

# Private School Approval in Washington State



## What is a private school?

A private school is a nonpublic school that offers a program of any or all grades one through twelve. Private schools must be approved by the State Board of Education, maintain a program that offers basic education for students to meet state graduation requirements, and meet standards for the health and safety of private school students.

## What do private schools do to stay approved?

Private schools must have health and safety inspections of the school buildings, provide instruction by Washington state certificated teachers (or by teachers supervised by a certificated teacher or administrator), and must meet instruction time requirements (a minimum of 1,000 hours or 180 days per year) and subject area requirements that allow students to meet state subject area graduation requirements. Approved private schools must have full-time enrolled students who attend the school. Private school must also certify that they will comply with state laws and regulations that apply to private schools.

**“The legislature hereby recognizes that private schools should be subject only to those minimum state controls necessary to insure the health and safety of all the students in the state and to insure a sufficient basic education to meet usual graduation requirements.”  
(RCW 28A.195.010).**

## Annual private school approval requires the following:

- Health and safety inspections of school buildings
- Instruction by Washington state certificated teachers or qualified teachers who are supervised by a certificated teacher or administrator
- Instructional time requirements (a minimum of 1,000 hours or 180 days)
- Educational offerings that allow students to meet state subject area graduation requirements
- A physical address in Washington state, as well as full-time enrolled students who attend the school
- Annual certification that the school will comply with state laws and regulations that apply to private schools
- Annual renewal of approval
- Annual student enrollment reporting



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## Why should a school seek and maintain approval?

Beyond compliance with Washington State law, the following are reasons private schools should be approved:

- **Truancy.** If the organization is not approved as a school, the students attending may be considered truant.
- **Funding.** Federal funds or services might be available for nonprofit private schools or small businesses. Such funds would not be available to an unapproved organization.
- **Sports.** Students from approved private schools may participate in Washington Interscholastic Activities Association athletics, and their students may prepare for participation in National Collegiate Athletic Association college athletics if that's their ambition.
- **Scholarship opportunities.** Students from approved private school have access to scholarships that may not be available to unapproved organizations.
- **Post-secondary opportunities.** The military, and many schools and colleges only accept transcripts or diplomas from approved private schools.
- **Educator credentials.** Certificated staff may count work experience at an approved private school toward teaching experience.
- **Compliance with the law.** Unapproved organizations may face greater potential liabilities in areas such as accountability to parents, insurance, and real estate contracts.
- **Accreditation.** Approved private schools may be accredited by external accreditation organizations that assure the school meets quality standards.

## What if an entity is operating as a school, but it is not approved?

SBE staff will work with organizations to become compliant with the law and become approved private schools. SBE staff will also follow up with complaints about unapproved organizations marketing themselves as schools.

When researching a school, parents and/or guardians should ask if the school is approved to operate as a private school in Washington. Ask about accreditation, too. Parents and members of the public can find a full list of approved private schools at [sbe.wa.gov/privateschools](https://sbe.wa.gov/privateschools).

You can reach the State Board of Education about private school issues here: [privateschools@k12.wa.us](mailto:privateschools@k12.wa.us).