



New Hampshire

Department of Education

Office of Nonpublic Schools

FAQ

For NH Nonpublic Schools

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What is a nonpublic school?

In New Hampshire, nonpublic schools are ones that are independent in philosophy, each driven by a unique mission. They are also independent in the way they are managed and financed, each often governed by an independent board of trustees and each primarily supported through tuition payments and charitable contributions. They are accountable to their communities and may be accredited by a [NH recognized program approval agency](#).

Do I need a license to operate a nonpublic school?

There are no licensing requirements in New Hampshire. All schools are however required to be registered and approved by the State Board of Education to operate in the State upon submitting a complete application to the Office of Nonpublic Schools.

What is the difference between school approval and accreditation?

School approval is a mandatory process required by [RSA 21-N:9](#). All children residing in the State of New Hampshire between the ages of 6 and 18 are required by [RSA 193:1](#) to attend an approved public school, approved nonpublic school, or an approved home school program.

Accreditation is a voluntary process in which schools submit to a review by an accrediting organization which measures the schools against standards established by the accrediting organization. Most public and nonpublic high schools and a few middle schools in New Hampshire are accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) (www.NEASC.org). For a complete list of accredited agencies recognized by the NH Department of Education, please [click here](#).

Is the NH DOE an accreditation agency?

No. The agency only approves nonpublic schools.

If my school is accredited, am I eligible to receive approval for attendance and program purposes?

As of March 2021, schools that are accredited by one of the following associations may be eligible to receive DOE approval for Attendance and Program (AP) purposes for a term of five years.

- New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)
- Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)
- American Association of Christian Schools (AACCS)
- Accrediting Association of Seventh Day Adventist (AAA)
- Association of Independent Schools in New England (AISNE)

All other schools may be eligible to receive DOE approval for Attendance (AA) purposes for a term of three years.

An accrediting agency other than the those listed above may apply to be a recognized agency by the DOE. Please refer to [Ed 405](#) for details.

Are all schools required to be approved?

Yes, a school must be approved to satisfy the compulsory education requirement under [RSA 193:1](#) for children between ages 6 and 18.

Are all schools required to be accredited?

No, accreditation is a voluntary process. All schools are however required to be registered and approved by the NH Department of Education.

Is there any difference between private schools and nonpublic schools?

No, the two terms are used interchangeably in New Hampshire statutes and administrative rules.

What standards must be met for a school to be approved?

Nonpublic schools must meet the requirements of the [New Hampshire Code of Administrative Rules, Chapter Ed 400](#).

What happens if a school does not meet all of the standards?

Pursuant to [Ed 401.02](#), a nonpublic school which does not meet all of the standards of [Ed 403](#) or [Ed 404](#) shall be recommended for being conditionally approved for a period of one year provided that: (1) The school was previously approved and is seeking continued approval pursuant to [Ed 403.02](#) or [Ed 404.05](#); (2) All identified deficiencies and a timetable for their correction are incorporated into the approval designation; and (3) Deficiencies related to health and safety of students and or staff are corrected as directed by the authority having jurisdiction.

In no case shall a school be recommended for being conditionally approved for more than 3 consecutive school years.

A school may also be granted a status of delay in full compliance by the State Board of Education.

Children attending an unapproved public school are not meeting the compulsory education requirements and may be considered truant.

How do I know if my school has been approved?

Please contact the Office of Nonpublic Schools at (603) 271-2831. A list of approved schools can be found [here](#).

Are there different types of approval?

Pursuant to [Ed 400](#), nonpublic schools may be designated as approved for attendance purposes only, approved for program and attendance, conditionally approved, or unapproved. Nonpublic Schools may request a delay in full compliance from the State Board of Education.

What is the difference between an attendance approval and a program approval?

Nonpublic schools have two avenues in which they can obtain an approved status with the NH Department of Educating. A school may submit an application for either attendance purposes only or attendance and program purposes. School seeking an approved status through attendance purposes only adhere to a minimum standard of criteria that is set forth in [Part Ed 403 of the Code of Administrative Rules \(Ed 403\)](#). This includes items such as educational objectives, program of studies, assessment processes, student records, etc. Upon obtaining approval, this type of school will renew their application once every three years.

Schools have a second avenue. They may submit an application for attendance and program purposes, which requires them to adhere to all the criteria in [Ed 403](#), as noted above, in addition to the list of criteria in [Ed 404](#) of the Code of Administrative Rules, all while operating under the approval of an [accreditation agency recognized by the NH Department of Education](#). Schools undergo a rigorous evaluation by accrediting agencies. Upon obtaining approval, a school in this category will renew their application once every five years.

How often must a school be approved?

Nonpublic schools approved for attendance purposes only are approved every three years. Nonpublic schools that are approved for program and attendance are approved every five years.

Nonpublic schools are required to meet the requirements of the [New Hampshire Code of Administrative Rules, Chapter Ed 400](#) or be considered unapproved. Children attending an unapproved nonpublic school are not meeting the compulsory education requirement and may be considered truant.

How many days of instruction are required?

Pursuant to [Ed 401.03](#), nonpublic schools are required to maintain a calendar with 180 days or the equivalent in hours, at least 450 hours in kindergarten, 945 hours in grades 1 through 6, and 990 hours in grades 7 through 12.

May a school year be less than 180 days?

Yes, school districts and nonpublic schools may have fewer than 180 days as long as they meet the required number of hours of instruction as outlined in [Ed 401.03](#).

Are schools required to make up time when they are closed due to inclement weather?

Yes, schools are required to make up time lost due to weather or other emergencies unless if on that day, the school would normally have had at least 5.25 hours of instructional time; and the school remained open for at least 3.5 hours of instructional time. Please see [Ed 401.03](#).

How can a student obtain a transcript from a nonpublic school which has now closed?

Nonpublic schools are required to notify the NH Department of Education when they close and indicate where their students' records will be stored; however, we cannot guarantee that the records will be available at the department. In those cases, we will provide the contact information we have to help students find the records. Students who attended Catholic schools should contact the Diocese of Manchester at (603) 669-3100.