

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Montpelier, Vermont**

**TEAM:** General Supervision and Monitoring

**ITEM:** Will the State Board of Education grant renewal of general independent school approval to serve students in grades 7-12 to The Gailer School of Middlebury, Vermont?

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

**That the Vermont State Board of Education grants renewal of general independent school approval to serve students in grades 7-12 to The Gailer School, Middlebury, VT. This approval is for 5 years, through June 30, 2016.**

**Approval is subject to the condition that the school immediately report to the Department of Education whenever any changes occur in enrollment, programs, policies, facilities, financial capacity, staffing, or administration during the approval period.**

**STATUTORY AUTHORITY:** Title 16 V.S.A. §166(b)

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

1. The Gailer School is a co-educational day school offering an innovative rigorous college preparatory program for students in grades 7 through 12. The mission of Gailer School is to inspire students to love learning and become insightful world citizens. The Gailer School was founded in 1989, and it was the first Vermont member and continues to be a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools, a national school/university partnership to redesign schools for better student learning and achievement.
2. The Gailer School was last granted independent school approved by the State Board of Education on October 18, 2005 through June 30, 2008.
3. On behalf of the Commissioner, Brynne Reed and Pat Pallas Gray visited the school on May 24, 2011.
4. The Gailer School leases 4040 sq. ft. in Middlebury, VT. The interior space of the building includes a DaVinci classroom, a Spanish classroom, a math classroom, a computer room, an equipped science lab, a gallery/school meeting/performance space (Great Room), and a lounge/library/student area. The administrative space includes a reception/administrative assistant desk area and the director's office. The second floor of the property is used as a lounge and office/meeting space for teachers. The property is adjacent to extensive playing fields which are used by the school. There also is a large yard area where students can eat outside and teachers can hold classes. The building meets state and federal health and safety

regulations, is handicapped accessible, and meets the needs of the program. A copy of the Certificate of Occupancy (CO) for the facility is on file at the department.

5. The minimum course of study, as defined by 16 V.S.A. §906, is provided and adapted to the age and ability of the students. The Gailer School has developed a unique, interdisciplinary and intercultural curriculum known as the Da Vinci Curriculum. Instruction at Gailer emphasizes inductive reasoning and interdisciplinary learning. The students are challenged to synthesize information from the humanities, sciences and social sciences into a comprehensive body of knowledge, often expressing these ideas through an artistic medium. Additionally, all students are required to volunteer at least two hours a week with a non-profit organization of their choice during the first semester, and to pursue a personal study project (inquiry) for at least two and a half hours a week during the second semester. Many of the older students participate in the annual international trip. The school has the support services to meet the needs of the program, including computers and a science lab. The local public library and the Middlebury College Library are both within walking distance of the school. At the time of the visit there were 20 students enrolled.
6. There are three full-time and two part-time teachers staff members providing the instruction in science, the humanities, mathematics, Spanish, and health/fitness. “Master Classes” are taught weekly by skilled artists and other professionals to complement the minimum course of study. One of the full-time staff members also serves as the Director of the school. The faculty and staff members serve as student advisors, and meet several times each week with their advisees. The staff is qualified by degree, training or experience for their positions. A program of professional development is in place for the staff.
7. The student attendance, assessment, and health records, and school fire drill records, were reviewed and found to be in good order.
8. The Gailer School maintains an operating schedule that includes a total number of instructional hours each year which is not less than that required of a public school serving the same grades.
9. The Gailer School has submitted information regarding its financial capacity for the period of approval.
10. The Gailer School has a policy on prevention of harassment of students that is as stringent as department’s model policy.

**COST IMPLICATIONS:** none

**CONTACT PERSONS:**

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**State Board of Education  
October 18, 2011  
Item F3**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Montpelier, Vermont**

**TEAM:** General Supervision and Monitoring

**ITEM:** Will the State Board of Education grant renewal of general independent school approval, to serve students 5-14 years of age, to The Hiland Hall School of Bennington, VT?

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

**That the State Board of Education grants renewal of general independent school approval, to serve students 5-14 years of age, to The Hiland Hall School of Bennington, VT. This approval is for five years, through June 30, 2016.**

**Approval is subject to the condition that the school immediately report to the Department of Education whenever any changes occur in enrollment, programs, policies, facilities, financial capacity, staffing, or administration during the approval period.**

**STATUTORY AUTHORITY:** Title 16 V.S.A. §166(b)

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

1. The Hiland Hall School is an independent day school serving students 5-14 years of age. The mission of The Hiland Hall School is to join with families in the liberation and development of the full capacities of the students entrusted to it, intellectually, socially, aesthetically, physically and morally.
2. The State Board of Education last granted independent school approval to The Hiland Hall School on March 15, 2005 through June 30, 2009.
3. The Hiland Hall School was visited on behalf of the Commissioner by Pat Pallas Gray and Brynne Reed on April 6, 2011.
4. The school occupies a large, 5,000 square foot rectangular building, with no interior partitions of the primary space. In addition there is an office, a small auxiliary meeting room, a kitchen area, and storage space. The back of the building provides an additional 5,000 square feet. Part of this space was renovated to accommodate the middle school program. There is a large exterior play space to the rear of the building. The building

meets all state and federal health and safety regulations and is adequate to meet the needs of the program and students. A copy of the Certificate of Occupancy (CO) for the facility is on file in the department.

5. The minimum course of study, as prescribed in 16 V.S.A. §906, is provided and adapted to the age and abilities of the students. The school strives to develop each student to his/her full capacity while emphasizing the importance of the school community. Classes are ungraded and students are grouped by ability for the academic parts of the day. At the time of the visit, there were 36 students enrolled, of which two were publicly-placed. The school has available support services to support its purpose and curriculum.
6. The school has the resources including financial capacity and qualified staff to meet its objectives. The staff includes two and a half teachers, one of whom serves as the principal, and an assistant teacher. In the last few years the school has employed Bennington College students through their work study program as tutors in America Reads and America Counts. Parents are active in the school, often teaching curriculum-related special topics.
7. The health, safety, attendance, and assessment records are in good order.
8. The school maintains an operating schedule that includes a total number of instructional hours each year that is not less than that required of a public school serving the same grades.
9. The Hiland Hall School has a policy on prevention of harassment of students that is as stringent as the Department's model policy.

**COST IMPLICATONS:** none

**STAFF AVAILABLE:**

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