

# **Site Review**

## **Renewal – Mount Snow Academy**

### **Independent School Review Report General Education**

**Site Review Conducted - April 5, 2022**

Submitted by Independent School Review Team:

J. Deborah Ormsbee & Pat Pallas-Gray



## **Site Review Scope of Work and Purpose**

Mount Snow Academy, located in West Dover Vermont, is a boarding and day school that offers a five-month winter term academic program, for a maximum of 40 students with an interest in pursuing freestyle and alpine skiing and snowboarding competitions. Mount Snow Academy is seeking renewal of their current approval and to add grades four and five. The independent school review team visited the Mount Snow Academy on April 5, 2022, to conduct a general education site review.

## **General Education**

### **School Philosophy & Educational Objectives**

*State Board of Education Rule 2226.2*

Mount Snow Academy is a general education approved independent school that provides a co-educational academic support program for student athletes who attend an intensive winter sport program. Mount Snow Academy affords enrolled students with opportunities to participate in one-on-one and small group academic opportunities.

### **School Philosophy**

Mount Snow's renewal application states that

“ [the]Academy believes in the value of bringing together a group of young people and adults who work to create an environment that respects individual talent, values personal responsibility and cooperative endeavor, encourages academic curiosity and athletic development.”

### **Program Objectives**

Students enrolled during Mount Snow Academy's winter ter, continue to access the student's school system. The academy's administrative and teaching staff refer to these public entities as a student's "home school." Mount Snow's academic program director meets regularly with all home school districts to ensure continuity of student learning and to identify curricular expectations for each student, per grade.

The Academy's renewal application describes a primary objective is to “provide a one-to-one teaching model [that] promotes responsibility as well as academic curiosity. This model enables students to delve into academic subjects to a much greater degree than would be possible in a multi-student classroom and allows the student and teacher to develop an important scholarly relationship.”

## **School Enrollment**

16 V.S.A. §166(b)(4), State Board of Education Rule 2226.3

Mount Snow Academy has typically followed a rolling admissions process for their November through May winter term program. An enrollment period may vary and range from one month to the full five-month term. For the FY22 winter term, Mount Snow's total student enrollment was fifty-seven students, many of which are parttime. Mount Snow Academy currently serves students in grades six through twelve.

## **Governance**

State Board of Education Rule 2226.4

Mount Snow Academy's Board of Directors is comprised of volunteers from states in which enrolled student reside. Currently Board members include representatives from Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Mount Snow Academy's Board members are responsible for hiring the head of school who is tasked by members with ensuring the academic program fulfills home school curricular requirements as well as with the operation of the school, oversight of staff and alignment between academic and athletic programming.

An assistant academic director oversees admissions, academic programming and student discipline which includes the responsibility to serve as faculty liaison and is directly responsible for conducting teaching staff performance reviews. The Academy has a business manager on staff who is responsible for all administrative responsibilities including to serve as human resources manager and in charge of payroll.

A director of student life manages dorms, oversees residential staff, manages food services, including kitchen staff, and is responsible for student activities.

## **Minimum Course of Study & Required Assessments**

16 V.S.A. §166(b), State Board of Education Rule 2226.5

Currently, each Mount Snow Academy student receives individualized academic instruction. Central to the Academy's program are values that "nurture academic excellence, commitment, independence, personal responsibility, respect and confidence." Students receive rigorous academic opportunities based upon their home school. Students have access to a range of academic opportunities that includes personalized learning plans, project-based instruction, direct instruction and beginning with FY23 will include small group instruction comprised of two to three grade level peers.

Instructional staff meets with the education director regularly to review student progress in each required course. The director then engages student home school staff, if needed, to address any student needs.

Completed assignments, projects and supporting documentation is sent to each home school of residence using a confidential student on-line academic reporting system. Parents may also access their child's academic files to review grades and overall educational progress.

All academic instruction is completed during the first half of the day. After lunch, students meet with teachers during an advisory period to receive any additional supports or supplemental academic instruction until one o'clock. Students then depart to participate in the athletic training schedule of his/her choice.

## **Professional Staff**

### State Board of Education Rule 2226.8.1

The Academy will continue to employ its current professional staff for the five-month winter program. Upon receiving amendment approval, from the State Board, program administrators will employ teaching staff to provide instruction for upper elementary aged student who enroll, beginning with the FY23 winter term.

Mount Snow Academy currently employs professional staff qualified to provide academic instruction for all students. All academic staff members have at least a bachelor's degree in his/her field of instruction and many hold master's degrees. The academic staff have opportunities to participate in professional development opportunities to improve academic instruction.

## **Staffing Safeguards**

### State Board of Education Rule 2227.12

Background checks are conducted prior to start date for all newly hired employees. Fingerprint supported criminal records checks and Vermont adult/child abuse registries are checked annually. All reports are contained in a confidential filing system available for review upon request.

## **Mandatory Reporting Procedures:**

### State Board of Education Rule 2227.12

All of Mount Snow Academy's staff engage in a review of mandatory reporting requirements and policies during August in-service. Training includes coverage of type of incidents and to whom each staff member must report incidents.

## **Facilities**

### State Board of Education Rule 2226.6(3)

The Mount Snow Academy moved to its current facility at 248 Route 100 in West Dover, Vermont. The building previously served as an inn and is located near the ski area. Mount Snow Academy owns a fleet of vehicles to transport students on-site to receive athletic instruction at the ski area.

Agency of Education review team toured academic areas, kitchen and cafeteria spaces, the science lab, art studio and student quiet study areas. The building has been inspected by the Division of Fire Safety and the current certificate of occupancy is on file at the AOE.

The Mount Snow's academic spaces, kitchen/dining hall and student lounge are in good repair, clean, organized and well maintained.

## **Health & Safety**

*State Board of Education Rule 2226.7*

First aid stations are strategically located to provide quick and easy access to needed supplies. Each station includes information for both students and staff for contacting emergency services or Mount Snow administration. The new science lab had a fume hood installed prior to this school year and stores all lab materials, including chemicals, in a sturdy locked supply closet that only staff may access. As part of safety standards, the science lab has an eye-wash station and fire suppression blanket.

Mount Snow Academy does not have a nurse on staff; however, the school does have designated day and over-night staff that dispense medications, as required to students. Additionally, all school personnel are trained on storage, use and disposal of Epi-pens and trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of food allergies.

Mount Snow Academy's athletic program has partnered with the ski area's medical response team to administer immediate medical attention to students, if needed. The Mount Snow Academy's staff are trained on procedures that school personnel follow when required to address blood borne pathogens, infectious body fluids and toxic substances. In addition to medical precautions and procedures, kitchen and nutrition staff are trained on food safety as recommended by the USDA's safety requirements.

Student immunization records are up to date and records are in a secure, confidential digital filing system. Any paper files are secured in the program director's office.

Mount Snow Academy's program director confirmed that the school has adopted the AOE's hazing, harassment, and bullying policy and corresponding procedures are updated and reviewed with staff, annually. Parents are provided with a copy of this policy which includes the Mount Snow Academy's expectations and procedures for addressing issues with enrolled students.

## **Financial Capacity**

*State Board of Education Rule 2226.9*

Mount Snow Academy submitted to the AOE a copy of its audit report from Love, Cody & Company for June 2020 and 2019, indicating the school has met rule 2226.11 requirements and has the financial capacity to carry out its educational purposes for the period of approval.

## **School Calendar**

*State Board of Education Rule 2226.10*

Mount Snow Academy provided a calendar for their five-month winter term program.

## **Approval Recommendation**

Mount Snow Academy provides a co-educational academic program for families who wish to enroll their children in a school that also provides specialized athletic coaching and competitive opportunities in grades four through twelve.

Mount Snow Academy meets the criteria for renewal of approval and the addition of grades four (4) and five (5), except for Rule 2227, which applies to an independent school that operates a boarding program, enrolls students as boarding students, or operates a residential treatment program. As a school with a boarding program, Mount Snow Academy is required to be accredited by a State Board recognized accreditor; or licensed as a residential childcare facility by the Department for Children and Families (DCF). Mount Snow Academy has not received accreditation and is not licensed by DCF. Accordingly, the Agency of Education cannot recommend renewal of approval due to noncompliance with Rule 2227 at this time.

Good Morning Pat,

I have reviewed the renewal and the addendum and have signed that page. I do not have a working scanner at home. I will be able to send you a signed scanned page when I am at the school tomorrow. Hopefully that is acceptable.

My Best,  
Peter

On Fri, Jul 29, 2022 at 12:14 PM Pallas Gray, Pat <[Pat.PallasGray@vermont.gov](mailto:Pat.PallasGray@vermont.gov)> wrote:

Good morning, Peter,

I just left a msg on your cell phone. The draft report and an addendum document are attached. By State Board rule, you have 30 days to review the report for accuracy purpose. If, however you can review the report and send your response via email very soon—preferably by Monday, August 1—we are in hopes of getting the school's renewal request on the Board's August 12 agenda. If this isn't possible, please let me know and we will need to consider it for the meeting next month. Please do not make corrections to the draft report, just provide a list of changes needed.

If you can get your response back to us, you need to know that we expect the Independent School Subcommittee of the State Board to meet on the morning of August 8. This will be followed up by the State Board meeting on August 12. Either you or a representative of Mount Snow Academy will need to be available to answer any questions the Subcommittee or the State Board might have.

The addendum is a new document now required because of the independent school rules changing on May 10, 2022. Some of the changes went into effect immediately.

Looking forward to hearing from you regarding this matter.

Take care

Pat

Pat Pallas Gray

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