

State Board of Education Independent School Approval Review Committee

Draft Meeting Minutes

Meeting Place: Virtual Teams Meeting/Video/Teleconference

Call in #: 1-802-828-7667

Conference ID: 923 037 153#

Date: March 10, 2022

Present:

State Board of Education (SBE) Subcommittee Members:

Agency of Education (AOE):

Others: N/A

Present

State Board of Education (SBE) Subcommittee Members: Tom Lovett-Chair, Patrick Brown, Jenna O'Farrell, Lyle Jepson

Agency of Education (AOE): Patrick Halladay, Cassandra Ryan, Emily Simmons, Pat Pallas Gray, Maureen Gaidys, Deborah Ormsbee

Others:

Call to Order/Roll Call/Amendments to the Agenda

Tom Lovett convened the committee at 1:00 pm and called the roll: Patrick Brown, Lyle Jepson, Tom Lovett and Jenna O'Farrell were present. There were not amendments to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes from February 4, 2022

Patrick moved to approve the minutes. Lyle seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Public to Be Heard

There were no public to be heard.

Stone Path Academy

Emily updated the group on Stone Path Academy. The school has been conditionally approved by the SBE to continue through the end of the year. Emily is the agency contact with monthly contact with the school. Procedurally, Emily will connect with Tom, the chair of the committee, if conditions change and something needs to be reported. The conditions were reviewed. By June 30, 2022, the transfer of records will be complete. No further action was required regarding Stone Path Academy.

Site Visits and Desk Reviews

Patrick Halladay reported on the determinations triggering an onsite visit. A draft outline was provided.

“Schools requiring an onsite visit

- *All initial approval requests*
- *First renewal after initial approval period*
- *If the last renewal was for less than full approval period*
- *All General Education /Special Education schools*
- *Schools with multiple administration and/or special education staff changes within the last two years*
- *Schools with boarding capabilities w/accreditation or DCF licensure*
- *Schools with residential capacity that withdraws from or has its residential treatment license from DCF revoked or suspended*
- *Schools where concerns have been expressed to the IS Team that the AOE’s Legal team determine require further review.”*

The importance of onsite reviews was highlighted by Deb. Patrick Brown inquired about expediting reviews to clear the backlog, even if it is a one-time-only process.

Recommended by the Agency:

“Schools allowing for desk review

- *Kindergartens*
- *When amendment requests to add a grade or a minimum increase in enrollments if the school has undergone an onsite visit within the last three years.*
- *General Education, NEASC approved schools due to renewal.”*

Tom highlighted several schools that he targeted as schools that would allow for a desk review. There was general agreement. Casandra pointed out that desk reviews do not necessarily speed up the process. She offered to work with other Agency staff to determine an accurate list of schools for which a desk review is appropriate.

Tom is most interested in determining when and how many schools will be forwarded to the committee to review in April (2022). Cassandra believes this will be a slow period and that the committee should expect greater activity in the fall when schools are in session.

Currently there are 12 schools awaiting renewal and one new application from 2020. For 2021, there are 20 schools awaiting renewal and two new applications. For 2022, 27 schools will require renewal, as well as two kindergartens, two tutorials, and three TPEs (Teen Parent Education Programs). In 2023, an additional 20 schools will come up for renewal.

Schools that have followed the procedure, have submitted a report, and have requested renewal but have yet to be acted upon, have conditional approval to continue operations until such time as the SBE acts.

Additional information was provided by Agency staff.

“Information on Tutorials

- *Four approved Tutorials in Vermont*
- *Require onsite visits even though two are licensed by DCF as Residential Treatment Centers*
- *Tutorials are given two-year approvals per SBE rules”*

“Info on Teen Parent Education Programs

- *State Board standards do not require an onsite visit*
- *TPEs are given three-year approvals per SBE rules*
- *Currently three TPE apps are being reviewed*
- *As of December 2021, all draft reports are reviewed by the AOE’s General Counsel to being shared with the TPE for review and response.”*

The Agency would like to work in site visits for the Tutorials during the upcoming months. Teen Parent Education Programs do not require an onsite visit.

Discussion took place regarding the need to update renewal and first-time applications based upon the updated Rules. Agency staff does not foresee large changes being necessary. Some minor adjustments will be made.

Patrick Brown suggested that, in the interest of time and to clear the backlog of renewals, that schools that applied prior to the new rules should be allowed approval under the prior rules. Agency staff suggested that the “assurances” portion of the application might require a revision or addendum, specifically including the non-discrimination and health & safety sections.

Data collection was briefly discussed. Cassandra pointed out that the teams at the Agency are strengthening data requirements and accuracy concerning the data they receive. A process to escalate requirements for compliance will be discussed in the future.

Action Items:

1. The committee will review any schools that are ready in April. It does not appear that there will be many/any.
2. The Agency is asked to provide the committee and then full SBE with a list of schools that will be conducted by desk review, and which schools will be conducted by a visit. Pat Pallas Gray will put together a draft.
3. Clarification on whether TPEs should come before the committee will be explored.
4. Patrick Halladay will work with Emily Simons to create a document listing the necessary assurances that the school is aware of and attests to the fact that they will be followed. Health and safety and non-discrimination are the key components. Patrick will update Tom on the outcome.
5. The committee will return to the full SBE to discuss whether schools that have already completed a report and which then include a signed assurance to comply with the new rules at the date of rule change will be sufficient.
6. A process for notifying the schools of rule changes and the need for assurances will be discussed.

Other

The next meeting will be scheduled when there are agenda items requiring discussion, review and/or action.

Adjourn

Jenna made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:01 pm. The motion was seconded by Patrick and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Lyle P. Jepson