

## ACCREDITATION

This bulletin applies to the Private School Choice Programs which includes the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, Racine Parental Choice Program, and Wisconsin Parental Choice Program. The information below is intended to assist schools in understanding Wis. Stat. §§119.23 and 118.60 and PI 35 and PI 48 pertaining to accreditation.

In order to participate in the Private School Choice Program (PSCP), private schools must meet accreditation and, if applicable, preaccreditation requirements. It is the school's responsibility to ensure that it meets the deadlines and meets all requirements to continue in the program.

### PreAccreditation

**New Private School:** A school that has been in continuous operation in Wisconsin for less than 12 consecutive months or provides education to fewer than 40 pupils divided into two or fewer grades meets the definition of a new private school according to Wis. Stats. §§119.23(1)(ai) and 118.60(1)(bn).

A new private school must be preaccredited for all grades to be offered at the school from an approved preaccrediting entity *no later than December 15* of the school year immediately preceding the school year the new private school intends to participate in the PSCP. For instance, preaccreditation must be attained prior to December 15, 2023 if the school wishes to participate in the PSCP during the 2024-25 school year. A notice from the preaccrediting entity must be received by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) *no later than December 15*. A school may apply for and seek to obtain preaccreditation from only one preaccrediting entity.

**Note:** A school fully accredited by an approved accrediting entity is not required to provide documentation of preaccreditation; however, the school must provide documentation of full accreditation to the DPI *no later than December 15*.

**Existing Private School:** A school that has been in continuous operation in Wisconsin for more than 12 consecutive months and provides education to 40 or more pupils or has three or more grades with enrolled students. This definition includes an existing private school operated or managed by a governing body participating in the PSCP if no payment has been withheld or no order barring PSCP participation has been issued to any private school operated or managed by the governing body in the three immediately preceding school years.

An existing private school new to the PSCP must obtain preaccreditation for all grades offered at the school by an approved preaccrediting entity *no later than August 1* before the first school term in which the private school begins participating, *no later than May 1* if the private school plans to begin participation in the PSCP with summer school. A school may apply for and seek to obtain preaccreditation from only one preaccrediting entity.

**Note:** A school fully accredited by an approved accrediting entity is not required to provide documentation of preaccreditation; however, the school must provide documentation of full accreditation to DPI *no later than August 1, or May 1* if offering summer school.

### **Applying for Accreditation**

All private schools new to the PSCP must apply and have an accepted application for full accreditation by an approved accrediting entity *no later than December 31* of the first school year in which the private school begins participating in the PSCP. A letter from the accrediting entity must be received by DPI no later than December 31.

### **Achieving Accreditation**

All private schools new to the PSCP must achieve full accreditation, *for all grades the school offers*, by an approved accrediting entity no later than December 31 of the third year following the first school year in which the private school begins participating in the PSCP. For example, a new school first participating in the PSCP in the 2024-25 school year must attain full accreditation prior to December 31, 2027. School must plan to meet all requirements for full accreditation and ensure that all grades the school offers are accredited **prior** to the deadline.

### **Adding Grades to Accreditation**

Schools that are fully accredited must be accredited for all the grades the school offers.

If a private school is accredited for only elementary grades (kindergarten through 8th grade) or only high school grades (9th through 12th) and plans to add additional grades, for example, an elementary school adding high school grades, the school then must apply for accreditation for the additional grades no later than December 31 of the first school year that the private school offers instruction in the nonaccredited grades. The school must *send a letter to DPI no later than December 31* providing proof from an accrediting entity the school meets this requirement. The school then must achieve full accreditation by one of the approved accrediting entities prior to December 31 of the third year following the first school year the new grades are offered.

A school that is accredited only for elementary grades or only high school grades and plans to add an elementary grade or a high school grade must be accredited for the nonaccredited grade *no later than August 1* of that school year. For example, an elementary school accredited for grades K-5 plans to add grade 6 in the next school year, the school must be fully accredited for grade 6 by August 1 of the school year grade 6 is offered.

## Accredited Schools

Failure to maintain continuous accreditation may result in the school's termination from the PSCP.

The accreditation notice from the accreditation agency must be submitted annually by **August 1** and may not be dated any earlier than July 1 of that school year. The DPI will work directly with the accrediting agencies to obtain the accreditation notice. Schools are responsible for ensuring they are fully accredited by their accrediting agencies and are included in the notice, by reaching out to their accrediting agency. The accreditation notice must be completed by an authorized member of the accrediting agency and include all of the following information:

- The private school's name;
- The private school's address for each location included in the accreditation;
- The grades accredited; and
- Indication that the private school is accredited at the time the notice is filed.

The department sends notification of receipt within 10 days of receiving the accreditation notice. A school must notify DPI immediately if its accreditation status changes. If a school learns that its accrediting organization is no longer an approved organization, the school must immediately notify DPI in writing and obtain accreditation from an approved accrediting organization within three years.

## Approved Accreditation Entities & Contact Information

**Approved Preaccrediting Entities:** Under Wis. Stats. §§118.60(1)(cm) and 119.23(1)(ap) an approved "preaccrediting entity" means the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University (no longer preaccredits schools), Wisconsin North Central Association, Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation, Independent Schools Association of the Central States, Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation, National Lutheran School Accreditation, Wisconsin Association of Christian Schools, Christian Schools International, Association of Christian Schools International, and the diocese or archdiocese within which a private school is located.

**Approved Accrediting Entities:** Under Wis. Stats. §§118.60(1)(ab) and 119.23(1)(ab) an approved "Accrediting entity" means Cognia, Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation, Independent Schools Association of the Central States, Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation, National Lutheran School Accreditation, Wisconsin Association of Christian Schools, Christian Schools International, Association of Christian Schools International, the diocese or archdiocese within which a private school is located, and any other organization recognized by the National Council for Private School Accreditation.

## Approved Accreditation Entities & Contact Information

### **Cognia**

9115 Westside Parkway  
Alpharetta, GA 30009  
Phone: 888-413-3669 ext. 5609  
[cognia.org](http://cognia.org)

### **Association of Christian Schools International**

PO Box 62249  
Colorado Springs, CO 80962  
800-367-0798  
[www.acsi.org](http://www.acsi.org)

### **Christian Schools International**

99 Monroe Avenue NW, Suite 200  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
800-635-8288  
[www.csionline.org](http://www.csionline.org)

### **Independent Schools Association of the Central States**

55 West Wacker Drive, Suite 701  
Chicago, IL 60601  
312-750-1190  
[www.isacs.org](http://www.isacs.org)

### **National Lutheran School Accreditation**

LCMS School Ministry  
1333 S. Kirkwood Rd.  
St. Louis, MO 63122  
1-800-248-1930 ext.  
<https://www.lcms.org/schools>

### **National Council for Private School Accreditation (Full Accreditation Only)**

PO Box 13686  
Seattle, WA 98198  
<http://www.ncpsa.org/>

### **The Diocese or Archdiocese within which the school is located**

Listing of all Dioceses:  
<http://www.usccb.org/about/bishops-and-dioceses/all-dioceses.cfm>

### **Wisconsin Association of Christian Schools**

1840 Bond Street  
Green Bay, WI 54303  
920-499-5561  
[www.wacschools.org](http://www.wacschools.org)

### **Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation**

N16 W23377 Stone Ridge Drive  
Waukesha, WI 53188  
414-256-3221  
[www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net)

### **Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation**

P.O. Box 154  
Sparta, WI 54656  
608-567-1208  
[www.wrisa.net](http://www.wrisa.net)