

# **Site Review- Kindergarten Renewal**

## **Green Mountain Montessori School**

### **Independent School Review Report**

### **General Education**

**Site Review Conducted on May 5, 2022**

Submitted by Independent School Review Team:

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## **Site Review Scope of Work and Purpose**

The Agency of Education's Independent School team, including an educator, conducted a review of the approved kindergarten program at Green Mountain Montessori School on Thursday, May 5, 2022.

## **Kindergarten Application Requirements**

### **State Board of Education Rule 2271.1**

Green Mountain Montessori School's kindergarten application was complete and included all required documentation at the time of submission.

## **Kindergarten Educational Objectives**

### *State Board of Education Rule 2271*

Green Mountain Montessori School's mission is to provide a "stimulating, caring and healthy environment that guides children to reach their fullest potential—becoming responsible, independent and creative individuals who are aware and proud of whom they are." The school follows the Montessori philosophy to provide an environment that fosters the child's natural love of learning.

## **Program Description and Enrollment**

### *State Board of Education Rule 2272*

Green Mountain Montessori School is a non-profit school located at 8 Jericho Road in Essex Town, Vermont. On the day of the visit, there were 18 students at the school.

Decisions pertaining to the office and administration of the school are "made jointly by the head of school and all administrative staff that are responsible for the educational, social, emotional, and physical development of [students] in the manner set forth by the Pedagogical Committee of the Association Montessori Internationale, under the guidance of the head of school." The Board of Directors works collaboratively with Green Mountain Montessori School's head of school. All daily academic, administrative, and operational decisions are made by the head of school.

Included in the family handbook is disclosure information about enrollment in an approved kindergarten including specific information regarding Act 166 and public funding requirements for state approved kindergartens. Students' parents or guardians receive information on public funding for state approved kindergartens during the enrollment process.

In addition to information pertaining to course of study, educational objectives included in the handbook state that: "[the school] does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national and ethnic origin or as otherwise prohibited by federal, state or local law in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and other school-administered programs."

Furthermore, the Department for Children and Families (DCF) licenses the school as an early childhood program. Green Mountain Montessori School also has earned 3 STARS (Step Ahead Recognition System)—a quality initiative of the State of Vermont Child Development Division of the Agency of Human Services.

### **Minimum Course of Study**

*State Board of Education Rule 2271.1 (a)*

The curriculum is a mixture of practical exercises that foster independence, sensorial exploration, language, math, geography, the sciences, history, music, art, and creative play for the development of the whole child.

Green Mountain Montessori Kindergarten offers several parent “curriculum nights” annually in which parents are invited to attend an informative presentation. School staff select a particular curricular topic and demonstrates how curriculum is delivered in keeping with the Montessori philosophy.

### **Operating Schedule**

*State Board of Education Rule 2272 (e)*

There are a number of enrollment options at the school. Children aged 3.0 – 6.5 years as of September 1 are eligible for the full day program. Children aged 3.0 – 3.9 years are eligible for the half day program. Students enrolled in either program are eligible for the before/after school programs. To preserve the Montessori environment during the before/after school programs, Green Mountain Montessori only allows regular students to participate. All children are enrolled for the entire academic year unless their application is accepted after the start of the school year. The school follows the school calendar used by the local school districts.

### **Professional Staff and Professional Development**

*State Board of Education Rule 2272 (c) & 2273.2*

Instructional staff is comprised of two lead teachers, two assistant teachers, afterschool care staff, substitute teachers, and an office manager. The head of school provides instruction to students as well. Parent volunteers provide enrichment activities to support the school’s curriculum and supervision during outdoor activities.

One lead teacher has a master’s degree in early education; the other will matriculate this spring into a master’s degree program in early education. All instructional staff are required to participate annually in Montessori pedagogical education courses and earn a certificate of completion in Montessori academic programming.

Several instructors are licensed in or are working towards obtaining a Vermont early education teacher’s license. The Board and head of school provide ample access to professional

development opportunities for all staff interested in obtaining either initial licensure or support for licensure renewal.

### **Staffing Safeguards:**

All staff, instructional support personnel, and parent volunteers have undergone finger printing and child/adult abuse background checks. Documentation is on file in staff professional files.

### **Mandatory Reporting Procedures:**

All Green Mountain Montessori School's kindergarten staff are required to attend annual mandatory reporter training during August in-service. The policy is outlined in the staff handbook and provided to parents/families at the time of student enrollment.

### **Facilities**

#### State Board of Education Rule 2271 (b)

Green Mountain Montessori School is in a restored 1820's brick farmhouse in the center of Essex Town. The first floor of the facility is handicapped accessible. The facilities meet the needs of the students and state and federal health and safety regulations. A copy of the Certificate of Occupancy (CO) from the Division of Fire Safety is on file at the Agency of Education.

Located on two floors, all the classrooms are clean, well-organized, and arranged to provide access to varied models of instruction. Student work is displayed throughout each classroom and in common spaces. Outdoor education spaces are surrounded by locked security fencing and may only be accessed by staff or approved visitors, enabling students to have safe access to outdoor activities that reinforce the curriculum and foster social skill development and creativity.

### **Health & Safety**

All Green Mountain Montessori School staff are trained in CPR and First Aid. The school's administration schedules regular training updates to ensure the health and safety of students and staff.

Fire drills are conducted monthly, and plans are currently underway to determine active shooter and remain-in-place drills appropriate for early education students. Parents and families are included in the development of this policy.

Additionally, Green Mountain Montessori School's handbook includes specific policies around maintaining a smoke free campus and infectious disease interventions and protocols. Included in the school's handbook is a section regarding contacting family members should an emergency occur, including adults authorized to pick-up each student. The handbook states "All parents must give the school the names and phone numbers of three people who can be contacted in the case of an emergency. Every attempt will be made to reach parents first, and

then the back-up list will be used. It is important that these people agree to be listed and are available to come to the school in an emergency or when the child is ill, and the parents are unavailable.” It is a requirement of the school that identified adults also undergo background checks to ensure the safety of each student.

### **Student Records and Confidentiality**

#### State Board of Education Rule 2273.1

AOE representatives verified that Green Mountain Montessori School’s student records and electronic filing system continues to meet State and Federal confidentiality requirement standards. Student education records and other related paper documentation are kept in a secure, locked storage facility in the school’s main office. Parent volunteers are required to sign a confidentiality disclosure statement and receive appropriate training prior to being placed on parent assignment rosters, allowing access to student files. Additionally, student files may only be accessed through formalized requests to the head of school.

The school does not have a nurse on staff. Since March 2020, the school’s administration was assigned a designated health professional to assist with COVID related infections and were provided with access to needed health supplies, protocols for reporting infections, and other related-COVID concerns.

During regular school operation, school staff do not administer over the counter medications. Any student prescriptions are administered by parents prior to daily attendance. Student immunization records are up to date and on file in a secure, locked filing system in the main office.

### **Hazing, Harassment & Bullying Policies**

Green Mountain Montessori School utilizes parent-teacher conference model to address student incidents regarding harassment and bullying. This information is included in the school’s handbook which aligns with agency requirements for early education schools under Act 166. The school’s staff, due to the age of children, also address bullying as part of the curriculum and during daily social interactions between and among students.

### **Financial Capacity**

Green Mountain Montessori School submitted a profit & loss statement for the 2021-2022 school year and a balance sheet as of May 5, 2022 indicating the school has met rule 2226.11 requirements and has the financial capacity to conduct its educational purposes for the period of approval.

### **Approval Recommendation**

Green Mountain Montessori School provides early education opportunities for families who wish to enroll their children in a school that that follows a Montessori curriculum and

philosophy. The independent school review team confirms that Green Montessori School meets State Board of Education approval Rule 2227, statutory, and Act 166 requirements to operate as an early education school and, as such, recommends renewal of the school for the maximum term of two years.