

Independent School Program Approvals & Renewals Summary Report, FY20

Independent School Team Members:

J. Deborah Ormsbee
Pat Pallas-Gray

Collaborating AOE Special Education Team Member:

Tracy Harris

Contact Information:

deborah.ormsbee@vermont.gov. 802-828-1226

Independent School (IS) Program Renewals:

From FY16 – FY19 the Agency of Education contracted with external general education consultants to perform independent school reviews. Those contracts have not been renewed. As authorized by the State Board of Education (SBE), all independent school program review responsibilities have been returned to the Agency of Education (AOE), effective FY20.

In May 2020 independent school team members met with AOE Special Education Director, Jacqui Kelleher, requesting assignment of Student Support Services personnel to the team, to perform reviews, as needed. The Student Support Team coordinator ensures that special education specific programs, fulfill expectations of IDEA and Special Education Rule Series 2360. Special education reports come to the IS team for inclusion in the school’s overall report, which is generated by the IS team for submission to the Secretary of Education and the SBE. All general education school reports are completed by independent school team members.

The reporting format/template was updated to reflect program compliance with Statute and Rule for each type of approved program. Furthermore, each report addresses statute and rules, specific for each type of approval, to further clarify program viability.

Prior to Governor Scott’s COVID-19 school closure mandate, six independent programs were reviewed by the team, August 2019 – March 2020. Two programs, INCLUSION (tutorial) and Priority Placements, LLC submitted applications seeking initial approval. One general education program, Mount Mansfield Ski Club & Academy, applied for a program amendment to add a traditional nine-month school year to the SBE approved winter-term program. All independent school reports were completed and reviewed by each school head, as required by rule, and submitted to Secretary French’s office. All programs that applied, seeking either initial approval or a renewal, have been approved by the State Board of Education.

FY20 Independent School reviews completed and approved:

| General Education Schools | Special Education Schools | Approved Kindergartens | Approved Tutorial Programs |
|--|---|---|--|
| Mount Mansfield Ski Club & Academy - Stowe Amendment Request | Priority Placement, LLC Brattleboro, initial Gen Ed & Sped approval | Mary Johnson Children’s Center, Kindergarten, Middlebury, renewal <i>Saxon Hill</i> Kindergarten, Jericho, renewal | 204 Depot tutorial, Bennington, Renewal <i>INCLUSION</i> , short-term crisis response tutorial, associated with Howard Center, initial approval |

Impact of COVID-19

There were an additional seventeen programs seeking renewal prior to June 30, 2020. As of March 2020, all seventeen programs have successfully submitted complete renewal applications including required support documentation.

It is important to note that all independent schools due for FY20 renewal, met independent school program requirements, pursuant to:

SBE Rule 2222.5, approval of a school completing timely application for further approval shall extend until the Board acts on further approval. Each school has completed and submitted an application(s) in a timely manner.

A breakdown of the schools/programs in need of rescheduling as follows:

| General Education Schools | Special Education Schools | Approved Kindergartens | Number of NEASC Accredited independent schools up for renewal |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>1 General Ed Winter-term ski school, Mt. Snow Academy, renewal</p> <p>2 General Education independent schools, East Burke School, Red Fox, renewals</p> | <p>6 Special Education school: Choice Academy Schools, Community Schoolhouse, Laraway School, Meadows School, Stone Path Academy and Two Roads Academy, renewals *</p> <p>*Agency Special Education Program Coordinator will join Independent School Team</p> | <p>1 approved Kindergarten program: Green Mountain Montessori, renewal</p> | <p>3 General Education NEASC <i>granted renewal by the SBE 2/2020: Burke Mountain Academy, Killington Mountain School & Mater Christi</i></p> <p>3 Additional NEASC accredited independent program renewals will soon be ready for State Board renewal/consideration:</p> <p>Mount St. Joseph's Academy, St. Michael's Catholic School & Vermont Academy of Science & Technology</p> <p>1 NEASC Special Education School to visit- (IS Team & Special Ed Team): Village School of North Bennington</p> |

FY20 Review- Schedule Changes

In anticipation of schools reopening for in-person instruction at the beginning of school year 2020-2021, the IS team will conduct site visits for both rescheduled FY20 approvals and school approvals due in FY21.

Annual Independent School Program Reflection:

The Agency of Education's Independent School Programs and Student Support Division have worked to answer the State Board of Education's request for improvement in school reviews and reporting processes, FY20.

The revised format has allowed team members to gather and report important information. First, new procedures and inter-team collaboration has enabled personnel to gather program specific data identifying areas of need and to provide targeted technical assistance, as needed or requested. Second, site reviews revealed that programs are in compliance with statute and rules governing independent school programs, regardless of program type, as well as, highlighted education quality among those school recommended by the Independent School Team for renewal.

Independent School program evaluation and action planning is scheduled for July, 2020.

For additional independent school program information please contact IS Team Members:

J. Deborah Ormsbee, Education Quality Division
Deborah.Ormsbee@vermont.gov or 802-828-1226

Pat Pallas-Gray, Education Finance Division
Pat.PallasGray@vermont.gov or 802-828-3991