

AGENCY OF EDUCATION
Barre, Vermont

TEAM: School Finance

ITEM: Will the State Board of Education grant renewal of general independent school approval to serve students in grades K-8 to The Schoolhouse of South Burlington VT?

SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the State Board of Education grants renewal of general independent school approval to serve students in grades K-8 to The Schoolhouse of South Burlington VT. This approval is for five years, through June 30, 2022.

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

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

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. The Schoolhouse is a progressive K-8 school founded in 1970 by parents desiring a child-centered primary school. Over the years, grades have been added until The Schoolhouse reached the present level of grades K-8. The Schoolhouse's educational philosophy and values are founded upon five core concepts: trust, sharing, responsibility, respect, and belonging.
2. The Schoolhouse is a board-directed school. Admissions to the school are made by a committee comprising the administrative team.
3. The Schoolhouse, Inc. was visited on behalf of the Secretary of Education by Brian Morgan on April 18, 2017. The Schoolhouse owns, manages, and occupies a renovated barn on 28 acres of land in a suburban development built on former farmland. The school facility comprises 15,200 sq. feet of single-story interior space, and includes: 2 preschool classrooms, 3 elementary classrooms, 1 middle school classroom, a library/large community room, a large gymnasium, kitchen, and staff/administration offices. The 28 acres consists of wetlands, 3 ponds, woods, playgrounds, and garden plots. The school has a partnership program (Farm, Food, Forest Program) with nearby Bread and Butter Farm in South Burlington. Students visit the farm on a weekly basis and enjoy an authentic hands-on opportunity to experience farm life. The school's

facility meets all state and federal health and safety regulations and is handicapped accessible.

4. 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 has completed a thorough curriculum mapping initiative. The curriculum is differentiated to accommodate each student and to “meet students where they are.” At the time of the visit there were 59 students in grades K-8 and 35 students in pre-K.
5. The staff includes five full-time classroom teachers, a part-time mathematics teacher, a foreign language teacher, a part-time music teacher, and a full-time and a part-time aide. The school is overseen by the Head of School. Staff members are qualified by degree, training, and experience for their positions. The Schoolhouse encourages its staff to pursue their continuing education through workshops, in-services, college and university courses, etc. to further their professional and personal growth.
6. Student health, attendance, and assessment records are in good order, readily available, and scrupulously maintained. The 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.
7. A review of the financial information provided confirms the school is in a sound financial position.
8. The Schoolhouse has a policy on prevention of harassment, hazing, and bullying that is as stringent as the Agency’s model policy.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS: none

STAFF AVAILABLE:

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