for the period covered by the report. It also must identify students who dropped out, withdrew from enrollment or transferred to another Iowa school and the dates their attendance ceased at the school.
- Accredited private schools must adopt a local policy stating whether health services, media services and guidance programs will be provided. This regulation may not be interpreted to require schools to provide or to offer health services, media services or guidance programs.
- Accredited private schools must evaluate the progress of their students annually using locally determined performance levels for at least one assessment in, at a minimum, the

areas of reading, mathematics and science. Student achievement levels as defined by the Iowa Testing Program may be used to fulfill this requirement.

CURRICULUM & ACADEMICS

Applies to all private schools

- Each private school administrator, teacher, support service staff member and non-instructional professional staff member must hold a license, certificate or statement of professional recognition that is valid for his or her type of position.
- Each private school student must attend school for at least 180 days each year, including at least 37 days each school quarter. The school day must consist of at least 5½ hours of instructional time, not including lunch periods.
- A private school that is unable to meet the minimum educational program may request an exemption from the state Board of Education. The authorities in charge of the school must file with the director of the state Department of Education the names and locations of all schools desiring to be exempted and the names, ages and addresses of all students of compulsory school age who are enrolled. The director, subject to the approval of the board, may exempt the school from compliance with the minimum educational program for two school years. When the exemption has been granted, renewal of the exemption for each succeeding school year may be conditioned by the director, with the approval of the board, upon proof of student achievement in the preceding year in the basic skills of arithmetic, the communicative arts of reading, writing, grammar and spelling and an understanding of U.S. history, the history of Iowa and the principles of American government. Proof of achievement is determined on the basis of tests or other means of evaluation prescribed by the director with the approval of the board. The testing or evaluation, if required, must be accomplished prior to submission of the request for renewal of the exemption.
- The medium of instruction in all secular subjects taught in private schools must be English, except when the use of a foreign language is deemed appropriate in the teaching of any subject or when the student has limited English proficiency. When the student has limited English proficiency, private schools must provide special instruction, which must include either instruction in English as a second language or transitional bilingual instruction, until the student is fully English proficient or demonstrates a functional ability to speak, read, write and understand the English language.
- Upon request of a private school, the director may, for a number of years to be specified by the director, grant the school a high school exemption from one or more of the requirements of the educational program specified by state law. The exemption may be renewed. Exemptions are to be granted only if the director deems that the request made is an essential part of a planned innovative curriculum project that the director determines will adequately meet the educational needs and interests of the students and be broadly consistent with the intent of the educational program as defined by state law.

Applies only to accredited private schools

- Accredited private school kindergarten programs must include experiences designed to develop healthy emotional and social habits and growth in the language arts and communication skills, as well as a capacity for the completion of individual tasks, and protect and increase physical well-being with attention given to experiences relating to the development of life skills and human growth and development.
- The following must be taught in grades one through six: English-language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, health, human growth and development, physical

- education, traffic safety, music and visual art. The health curriculum must include the characteristics of communicable diseases, including acquired immune deficiency syndrome. The state Board of Education, as part of accreditation standards, adopts curriculum definitions for implementing the elementary program.
- The following must be taught in grades seven and eight: English-language arts; social studies; mathematics; science; health; human growth and development; family, consumer, career and technology education; physical education; music; and visual art. The health curriculum must include the characteristics of sexually transmitted diseases and acquired immune deficiency syndrome.
 - The minimum program for grades nine through 12 is:
 - Five units of science, including physics and chemistry, which may be taught in alternate years
 - Five units of social studies, including instruction in voting statutes and procedures, voter registration requirements, the use of paper ballots and voting machines in the election process and the method of acquiring and casting an absentee ballot. All students must complete a minimum of a half unit of U.S. government, including the Constitution of the United States, the Bill of Rights and an assessment of a student's knowledge of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and one unit of U.S. history
 - Six units of English-language arts
 - Four units of a sequential program in mathematics and two additional units of mathematics
 - Four sequential units of one foreign language other than American sign language
 - One-eighth unit of physical education activities during each semester of school for all students who are physically able (a 12th-grade student may be excused by the principal if the parent requests it in writing)
 - Five units of "occupational education" subjects, which may include, but are not limited to, programs, services, and activities that prepare students for employment in business or office occupations, trade and industrial occupations, consumer and family sciences or home economics occupations, agricultural occupation, marketing occupations and health occupations
 - Three units in the fine arts, including at least two of the following: dance, music, theatre and visual art
 - One unit of health education, including personal health, food and nutrition, environmental health, safety and survival skills, consumer health, family life, human growth and development, substance abuse and nonuse, emotional and social health, health resources and prevention and control of disease, including sexually transmitted diseases and acquired immune deficiency syndrome.
 - Each accredited private school must incorporate into its comprehensive school improvement plan provisions for the professional development of all staff.
 - Accredited private schools must have an educational program taught with a multicultural, gender-fair approach. Global perspectives and career education must be incorporated into all levels of the educational program.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Applies to all private schools

- Private schools may not require non-administrative personnel to perform any special health services or intrusive non-emergency medical services for students unless the non-administrative personnel are licensed or otherwise qualified and have consented to perform the services.
- Possession or consumption of alcoholic liquors, wine or beer on school property or while attending a school-related function is prohibited.

- Every student and teacher in any private school must wear industrial-quality eye-protective devices at all times while participating, and while in a room or other enclosed area where others are participating, in any phase or activity of a course that may subject them to the risk or hazard of eye injury from the materials or processes used in the class.
- Every student and teacher in any private school must wear industrial-quality ear-protective devices while participating in any phase or activity of a course that may subject them to the risk or hazard of hearing loss from noise in processes or procedures used in vocational or industrial arts shops or laboratories.
- Private schools must conduct at least four fire drills and four tornado drills in all school buildings during each school year and keep all doors and exits of their respective rooms and buildings unlocked when occupied during school hours or when being used by the public at other times. At least two drills of each type must be conducted between July 1 and Dec. 31 of each year and two drills of each type between Jan. 1 and June 30.
- Every school building with two or more classrooms must have a fire warning system of a type approved by the underwriters' laboratories and the state fire marshal. The warning system must be used only for fire drills or in an emergency. Schools may modify the fire warning system for use as a tornado warning system, or else they must install a separate tornado warning system. Every school building also must be equipped with portable fire extinguishers, with the type, size and number in accordance with national fire protection association standards and approved by the state fire marshal. The state fire marshal or the marshal's deputies must inspect each private school at least once every two years to determine whether the school meets fire safety standards and is free from other fire hazards.
- Private schools must prescribe procedures for handling reports of child abuse.
- Private school employees must file with the school advisory board certification of fitness to perform the tasks assigned, which shall be in the form of a written report of a physical examination, including a check for tuberculosis, by a licensed physician and surgeon, osteopathic physician and surgeon, osteopath or qualified doctor of chiropractic, licensed physician assistant or advanced registered nurse practitioner. A report must be filed at the beginning of service and at three-year intervals.

Applies only to accredited private schools

- Accredited private schools must prescribe reasonable rules for the punishment of truants.
- Accredited private schools must prescribe procedures to report any use or possession of alcoholic liquor, wine or beer or any controlled substance on school premises to local law enforcement agencies, if the use or possession is in violation of school policy or state law. The procedures may include a provision that does not require a report when the school officials have determined that a school at-risk or other student assistance program would be jeopardized if a student self-reports.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Each private school must provide and maintain a suitable flagstaff on each school site under its control, and the U.S. flag and the Iowa state flag must be raised on all school days when weather conditions are suitable.
- At least twice during each school year, each accredited private high school must offer the opportunity to register to vote to each student who is at least 17½ .
- A state private school advisory committee is established, which consists of five members appointed by the governor. The term of the members is four years. The duties of the committee are to advise the state Board of Education and the director of the state Department of Education on matters affecting private schools, including but not limited to the establishment of standards for teacher certification and the establishment of standards for, and approval of, private schools.

- Private school students may participate in Workstart, a job-training program between schools and businesses.
- Residents of a public school district who a private school located either inside or outside the district are entitled to transportation on the same basis as provided for resident public school students under state law. Special arrangements can be made either with private schools or neighboring districts if necessary to transport a student to a private school outside the resident district. Parents may be reimbursed for some transportation costs to private schools, particularly in areas where public busing is impractical.
- To the extent that funds are appropriated by the General Assembly, textbooks adopted and purchased by a school district must be made available to students attending accredited private schools under comparable terms as made available to public school students, upon request of the student.



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.