

Gen. Ed. Report on INSPIRE School for Autism, Brattleboro, VT

INSPIRE (Integrated School Program for Independence, Relationships, and Entrepreneurship) for Autism, Inc. is a non-profit, educational institution serving the needs of students aged 7-22.

1. The school's educational philosophy is to provide social, educational, and vocational training which will maximize the potential for individuals who have a primary disability of autism spectrum disorders, which includes autistic disorder, Asperger's disorder, pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS), childhood disintegrative disorder, and Rhetts's syndrome as defined in the fourth edition of DSM-IV, 2000, adolescents and young adults with autism to lead satisfying, self-sustaining lives in connection with their communities.

2. The State Board of Education last granted independent school approval to INSPIRE for Autism, Inc. on April 19, 2011 for five years through June 30, 2016.

3. INSPIRE for Autism, Inc. was visited on behalf of the Commissioner by Brian Morgan on January 24, 2018.

4. The school occupies an L-shaped, upper section of Croker Hall on the former campus of the Vermont Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, a.k.a. the Austine School for the Deaf. The L-shaped hallway surrounds two sides of a large gymnasium with two locker rooms. The gymnasium is shared with the New England Center for Circus Arts. The entire floor is leased from the Prouty Center, and it comprises three classrooms (divisible into five), three sensory rooms, a faculty room, two bathrooms (m/f), a conference room, an independent study room, computer room, vocational room, small group instruction room, two offices for staff, and two speech therapy rooms. The school is in the process of installing a commercial-grade kitchen and laundry facility. The campus lends itself to nature and environmental study with raised garden beds, fruit trees, a small pond, fields, and wooded areas. The Board is considering purchasing the entire Croker Hall, thereby giving the school a permanent home.

The facility meets all state and federal health and safety regulations and is handicapped accessible.

5. The minimum course of study, as prescribed in 16 V.S.A. para 906, is provided and adapted to the age and abilities of the students.

While the school caters to students aged 7-22 chronologically, their developmental ages range from 1 to 8. A minimum course of study is provided, but curricula are varied and adapted to individual students and the IEP's. The mix of curricula revolve around the Common Core. For example, the reading program uses VILACS, and Khan Academy, among other resources. Similarly, other subjects use a mix of resources appropriate to individual students.

The school owns four vans to take students into town or to the swimming pool in Keene, NH, for example. At any given moment, a number of students will be with their teachers away from campus.

6. The school has the resources including financial capacity and qualified staff to meet its objectives.

The school is staffed by one administrator, one clerical assistant/receptionist, two full-time teachers, one part-time teacher, and eleven assistant educators. Part-time teachers come and go as the school enrollment varies. The staff members are qualified by degree, training, and

experience for their positions. INSPIRE will continue to hire qualified teachers, as needed, to maintain a 4:1 ratio of instructional staff.

A review of the balance sheet submitted with the application for re-approval indicates that the school is financially sound.

7. The health, safety, attendance, and assessment records are in good order. Fire drill and evacuation drill records are also now in good order.

8. 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. INSPIRE operates year-round.

9. The school has a policy on prevention of harassment of students that is as stringent as the Agency's model policy.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Morgan