

AGENCY OF EDUCATION

Barre, Vermont

TEAM: School Finance

ITEM: Will the State Board of Education grant renewal of approval as an independent kindergarten to Saxon Hill School, Inc. of Jericho, VT?

SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the State Board of Education grants renewal of approval as an independent kindergarten to Saxon Hill School, Inc. of Jericho, VT. This approval is for two years, through June 30, 2019.

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) (1)
State Board Rules 2270--2275

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. Saxon Hill School, founded in 1964, is Vermont's oldest parent cooperative preschool and kindergarten program in the state. At Saxon Hill School they provide children the freedom to experience and experiment, support every child's individual level of growth and development, build communication and problem-solving skills, encourage children in becoming compassionate, responsible members of a group, and celebrate the wonders and job of being 3, 4, and 5 years old. As a parent cooperative, the parents contribute to the overall functioning of the school both in and out of the classroom.
2. Saxon Hill School is licensed to operate an early childhood program by the Department of Children and Families, Child Development Division, is a Five-Star recognized program, and is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Youth Children (NAEYC). The Vermont State Board of Education has continuously approved Saxon Hill School since 1985.
3. On behalf of the Secretary of Education, Pat Pallas Gray and Brynne Reed visited the school on May 17, 2017.
4. Two years ago, Saxon Hill School moved into a large, leased two-classroom space at the Underhill ID Elementary School, which is next to the Mills Riverside Park and on the same campus as Browns River Middle School. The school has a generous outdoor playground with a garden, access to nature trails, and a wonderful sledding hill. The building is handicapped accessible, meets all state and federal health and safety

regulations and is adequate to meet the needs of the preschool/kindergarten program. A Certificate of Occupancy (CO) from the Division of Fire Safety is on file at the school and at the Agency.

5. The Vermont Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities, the Vermont Early Learning Standards, and Saxon Hill School's Development Guidelines, along with other developmentally appropriate practices, guide the curriculum for the programs. Saxon Hill School offers three programs: two 3-day and a four-day. The latter is the kindergarten program. On the day of the visit, there were 49 enrolled, one of which was kindergarten-aged.
6. The minimum course of study, as prescribed in 16 V.S.A. §906, is provided and adapted to the age and abilities of the children. The classroom provides a wide variety and array of materials and books for student learning and interest. Member "parent help" in their child's classroom on a rotating basis, thus giving parents exposure to the expertise of the staff as they model parenting and communication skills. The school has adopted a Reggio Emilia approach to education in which teachers and parents act as co-learners with children. Both teachers and parents contribute to portfolios documenting each child's progress during the year. The kindergarten at Saxon Hill School is staffed with a four-day lead teacher and an assistant teacher. An Education Program Director, who has been at the school for 37 years, oversees the Saxon Hill School programs. All staff members have degrees and experience working with early childhood-aged children.
7. The health, safety, attendance and assessment records were reviewed and found to be in good order.
8. Saxon Hill School has a policy on prevention and reporting of harassment, hazing and bullying, which is as stringent as the Agency's model policy.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS: None

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