



Good morning Senators. My name is Margaret McGettrick and I am the Director of Education for the Texas Catholic Conference.

I would like to use my few minutes with you to talk about the strong accountability measures and standards to which our schools are held. In spite of the comments of many critics to bills such as a SB 1506 the Texas Catholic Conference wholly supports the accountability measures that are required of participating schools on the issue of school choice.

For many years the State of Texas accredited private schools as well as public schools. Limited resources, however, forced the Texas Education Agency to stop performing this service for private schools. The Texas Association of Non Public Schools, TANS, wishing to maintain the benefits of state accreditation, sought an agreement with the State Commissioner of Education to form a private accreditation commission. This commission known as TEPSAC began operating in 1986.

TEPSAC is a confederation of accrediting agencies whose primary purpose is to maintain standards of accreditation among its membership. These standards of accreditation are comparable to TEA standards and preserve the integrity of the member organizations and the schools they accredit. These standards include, but are not limited to, the following:

- consideration of the school's goals and objectives
- compliance with applicable state and federal statutes
- effective administration and governance
- the teaching of a balanced curriculum
- implementation of personnel practices which ensure hiring qualified instructional leaders with college degrees
- student achievement
- indicator based quality of learning

The relationship of TEPSAC with the 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 Agency liaisons to ensure ongoing integrity and quality of the process
- The listing of all accredited elementary and secondary non-public schools in the Texas School Directory (<http://askted.tea.state.tx.us>)

I am providing you with supporting documentation outlining the provisions under which TEPSAC was formed, questions and answers as to its purposes as well as approval and validation from Dr. Shirley Neeley, Commissioner of Education.

Thank you for your attention to SB 1506 and hopefully in the not too distant future all students in Texas will have access to the school of their choice.

Margaret McGettrick

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TEPSAC

The Texas Private School Accreditation Commission-TEPSAC-helps ensure quality in private schools by monitoring and approving organizations that accredit the various non-public elementary and secondary educational institutions in the state of Texas,

The State Commissioner of Education recognizes the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission and its affiliated non-public schools. Since 1986, the Texas Education Agency, through the Commissioner of Education, has recognized the accreditation responsibilities of TEPSAC and its affiliated associations. (Subsequent to the establishment of TEPSAC, direct accreditation of non-public schools by the Agency was phased out and was discontinued by 1989.)

- The relationship of TEPSAC with the Commissioner 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 Agency liaisons to ensure the ongoing integrity and quality of the process; and
- the listing of all accredited elementary and secondary non-public schools in the Texas School Directory (<http://askted.tea.state.tx.us>).

Questions and Answers about Private Schools in Texas

- **What state requirements apply to private schools in Texas?** The only requirement placed on private schools in Texas is found in the state's compulsory attendance law, which says that a child may be exempt from attending public schools if he or she attends a private or parochial school that teaches good citizenship.
- **How can I be sure that a private school will meet my child's educational needs?** One way of gauging the quality of a private school is through the school's accreditation. It is important to know something about the school itself.
- **How can I tell if a school's accreditation is from a reputable organization?** For many years, the state of Texas accredited private schools as well as public schools. Limited resources, however, forced the Texas Education Agency to stop performing this service for private schools. The Texas Association of Non-Public Schools -TANS-, wishing to maintain the benefits of state accreditation, worked out an agreement with the State Commissioner of Education to form a private accreditation commission that would recognize appropriate accrediting organizations. This new commission is TEPSAC, which began operating in 1986.
- **What is TEPSAC?** TEPSAC is first not of itself an accrediting organization. It is instead a confederation of accrediting associations whose primary purpose is to maintain standards of accreditation among its membership. These standards of accreditation are comparable to TEA standards and preserve the integrity of the member organizations and the schools they accredit. Individual schools may seek accreditation from a TEPSAC association member.
- **What criteria does TEPSAC use to determine whether an accrediting organization should be recognized?** An accrediting organization that requires its schools to uphold standards comparable to state standards may apply for recognition. These standards include, but are not limited to, consideration of the school's goals and objectives; compliance with applicable state and federal statutes; effective administration and governance; the teaching of a balanced curriculum; implementation of personnel practices which ensure hiring qualified instructional leaders with college degrees; student achievement; and indicator-based quality of learning.
- **How do the recognized accrediting organizations monitor the quality of accredited schools?** The agreement between TEPSAC and the Commissioner of Education requires every recognized accrediting organization to conduct an on-site visit to each of its accredited schools at least once every five years.
- **What is the benefit of enrolling my child in an accredited private school as opposed to a non-accredited private school?** Accredited schools usually have a higher quality curriculum and more qualified teachers. Grades and courses completed at accredited private schools are accepted in public schools if you ever wish to transfer your child. In addition, if your child intends to seek admission to a college or university, a diploma from a non-accredited high school may not be recognized for meeting admission requirements. A valedictorian from an accredited private school receives the monetary stipend given by the state to those attending public schools.
- **What accrediting agencies have been approved by TEPSAC and how can I get in touch with them?** You may contact the TEPSAC office for general or specific information about private schools and accrediting groups.

The address and phone number for this purpose is:

TEPSAC
Box 12073
Longview, TX 75607
Phone: 903-643-8770 Fax: 903-233-3851
Email: tanstepsac@letu.edu

ACCREDITED NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN TEXAS

Accrediting associations recognized by the commissioner of education to accredit non-public schools in Texas have formed the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission (TEPSAC). Member associations of TEPSAC serve in an advisory capacity to the commissioner of education concerning the accreditation of non-public schools and recommending accrediting associations in Texas.

The accreditation of non-public schools in Texas is a function of TEPSAC and is recognized by the commissioner of education as having standards comparable to 19 TAC Chapter 97. Student credits earned in non-public schools accredited by the member associations of TEPSAC are transferable to Texas public schools. Teacher service in accredited non-public schools has been recognized for salary increment purposes in Texas public schools. The accreditation of non-public schools under this arrangement became effective on February 12, 1986. Accreditation of non-public schools directly by The Texas Education Agency ceased after May 31, 1989.

The accredited non-public schools are listed under the county in which they are located. Accredited Catholic schools are listed by the county in which the (Arch) Diocese is located.

All schools listed on the following pages are currently accredited by associations that are members of TEPSAC. Information about these schools and procedures for becoming an accredited non-public school should be obtained from:

Texas Private School Accreditation Commission (TEPSAC)

Dr. Jimmy Ames

Box 12073

Longview, TX 75607

(903) 643-8770

FAX: (903) 233-3214

E-mail: tanstepsac@aol.com

www.tepsac.com

The most current information on non-public schools accredited by the member associations of TEPSAC is available at the following TEA website: <http://AskTED.tea.state.tx.us>. Future editions of the printed *Texas School Directory (TSD)* will not include this detailed information, but it will continue to be available on the TEA website. It is also expected that TEPSAC will be developing its own website, and that future editions of the *TSD* will reference that website address. Additionally, websites currently available for each of the accrediting associations are noted on the following page.



TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

1701 North Congress Ave. ★ Austin, Texas 78701-1494 ★ 512/463-9734 ★ FAX: 512/463-9838 ★ <http://www.tea.state.tx.us>

Shirley J. Neeley, Ed.D.
Commissioner

May 14, 2004

Mr. Geoffrey Butler, Chairperson
Texas Private School Accreditation Commission
Box 12073
Longview, Texas 75607

Dear Mr. Butler:

This letter of understanding is written to verify the continuing recognition of the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission (TEPSAC) and its affiliated associations for the purpose of determining the accreditation of nonpublic schools.

Since 1986 the Texas Education Agency (Agency), through the Commissioner of Education, has recognized the accreditation responsibilities of TEPSAC and its affiliated associations. Subsequent to the establishment of TEPSAC, direct accreditation of nonpublic schools by the Agency was phased out and was discontinued after 1989.

The following activities related to the accreditation of nonpublic schools will continue:

- transferability of student credits earned in accredited nonpublic schools to Texas public schools
- recognition of teacher service in accredited nonpublic schools for salary increment purposes in Texas public schools, as authorized in the Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part II, Chapter 153.1021(h)(8)
- acknowledgment of all accredited elementary and secondary nonpublic schools in the Texas School Directory.

Agency liaisons attend biannual TEPSAC meetings to review the nonpublic school accreditation process and criteria to ensure the ongoing integrity and quality of the process. If further information or assistance is needed, please contact Dr. Karen Case, Deputy Associate Commissioner for Interventions and Special Investigations, at (512) 463-8998.

Thank you for all that you do for education. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Shirley J. Neeley, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Education

"Good, Better, Best—never let it rest—until your good is better—and your better is BEST!"