

**AGENCY OF EDUCATION
Barre, Vermont**

TEAM: School Finance

ITEM: Will the State Board of Education grant renewal of general and special education independent school approval to Mosaic Learning Center with program sites in Morrisville and So. Burlington, VT to serve male and female students ages 5-22 in grades K-12, within the following disability categories: Specific Learning Disability, Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment, Speech or Language Impairment, Developmental Delay, Orthopedic Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury, Deaf-Blindness, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Other Health Impairment, Emotional Disturbance, Intellectual Disability, and Multiple Disabilities?

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the State Board of Education grants renewal of general and special education independent school approval to Mosaic Learning Center with program sites in Morrisville and So. Burlington, VT to serve male and female students ages 5-22 in grades K-12, within the following disability categories: Specific Learning Disability, Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment, Speech or Language Impairment, Developmental Delay, Orthopedic Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury, Deaf-Blindness, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Other Health Impairment, Emotional Disturbance, Intellectual Disability, and Multiple Disabilities. This Approval is for five years, through June 30, 2021.

Approval is subject to the condition that the school immediately report to the Agency of Education whenever 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)
State Board rule: 2228 et. seq.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Mosaic Learning Center (MLC) is an independent, LLC day facility providing educational, therapeutic, and reintegration services for up to 15 (10 in So. Burlington; 5 in Morrisville) male and female students in grades 5-22. The school was founded in 2002 and has since grown to two campuses. Accepted students are in need of specialized services in a self-contained classroom and living environment due to academic and emotional difficulties that interfere with their ability to function in a traditional school environment. MLC will serve previously traumatized students with emotional disabilities, learning impairments, specific learning differences, and other health impairments. The Core Purpose of the school is to embrace and inspire the strengths of the students and community. The Mosaic Learning Center is owned by Margaret Novotny of Morrisville, VT. Peter B. Gilmore visited the school on behalf of the Agency on March 9, 2016.

GENERAL EDUCATION: REPORT OF FINDINGS

1. The description of the school in the Application, and on the admissions brochures is accurate. The Core Purpose, Core Values, and Philosophy of the school are clearly presented on the website and serve as the guides for all aspects of life at the school. These tenets are reviewed regularly during the school year and discussed openly by all faculty and staff.
2. The course of study is highly individualized to student needs and is adequate to meet the educational purposes of the school. The school provides a minimum course of study that is age and ability appropriate, and it is presented in a highly individualized way. The school makes available the support services necessary to meet the requirements of a minimum course of study and its educational purposes including (a) library services through books on site and guided access to the internet, (b) administrative services and facilities including on-site administrators, computer databases for tracking information, emergency and safety plans, set schedules, etc., (c) counseling services including on-site counselors, therapists etc. and (d) a system of record keeping both electronic and paper that are stored in safe, inaccessible files in the cloud and/or on site. All students are on IEPs and the sending school LEAs work with Mosaic staff to devise and implement IEPs yearly or as needed. Students are often reintegrated into public school programs after their time at MLC. Mosaic uses a holistic team approach to educating students and according to the staff I interviewed, it is highly effective.
3. Although located on two campuses 45 miles apart, the Mosaic Learning Center functions administratively from the South Burlington campus. The two self-contained school houses have the classrooms and facilities necessary to carry out the school mission and programs. There is enough classroom space within the self-contained houses for the students to enjoy common and self-contained environments, and each of the teachers and administrators has sufficient office/working space as well. The buildings meet relevant health and safety standards as represented by updated certificates of inspection. Each building has classrooms, a kitchen, central gathering areas, and office/meeting areas. There is emergency, safety, and evacuation plans for each campus. The Morrisville campus is a worn facility currently used by four students and seven staff that is kept up with regular maintenance as necessary. The South Burlington campus is a newer facility for seven students. Faculty are required to clean the sites as needed during the day and at the close of school.
4. The school employs a professional staff in sufficient number who are qualified by training and experience in the areas in which they are assigned. All the general education staff has at least a bachelor's degree in their field of instruction and some hold Masters degrees in related areas. Upon interview, the long term staff at Mosaic Learning Center proved to be experienced, dedicated, professionals. They each have certifications applicable to the needs of the students and experience teaching the age groups they encounter. Staff appropriately oversees the students during the entire school day never allowing students to venture off on their own. The professional development at Mosaic Learning Center is appropriate to the techniques used with the students such as CPI (Crisis Prevention Intervention), PTR (Prevent, Teach, Respond) and CPR. Teachers are invited to attend training sessions in these areas and are encouraged to take advanced study in the techniques as well.

5. The back office administrative systems at Mosaic Learning Center are secure and appropriate for the running of the organization. On and off-site databases serve as secure storage for admissions and contact information, daily attendance along with all biographic information on students and families, academic records, immunization records, performance tracking, etc. The school employs a bookkeeper who maintains an accounting system of accounts payable, accounts receivable, budget tracking, and payroll. There is a yearly budgeting process that involves the main administrators with input from the staff. Review of a recent budget and other financials was not made available, but conversations with a Board member, the Operations Director, the Educational Director and individual faculty lead one to believe that the school is financially intact.

The Mosaic Learning Center is an organization that is committed to serving this very needy population of students in an individualized yet holistic way. There were many stories of successful students reintegrating with their public schools or “graduating” and moving on to adult programs. The staff spoke of loving their professions and many spoke of feeling a strong sense of purpose in their jobs as well as wonderfully strong support from the organization. The environment in which they teach is at times intense, but again, they all spoke of feeling happy to work there. The staff is held to high standards and they know what is expected of them. It is easy to see how this quality approach to education reflects the hard work of these dedicated professionals, and how it flows to the children and families in their care.

SPECIAL EDUCATION: REPORT OF FINDINGS

Mosaic Learning Center (formerly known as Augmentative Learning and Movement Center) is seeking re-approval as an independent day school in the areas of; specific learning disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment, speech or language impairment, developmental delay, orthopedic impairment, traumatic brain injury, deaf-blindness, autism spectrum disorders, other health impaired, emotional disturbance, intellectual disability and multiple disabilities. Mosaic has two locations, one in South Burlington and one in Morrisville. Mosaic currently serves 11 students, 7 in South Burlington and 4 in Morrisville, aged 6 to 22. Due to the intensive nature of the population served, each student is supported by an individualized education program, behavior plan, transition plan when appropriate, dedicated staff, and a life skills and community development curriculum.

The locations were visited by Vermont Agency of Education Special Education Consultants on 3/9/16, 3/25/16, and 4/11/16. These Consultants interviewed Mosaic Learning Center staff, toured facilities, observed staff/student interactions and reviewed student files and IEPs. Observations and file reviews were conducted for students diagnosed with Other Health Impairment, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Emotional Disturbance as many of the other categories are not currently represented in the student population. The staff was cooperative and professional. The facilities were clean, the amount of space was appropriate for the number of students enrolled and organized as needed for the individual needs of the students. Mosaic staff reported a positive and collaborative working relationship with Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to support the student’s educational programs.

Staff professional development and training take the form of new hire training in Prevent, Teach and Respond, a Mosaic Learning Center specific protocol for therapeutic intervention, behavioral guidelines, crisis prevention and emergency response guidelines. Staff also receives training through the Crisis Prevention Institute in de-escalation procedures. Staff reported feeling

supported with on the job training with specific students and behavior plans as well as on-going feedback during observations and meeting times.

The following rules were reviewed for compliance:

2228.3 – MET – Observed written policies and/or procedures in the areas of: (1) admissions, (2) least restrictive environment, (3) discipline, (4) graduation, (5) faculty qualifications, and (6) faculty-student ratios.

2228.3.1 – MET – Evidence of minimum maintenance of (1) educational records, and coordination with LEA and parents through data and file review, (2) participation in evaluation and IEP procedures through IEP review, and (3) implementation of IEPs through progress reporting and behavioral data.

2228.3.2 – MET – Special education teachers, speech-language pathologists, and occupational therapists were licensed by appropriate local state agencies. All current staff (excepting one on medical leave) has completed the requirements outlined in Rule 4500 as related to training for staff involved in restraint and seclusion protocols.

Based on the rules for special education approval for independent schools, Mosaic Learning Center has met the minimum requirements for independent school approval.

COST IMPLICATIONS: none

STAFF AVAILABLE:

Cassandra Ryan, Finance Analyst
802-479-1199