

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 serve students in grades 7-12, in the disability categories of autism spectrum disorders, deaf/blindness, hearing loss, visual impairment, emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, and traumatic brain injury, to Thetford Academy, Thetford, VT based upon the review by the Agency of Education and notification of continued New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation?

SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the State Board of Education grants renewal of general and special education independent school approval to serve students in grades 7-12, in the disability categories of autism spectrum disorders, deaf/blindness, hearing loss, visual impairment, emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, and traumatic brain injury, to Thetford Academy, Thetford, VT based upon the review by the Agency of Education and notification of continued New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation. This approval is for five years through June 30, 2023.

That the school reports to the Agency of Education within five days whenever any 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 228 et seq

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. Thetford Academy is a co-educational day school serving students in grades 7- 12. Thetford Academy serves as the designated school for students in the town of Thetford. In addition, the academy receives students from local VT towns and Lyme, NH.
2. Thetford Academy is currently approved in the disability categories of autism spectrum disorders, deaf/blindness, hearing loss, visual impairment, emotional disturbance,

intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, and traumatic brain injury.

3. Thetford Academy is accredited by the New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC), which is an accrediting body recognized by the State Board of Education pursuant to SBE Rule 7320. Other than routine annual reports, the next major responsibility regarding accreditation will be the five-year report due in 2023.
4. NEASC, as part of its accreditation review, assessed financial capacity. The applicant has satisfied NEASC's requirements, and the Agency recommends that the State Board support NEASC's findings of adequate financial capacity for the purposes of State Board approval.
5. Thetford Academy has a policy on the prevention and reporting of harassment, hazing, and bullying which is as stringent as the Agency's model policy.

Independent School Special Education Review Report

REPORT

May 2, 2018

Thetford Academy

Submitted by

Special Education Review Team



Approval Recommendation

Five year special education re-approval in the disability categories of: autism spectrum disorders, deaf/blindness, hearing loss, emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impaired, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, visual impairment and traumatic brain injury.

School Description

Thetford Academy enrolls 318 students, 54 whom are identified in special education. Special education students come from nine towns, including New Hampshire. Of the 54 students receiving special education, 38 are males and 16 are females, with 50% being Medicaid eligible. The student disability breakdown is as follows: autism spectrum disorder-6, emotional disturbance-2, intellectual disability-1, multiple disabilities-1, other health impairment-11, specific learning disability-31, speech or language impairment-2. Thetford Academy serves grades range from 7-12th, with the following numbers per grade:7th-4, 8th-11, 9th-8, 10th-11, 11th-10, and 12th-10. Through an agreement with Orange East Supervisory Union, Thetford Academy case manages students who are not placed at Thetford Academy but live in the town of Thetford. Thetford have case managed students who are placed at the Hartford Programs, Wilder School and SD Associates Foundations School in Windsor and Brookfield, with the goal of bringing these students to Thetford Academy as soon as appropriate.

Review Description

Thetford Academy, located in Thetford, Vermont, was visited by Agency of Education staff on 4/11/2018. According to student records, there are 54 Vermont students receiving special education services at this school. During the visit, the Agency employees interviewed staff, toured facilities, observed staff/student interactions, and reviewed student files and IEPs. File reviews were conducted for twelve (12) Vermont students. The students reviewed qualified under the disability categories of autism spectrum disorder, emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, other health impaired, specific learning disability, and speech or language impairment.

Review Findings

2228.1 – Thetford Academy demonstrated the policies, procedures, and staff training to support students in the disability categories of; autism spectrum disorders, deaf/blindness, hearing loss, emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impaired, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, visual impairment and traumatic brain injury.

2228.3 – Thetford Academy demonstrated 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 – Thetford Academy demonstrated sufficient evidence in all of the following; minimum maintenance of (1) educational records, and coordination with LEA, (2) participation in evaluation, and IEP procedures, (3) implementation of IEPs.

2228.3.2 – Thetford Academy meets expectations regarding licensed staff. Special education teachers were licensed by the Agency of Education.

2228.4 – Thetford Academy demonstrated policies, procedures, and written agreements outlining tuition and establishment of the division of legal responsibilities with regards to students on IEPs.

Questions: Contact Chris Kane at chris.kane@vermont.gov

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS: none

STAFF AVAILABLE:

Cassandra Ryan, Fiscal and Regulatory Compliance Coordinator