

Illinois State Board of Education Title Grant Administration Division

Nonpublic School Registration and Recognition FAQ Sheet October 2015

What formal relationships exist between nonpublic schools and the Illinois State Board of Education?

Illinois law requires every school, whether public or nonpublic, to report immunization/health, eye, and dental examination data annually to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). This reporting is done electronically through ISBE's IWAS software. IWAS is basically a portal to a large number of "systems" that allow access to ISBE's database for various purposes, and a person is given permission to access individual systems as needed or appropriate.

Each school needs an IWAS account in order to accomplish this work, and this can be set up by working with Ann Plogger (rplogger@isbe.net, 217-782-4321, or Information Technology S-395, 100 North First Street Springfield, IL 62777-0001). Questions regarding IWAS may also be directed to the ISBE help desk at 217-558-3600 or help@isbe.net.

In Illinois, registration of a nonpublic school is voluntary. Registration is also a prerequisite to voluntary nonpublic school recognition, and most schools that register go on to seek recognition. Schools must renew their registration and recognition statuses each fall in order to retain them.

What does it mean to be a registered nonpublic school?

Essentially, to be registered means that ISBE is officially aware of the existence of the nonpublic school, ISBE has assigned to the school an ID number (known as an RCDT Code), and ISBE has given the school access to IWAS. There is a brief application for registration that collects basic information about the school, its enrollment, and its staff as well as some other data.

What does it mean to be a recognized nonpublic school?

A recognized school has been registered with ISBE for at least one school year, it has filed an extensive application dealing with school policies, curricula, personnel, and student health and safety. In addition, the school has been visited by a small team to confirm this information; the school is revisited by a team every few years. Fundamentally, a recognized school is a school acknowledged to be in substantial compliance with various requirements of state statute and regulation.

It should be noted that recognition (a matter of compliance) is different from accreditation (a judgment about the quality of instruction). Accreditation involves an intensive examination of some or all of a school's curricula, the qualifications of its staff, the appropriateness of its library holdings, etc. ISBE does not accredit any school—accreditation is accomplished through independent third parties. A school may be accredited simultaneously by more than one accrediting body at the same time. A school may be recognized and not accredited; likewise, it may be accredited and not recognized.

What governs both registration and recognition?

Two documents are the sources of authority for nonpublic school both the registration and recognition programs:

- The [Illinois School Code](#)
- [23 Illinois Administrative Code Part 425](#)

Which entities can register or be recognized as nonpublic schools?

Section 2-3.25o(e) of the Illinois School Code defines a nonpublic school as any **nonprofit**, **non-home-based**, and nonpublic **elementary** or **secondary** school that is in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and attendance at which satisfies the requirements of Section 26-1 of the School Code. Since a school must be registered in order to be recognized, these same requirements apply to schools seeking recognition.

ISBE does not register schools with only pre-school students. Such schools must also have one or more of grades Kindergarten through 12 in place. ISBE will register a school with only Kindergarten students.

ISBE does not recognize schools with only pre-school or kindergarten students. Such schools must also have one or more of grades 1 through 12 in place.

What is needed for registration?

A school applying for registration for the first time does so through a paper application known as the "Nonpublic Registration, Enrollment and Staff Report." This Report document may be found at www.isbe.net/nonpublic/default.htm. The Report may be typed into as an electronic form and then printed for signature and mailing, or it may be printed and then completed, but either way it is submitted as a paper form. The initial Report may be submitted at any time between October 1 and June 25 each school year.

Once registered, the school will complete basically the same Report each fall but in IWAS rather than paper. The only exception to this is for correspondence schools who re-register each year through the paper Report. Re-registering allows the school to retain its registered status. The renewal Report must be submitted between October 1 and November 15 each fall.

What is needed for recognition?

A school applying for recognition for the first time does so through a paper application known as the "Nonpublic School Application for Recognition and Calendar." This Application document may be found at www.isbe.net/nonpublic/default.htm. The Application may be typed into as an electronic form and then printed for signature and mailing, or it may be printed and then completed, but either way it is submitted as a paper form. The initial Application may be submitted at any time; however, applications received after about the middle of November will likely be held until the following school year due to the logistics of scheduling the compliance team visits.

Once recognized, the school will complete basically the same Application each fall but in IWAS rather than paper. Re-applying allows the school to retain its recognized status. The renewal Application must be submitted between October 1 and November 15 each fall. Recognized schools are not visited each year; ISBE has a five-year cycle for visiting schools for recognition purposes although visits in intervening years may be done if situations warrant this.

What should a school do if its administrator or other details change or if the school closes?

In general, the school should contact Ann Plogger (rplogger@isbe.net, 217-782-4321, or Information Technology S-395, 100 North First Street Springfield, IL 62777-0001). Schools may be able to update some information in the Entity Profile System, which is found in IWAS.

Whom should a school or an individual contact if there are further questions about nonpublic school registration or recognition?

The primary contact is Dr. Gary Greene (ggreene@isbe.net, 312-814-3985, or 100 West Randolph Street 14-300, Chicago, IL 60601), but more general assistance may be had through ISBE's Title Grant Administration Division (217-524-4832 or N-242, 100 North First Street Springfield, IL 62777-0001).