

March 2, 2016

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The Sharon Academy  
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Sharon, VT 05064

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Burr & Burton Academy  
P.O. Box 498  
Manchester, VT 05254

Dear Michael and Mark,

As you know, the State Board of Education wants to review and update its rules related to the “evaluation of private education programs” (2200 series).

Specifically, the SBE asked me to recommend rule changes that address the following SBE goals (quoted from a request presented at the November SBE meeting):

- Updating antiquated language - The State Board requests the Secretary’s recommendations on updating the language and the system, in whole and in part.
- Fiscal Accountability – The law requires the State Board to assure that each school has adequate resources. The Board considers the current rules insufficient to meet this statutory requirement. The Board requests that independent school financial data and budgets be submitted annually in a common statewide electronic format, that GAAP procedures be utilized, and that independent auditors be periodically employed.
- Equal Opportunity and Equity – Currently, the provisions for assuring equal access and admission to private schools are not sufficient. It is the view of the State Board that equal opportunities must be available to all in admissions, program availability and discipline; and that the rules explicitly address these issues.
- The Use of External Evaluators – The Board considers a robust external



evaluation system to be essential for independent private schools which draw down public funds. The Board requests that independent schools be evaluated periodically using a NEASC system.

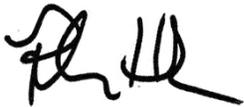
- Special Education – Approved independent schools shall provide special education services reasonably equivalent to those that would normally be provided in a traditional public school. The board realizes that certain schools may specialize in providing services for certain handicapping conditions, and that circumstances will vary.

As the designated leaders of the CIS, I am asking you to please take these guidelines to your members for discussion and comment. When you have comment from your members and it is ready to share, I would like to sit down with you to discuss the comments and hear your input on the proposed revisions to the rules.

I would very much like your input before we put together a draft set of revisions to bring to the State Board of Education.

I would like to schedule the meeting now, so we have it on the calendar, but realize we need to push it out far enough for you to have time to gather robust input from your CIS members. Based on the State Board's announced timeline, I suggest we try to schedule for sometime in mid to late April 2016. Please contact my assistant, Maureen Gaidys at 802-479-1060 or via email at [Maureen.Gaidys@vermont.gov](mailto:Maureen.Gaidys@vermont.gov) with suggested dates/times that may work.

Best,



Rebecca Holcombe  
Secretary of Education

cc: Kevin Ellis, Partner, Ellis Millis  
Mill Moore, Executive Director, VISA  
Laura Pelosi, MMR, LLC

