**State Board of Education**

**April 18, 2017**

**Item D-4**

**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 5-13 years of age to the Hiland Hall School, Bennington, VT?

# **SECRETARY’S RECOMMENDED ACTION**:

# **That the State Board of Education grants renewal of general independent school**

**approval to serve students 5-13 years of age to the Hiland Hall School, Bennington, VT. This approval is for five years, through June 30, 2022.**

**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:** 16 V.S.A. § 166 (b)

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

1. The Hiland Hall School is an independent day school serving students 5-13 years of age. The mission of 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.

1. Hiland Hall School was visited on behalf of the Secretary of Education on March 2, 2017 by a general education contracted consultant.
2. Hiland Hall School occupies a large, 5,000 square foot rectangular building with no interior partitions of the primary space. There is an office, a small auxiliary meeting room, a kitchen area, and storage space. Attached to the rear of this structure is another large space of almost 5,000 sq. ft. Part of this space accommodates the middle school science program. Beyond this space is a stonemason’s studio, which the school rents out, and on which it pays property taxes. There is a spacious exterior play area behind 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. The capacity of the building is limited to 40 individuals because of waste water regulations.
3. The minimum course of student, as prescribed in 16 V.S.A. § 906, is provided and adapted to the age and abilities of the students. Hiland Hall School is a progressive school that 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 school day. At the time of the visit, 32 students were enrolled, of whom eight were from sending districts. The school is well-equipped to support its purposes and curriculum.
4. The school has the resources including financial capacity and qualified staff to meet its objectives. The staff includes two full-time teachers and a half-time teacher. In addition, the founder and the Director are part-time independent contractors. The school continues to employ Bennington College students through their work study program as tutors in America Reads and America Counts. Parents are active in the school, ten teaching curriculum-related special topics.
5. The health, safety, attendance, and assessment records were reviewed and found to be in good order. The school has a policy on the prevention and reporting of harassment, hazing, and bullying that is as stringent as the Agency’s model policy.
6. 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.
7. The school provided a complete and detailed renewal application. Hiland Hall School meets the State Board rules and requirements for an approved Vermont independent school. I recommend that the SBE grant renewal of general education independent school approval to Hiland Hall School for a period of five years.

**FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:** none

**STAFF AVAILABLE:**

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