

AGENCY OF EDUCATION

Barre, Vermont

TEAM: School Finance

ITEM: Will the State Board of Education acknowledge that an approved independent school that operates under the name of Vermont Permanency Initiative DBA Connecticut River Academy in Bradford, VT is closing on April 26, 2019 and will no longer be an approved general education and special education independent school in VT as of April 26, 2019?

SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the State Board of Education acknowledges that an approved independent school that operates under the name of Vermont Permanency Initiative DBA Connecticut River Academy in Bradford, VT is closing on April 26, 2019 and will no longer be an approved general education and special education independent school in VT as of April 26, 2019.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Title 16 V.S.A. § 166 (b)
2228 et. seq.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. Vermont Permanency Initiative DBA Connecticut River Academy (CRA) is an independent, privately-owned day facility owned and managed by Becket Family Services. The school is mainly located on one campus in Bradford, VT with rented/leased program facilities and associated housing facilities/dorms at East Haverhill Academy in NH. CRA serves both day students from area LEAs and state-placed residential students placed by the Department for Children and Families (DCF) and/or the Department of Mental Health (DMH). CRA provides educational and therapeutic services for up to 40 male and female students in grades 6-12. The youth at CRA are in need of specialized services in a self-contained classroom environment due to academic and emotional difficulties that interfere with their ability to function in a traditional school environment. CRA is approved to serve students within the disability categories of Emotional Disturbance (ED), Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and Other Health Impairment (OHI).
2. CRA received renewal of general and special education independent school approval on January 17, 2018 through June 30, 2019. The school was approved to serve students in grades 6-12, within the disability categories of ED, SLD, and OHI. At that time the State Board of Education denied the approval of additional special education categories of

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Developmental Delay (DD), Intellectual Disability (ID), and Multiple Disabilities (MD).

3. CRA's Head of Schools notified the Agency of Education via email on April 4, 2019 that CRA was closing on April 26, 2019. At that time the Head of Schools provided copies of correspondence that was sent to the CRA faculty and to the parents of CRA youth on March 29, 2019. The notification indicated that on April 29, 2019 the students and faculty at CRA will be transitioning to Mount Prospect Academy (MPA)-Pike campus in Pike, NH. These CRA students currently reside at either Hall Farm or Blake Farm in NH, which are on the same campus. The Mount Prospect Academy-Pike facilities and faculty have been approved by the NH Department of Education.
4. Educational records for those youth who are enrolled at CRA and reside at Hall Farm or Blake Farm in Pike, NH will be transferred to Mount Prospect Academy-Pike campus. Students' Individual Education Plan (IEP) teams will be meeting to discuss the transition and amend each student's IEP to reflect the change in the academic placement from CRA to Mount Prospect Academy-Pike. The Director of Academics and the Principal of CRA will be supporting this transition.
5. Educational records for those state-placed youth at Newbury House in Wells River, VT, who have been receiving their academics at CRA, will be transferred to the Vermont Assessment Center at Newbury (VACN). The youth were placed at VACN by DCF and/or DMH for short-term assessment. VACN received initial tutorial program approval by the State Board of Education on February 20, 2019. VACN is now fully staffed and is opening on April 29, 2019. This will enable the VACN youth to have their academic program on the same campus as their dorm in Wells River, VT. Students' Individual Education Plan (IEP) teams will be meeting to discuss this transition and amend each student's IEP to reflect the change in their academic placement from CRA to VACN Tutorial Program. The Executive Director and Tutorial Program Manager/Special Educator will be supporting this transition.
6. CRA is preparing a list of the individual(s) at each VT LEA that were contacted about the upcoming closure of CRA and transition to the MPA-Pike campus. The Agency of Education has contacted these individual(s)/LEAs to confirm that they received proper notification, and that IEPs are revised and contracts are in place as appropriate.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS: none

STAFF AVAILABLE:

Cassandra Ryan, Fiscal and Regulatory Compliance Coordinator