

Standards for Educational Agencies With Special Purposes

Educational Agencies With Special Purposes are defined as those agencies serving groups of students whose learning needs are so sufficiently different from those of a heterogeneous population that specialized instructional methods and/or facilities are needed. The learning needs of the individual students served by these agencies must be sufficiently similar that they can best be met by grouping these students together in a specialized setting.

The process of accrediting Educational Agencies With Special Purposes begins with an examination of the agency's written statement of its educational goals. This focus allows the agency's program to be uniquely specialized to meet the learning needs of the students served and to be responsive to the interests and general welfare of the groups and students they serve.

Because Educational Agencies With Special Purposes vary widely in the kinds of students they serve, the kinds of programs provided also vary. For this reason, the Commission has developed specific principles that these agencies must meet. However, because of the specialized nature of the programs, it is essential that there is sufficient stability in leadership positions to ensure program continuity. Therefore, all Educational Agencies With Special Purposes are required to meet the following conditions in order to be Provisionally accredited or Accredited with the Georgia Accrediting Commission:

1. The educational agency must employ three or more full-time equivalent professional educators. The teaching staff must have academic preparation in language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. Other part-time or full-time teachers should be employed as the need arises.

2. The agency must be visited by a committee, appointed by the Executive Director of the Georgia Accrediting Commission, composed of at least one member of the Board of Directors or the Executive Director and one other person who may be a member of the Board of Directors or an approved consultant prior to approval for Provisionally Accredited or Accredited status. The agency will pay both the consultant and the other member of the committee at the rate of \$200 per day and travel expenses.

3. Whenever the person designated as the educational director of the agency leaves the position, the Executive Director of the Georgia Accrediting Commission must be notified so that a visiting committee may be appointed to visit the agency within 18 months of the change to verify the continuity of the educational program before continuation in Provisionally accredited or Accredited status is approved for a second year following the change in the person designated educational director of the program.

Accreditation Classifications

The Board of Directors has approved three levels of classifications for Educational Agencies With Special Purposes seeking Accredited status with the Georgia Accrediting Commission.

Preparation Status. Classification for an agency which has involved its faculty and staff in a study of the GAC principles and is moving toward Accredited status. An agency may be in *Preparation* status a maximum of two years.

Provisional Status. Classification for an agency which has involved its faculty and staff in a study of the GAC principles and has provided the Commission with satisfactory documentation that Principles Two, Four, and Six have been met. An agency may be in *Provisional* status a maximum of two years.

Accredited Status. Classification for an agency which has involved its faculty and staff in a study of the GAC principles and has provided the Commission with satisfactory documentation that the operation of the agency is in agreement with each principle.

Application Procedures for Educational Agencies with Special Purposes

Preparation Status:

1. The chief administrative officer of the agency will notify in writing the GAC Executive Director of the agency's desire to obtain Accredited status with the GAC. A fee of \$50.00 will be paid for each year of membership in *Preparation* status.

2. A visiting committee will be named by the Executive Director to work with the agency, and travel expenses.

3. The visiting committee will assist the educational director in understanding the overall concept of accreditation. The committee and the agency director will verify to the Executive Director that the faculty is engaged in examining the *Bulletin* and that they are preparing the materials required in this document.

4. An agency may be approved for *Preparation* status for the current year at the first meeting of the Commission following the receipt of the agency's report, provided it has been visited by the committee and a recommendation by the committee has been received in the office of the Executive Director. The agency may make application and be approved for both *Preparation* and initial *Provisional* status during the same year provided the recommendation of the committee indicates that the agency meets standards required for *Provisional* status.

Provisional Status:

1. The chief administrative officer of the agency will notify the GAC Executive Director of its desire to move to *Provisional* status. A fee of \$50.00 will be paid for each year of membership in *Provisional* status.

2. A visiting committee will be named by the Executive Director to work with the agency.

3. The approved committee verifies that the agency meets Principles Two, Four, and Six, and recommends to the Executive Director that the agency be approved for *Provisional* accreditation.

Accredited Status:

1. The chief administrative officer of the agency will notify the GAC Executive Director of the agency's desire to move to *Accredited* status. A fee of \$50.00 will be paid for each year of membership.

2. The GAC Executive Director will assign a visiting committee to work with the agency. The chief administrator of the agency will have worked with the committee and will provide the Commission with satisfactory documentation that the operation of the agency is in agreement with each principle. The written application should directly address how the agency meets each principle. Agency personnel are encouraged to make the applications as concise as practical with additional documentation made available to the visiting committee on the site.

3. The visiting committee will review the agency's written application and visit the agency.

4. After the agency has been awarded *Accredited* status, the agency will apply for *Continuing Accreditation* status on or before November 1 of each year. After the fourth year in *Accredited* status, the agency is required to have an on-site visit by a consultant appointed by the GAC Executive Director. A written application for *Accredited* status will also be required in which changes since the last application are described.

Principles of Accreditation for Educational Agencies With Special Purposes

Principle Number One:

The structure of the agency and the organization for basic responsibility should be clear. The agency and related administrative units must meet the following standards:

- A. The educational program is under the administration of a person with a Master's degree.
- B. The governing board of the agency publishes policies that will assure the observance of professional ethics by all concerned and will attract, retain, and promote the professional development of competent personnel.
- C. The governing board delegates to the administrator executive and administrative functions, including the nomination of staff personnel.

Principle Number Two:

The agency's philosophy and objectives are recorded in a statement of purpose and a written account identifies the way the purpose is reflected in admissions and in the program of operation, administration, organization, instruction, and student activities.

- A. The students served are so sufficiently different from those of a heterogeneous population that specialized instructional methods and/or facilities are needed.
- B. The learning needs of the individual students served are so sufficiently similar that they can best be met by grouping these students together in a specialized setting.
- C. The students served during any summer session include only those who would be eligible to be served by the agency during the normal school year. (All standards for high school summer school programs also apply to summer school programs provided by the agency.)
- D. Teachers of mathematics, science, language arts, or social studies to students at any grade level have bachelor degrees and at least 6 semester hours credit in education courses.
- E. Students who receive high school diplomas, other than GEDs or special education diplomas, have been taught high school mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies by teachers who have Georgia professional certificates in their teaching fields or bachelor degrees and at least 18 semester hours credit in their teaching fields.
- F. Student records are protected against fire, theft, and damage by being located in a fire resistant cabinet or a duplicate set of records is located in another area.

Principle Number Three:

The application shows that the program provides opportunities for learning based upon knowledge of the learning process and the abilities and interests of all the students.

- A. The application shows why each course offered is needed to achieve the purpose of the agency's educational program.
- B. The application shows that the agency's educational program emphasizes evaluation as a major factor in demonstrating achievement of the agency's purpose.
- C. Students who receive high school diplomas, other than GEDs or special education diplomas, meet the same course work requirements as required by the Georgia Accrediting Commission of students who graduate from public or private high schools.

Principle Number Four:

The quality of personnel determines, in large measure, the success of the program in meeting its goals and objectives.

A. The application shows, for each staff member, how the transcript of credits experience, and professional activities especially fit that person to perform the tasks assigned.

B. The application shows how the number of personnel proves to be adequate to the program's distinctive purpose.

C. The agency employs three or more full-time equivalent professional educators with the teaching staff having adequate academic preparation in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Other part-time teachers in specialty areas should be employed as needed.

D. The application shows salary increases for each staff member for the past year and the staff members' supplementary benefits are documented.

Principle Number Five:

The school plant and site provide an adequate physical environment for the school's educational program. The school is designed, operated, and maintained in a way in which the school's purpose and objectives are implemented.

A. The application shows that the size and design of buildings and grounds are suitable to the school's purpose in size and in design.

B. The application shows that available teaching materials and equipment are of acceptable quality, quantity and variety.

C. The agency has a minimum of 10 library books per student or a minimum of 7 library books per student and an annual expenditure of \$2.00 or more per student for computer disks, video cassettes, video disks, filmstrips or other non-print media.

D. The agency meets all applicable School Plant standards required for accreditation of High School programs. (Educational directors are encouraged to request waivers of specific standards that are inappropriate for the students they serve.)

Principle Number Six:

The governing board of the agency shall provide a system of financial support, budgeting and educational fund accounting that insures the operation of a quality program which is in keeping with the education purpose of the agency.

A. The application shows how the funds are adequate for the educational program.

B. The educational administrator is provided with an annual budget allocation that is adequate for the educational program.

C. Finances relating to all inter-school contests and all other school-sponsored activities are under the direct control of the educational administrator.

D. The monthly and annual salary of the educational administrator is greater than that of any other member of the educational staff with the same level of preparation and experience.

E. Each agency has a satisfactory system of internal accounting with records kept on all funds by the administrator or his or her appointed personnel. These records are audited annually and a financial statement is available.

Principle Number Seven:

The environment of the agency promotes ethical relationships, professional growth, and personal welfare for the faculty and staff. The agency's educational program also provides for the mental, physical and emotional health, and safety of the students.

A. The application shows that the agency has a plan to follow the progress of those students who have left the agency.

B. The application explains the professional growth experiences of the staff for the past year.