

Preliminary input from superintendents and special education directors in response to SBE proposed changes to Rules Series 2200

It is critical for independent schools to maintain a rigorous curriculum for students who attend their school. The curriculum should align with the public school curriculum. It is also essential for students to return with a solid transition plan in place and human resource support from the independent school. We appreciate the focus on behavior intervention from independent therapeutic day treatment facilities, but want to ensure students maintain and grow academically as well as socially and emotionally.

7/21/2016 11:39 AM View respondent's answers

Independent Schools receiving public funds should serve all students and be responsible for meeting all student needs. Independent Schools should be required to adhere to the open meeting law provision and public records request statute if they receive public funding.

7/20/2016 12:37 PM View respondent's answers

It can be very contentious when a parent wants an independent school and the sending school has to state that the independent school cannot meet the child's needs. Often the independent school calls us to talk about the child and somehow we become the giver of the news, so it appears we don't feel he can go there when actually the independent school does not want him. Independent schools do not tend to accommodate well or provide supports for students in special ed and if they do take the student and the student struggles, we get called again. Truly, many special education students with disabilities more severe than needing accommodations do not have the same span of choice as students without disabilities.

7/19/2016 3:22 PM View respondent's answers

The level of certification of the teachers needs to match that of public education.

7/18/2016 2:23 PM View respondent's answers

Tech schools are unreasonably restrictive due to funding constraints. We are not able to place students with disability due to pre-entry requirements.

7/18/2016 1:36 PM View respondent's answers

Approval of residential schools in Vermont in order to reduce the number of students placed into out of state residential facilities or whose needs are left unmet because of inadequate level of programming.

7/18/2016 12:52 PM View respondent's answers

Independent schools fill a need. That said, high cost independent schools that serve special populations consume large resources that might otherwise be used to build capacity in the public schools so that fewer students are removed from their local communities.

7/18/2016 12:11 PM View respondent's answers

no

7/18/2016 12:04 PM View respondent's answers

Yes, ensure independent schools have to follow all the rules, regulations, requirements of public schools.

TAB "D"

7/18/2016 11:41 AM View respondent's answers

Most of our secondary students attend Burr and Burton Academy and we have a good relationship with them regarding accepting all students. However, we have four other independent schools in our area and access isn't guaranteed. I struggle with the use of public funds being directed to schools who won't and/or can't accept all students.

7/18/2016 11:33 AM View respondent's answers

Control the cost of tuition. Especially costs associated to special education. The New School's tuition is over \$100,000 per child. They may service the most intensive needs students but at a very high price. Choices of programs for high intensive needs students is limited however, what controls are in place for assuring the tuition is reasonable. Now that special education costs and services are under the SU, the district that has tuition (school choice) for their students pays the SU and the school the student attends via excess cost billing. If the students would attend the middle/high school in their supervisory union the special education costs would not be extra, they are built in to the the SU assessment the district is paying but students are not receiving.

7/18/2016 11:22 AM View respondent's answers

I would suggest that in the spirit of Act 46, independent schools be accountable for educational quality, fiscal effectiveness, high quality staffing, and sustainability.

7/14/2016 10:29 PM View respondent's answers

Independent schools charge significant amounts for special education and 504 services. They are not reasonable. Independent schools need to follow the same process of accounting for special education services and costs for students as do the public schools. In one case, an independent school charges us more than \$9000 plus tuition for a student to attend the learning lab one period a day. In another case, an independent school down the road from us charged us excess costs, the school day is modified, they do not assess student progress, and do not track student data. Independent schools need to play by the same rules as public schools and account for expenditures the same way as public schools. I had one special educator from a private school tell me that they charge more for special education students because they only get the average tuition rate - not their costs. Thank you for asking.

7/14/2016 3:15 PM View respondent's answers

Announced tuition is often distorted. For example, an independent school might announce tuition at \$15,000. What they don't declare for all to know is that students in special education are charged additional moneys, or that the local district will still pay/employ the para-educator that works at the independent school, or that the independent school does zero case management, leaving that to the local district. Independent schools sound like a great deal because they do not disclose their true cost per pupil.

7/12/2016 1:16 PM View respondent's answers

I am confused about why our independent schools in Vermont are not subject to the federal rules of Charter Schools. It seems to me that there is a linkage between our private schools that function as public schools (based on the amount of public tuition they accept) and this set of rules. The provision of

"0" BAT

special education services in independent schools in this state deserves a careful look by the AOE. I would suggest a work group to find a way to ensure that all schools accepting public tuition dollars and serving a general population be required to admit in a blind fashion - similar to tech centers. We continue to need special education specific schools for students who cannot have their LRE needs met in a general education setting.

7/12/2016 1:11 PM View respondent's answers

I have a lot to say. This survey is a great start but does not capture the essence of the strengths and challenges that exist when students are tuitioned out of district. By and large, most of the public schools outside of our SU work hard to meet the needs of our students and charge us reasonable rates for special education services. They do not charge us for 504 services. We partner well and LEAs work through student specific issues. We have 5 independent schools within our SU boundaries, some approved to provide special education services, and others are not. I have worked extensively this year regarding service delivery and costs with the four schools to which the majority of our students attend. This has been a difficult, often frustrating process that has not been completely resolved. I have A LOT to say about specifics related to this, but would rather engage in a conversation than try to capture it here. Part of the confusion comes back to the Agency of Education related to Independent School requirements and Special Education Excess Costs versus Special Education tuition. There is not consistency in the information being communicated and so independent schools feel like they can charge "tuition" for special education services, rather than paying for the excess costs connected to the costs for the special education services. The unreasonable charges for 504 services, that are equivalent to the charges for special education services is another significant issue that we are working hard to address...

7/11/2016 5:22 PM View respondent's answers

There is, I believe, a civil rights problem in my district because students with disabilities are not able to attend the same private schools that non-disabled students can in the choice grades in three of my towns. In addition, there is a huge equity problem because students from low SES families simply do not have the same opportunities to attend private schools or even out of the district public schools that other, wealthier families do. Keep in mind that there is substantial overlap between these two groups. Many students on IEP's are also from low SES households. Ironically, while our middle school has been under school improvement for many years because of low test scores, historically, the most talented students have been skimmed off because of the towns' choice arrangements so almost all of the special ed kids and low SES students from the choice towns end up at our middle school. I believe that some of the "elite" private schools that some of the wealthier families send their kids to under school choice do not accept all students that apply. I believe that the State Board should only allow public money to be used at independent schools that offer the full array of special ed students and that admit any child who applies under public school choice. There remains the problem that many low SES families do not have the means or the inclination to have their children attend these private schools. So long as Vermont continues to embrace choice, it is hard to see how

this part problem is going to be solved.

7/11/2016 10:32 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

I recommend that the AOE somehow distinguish between independent schools that have a quasi-public character (e.g. Thetford Academy) and those schools that are more purely independent and private. I suggest that the criteria for the distinction rest in operations like admissions, special education, and even lunch programs as well as their current or projected contract status with local districts.

7/7/2016 1:33 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

I am concerned that there are some programs within Vermont that schools are using for students eligible for special education. These programs are not approved or recognized by the Vermont Agency of Education, yet schools are being reimbursed for the tuition. One program in particular had questionable costs on the invoice submitted to my district (the student moved in from another district). This program was charging over \$100,000.00 for the student yet didn't have any type of curriculum or specialized instruction. It appeared to be "babysitting". I challenged this program on some of the charges on the invoice. We were also calling an IEP meeting to discuss change of placement. At this point, the parent moved to another district. I will not send any students to this program. They are charging astronomical fees, yet are not recognized or approved. I know other special education directors in my region had similar concerns. I would strongly recommend that the AOE not reimburse districts for programs that are not recognized or approved. Our students deserve high quality programs that meet strict guidelines for becoming approved independent schools.

7/7/2016 12:36 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Requirements put into place such that independent schools rates are itemized and consistent. Billing for the services in some schools seems to vary and school districts are paying different negotiated rates. Should there be a state-wide contract between the state and the independent schools rather than every school contracting separately with these schools?

7/7/2016 9:59 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

1. Districts/SUs need to be able to evaluate the effectiveness of independent school programs; we invest loads of money (in our District well over 5 million) into independent schools but have no way to provide input on what these schools do for students (special education is a major example).
2. I find the fact that there are independent school lobbyists problematic; they put the needs of independent schools first, not the needs of students. I don't know how that can be controlled/curbed.
3. Independent schools in our area accept all students (almost all), but they don't have to keep them, and can put them out for infractions that would not be considered reasons that public schools could exclude students.
4. In our District, drop out rates are not accurate because independent schools can say they are sending students elsewhere, but no one tracks what happens to kids. That may be something that we should be doing in District, but we may not be able to do it without some kind of data support.
5. There need to be clear guidelines on what responsibilities Districts/SUs have for high school students in cases where students are tuitioned into independent schools -- beyond the special education guidelines.

7/6/2016 8:21 PM View respondent's answers

It is important that when students attend private schools that case management responsibilities are clearly outlined. It is more beneficial to have on-campus staff completing necessary paperwork for special education than the LEA who is removed from the day to day interactions. The LEA needs to be present. A documented process for how LEA responsibilities will be completed and a common agreement across the state for services rendered when students are tuitioned or placed.

7/6/2016 4:48 PM View respondent's answers

A provision, readily accessible, to track public school students success at the high school. Specifically, disaggregated by sending town (and their previous middle school) how students do in high school. For example, all the children who attend Burke K-8 or Lyndon Town School K-8 -- how do they perform on their SATs, NECAPs, ACTs, graduation rates, ASVAB etc.

7/6/2016 1:29 PM View respondent's answers

I think that the SBE considerations are the right one. It appears that there's a focus on equity and accountability to the system and to the students.

7/6/2016 1:20 PM View respondent's answers

I would like the State Board of Education to consider the same requirements for teacher licensure in Independent Schools as they do in public schools, to look at data regarding academics and behavior as they do public schools, and to ensure students in Independent Schools are getting a quality education that leads to success in adulthood.

7/6/2016 1:12 PM View respondent's answers

Consider another model of evaluation besides NEASC.....what about Global Best Practices?

7/6/2016 10:54 AM View respondent's answers

Equitable access for students with all disabilities to all independent schools receiving public funds is essential as is the requirement for all state/federally required testing and public sharing of all student data. As we move to Proficiency Based Graduation Requirements, consideration should be given to comparability with independent schools planning to continue to use Carnegie units. Financial stability and competent administrative management is a crucial consideration for small schools specializing in serving students with disabilities. At one point 3 years ago a school serving 2 of our students was unable to reimburse an overpayment (due to their overcharging the district) in the year of service. The money due back to the district was eventually netted out the following year from tuition due for another student. The tradition of operating on a "shoe string" also creates challenges for the quality of the programming as well as the long term or even short term stability of the independent school. Deeper financial and program monitoring by the AOE is needed.

7/6/2016 10:48 AM View respondent's answers

Independents should have to play by all of the same rules as public schools: licensure, accepting and keeping all students regardless of ability or disability, not dismissing "problem" students.

7/6/2016 10:39 AM View respondent's answers

no

7/6/2016 10:06 AM View respondent's answers

If the state's independent schools are going to continue to receive public funds then they must abide by the Education Quality Standards, accept all students and provide a robust education for every student who receives public funding.

7/6/2016 9:35 AM View respondent's answers

All schools, receiving State education funds, independent or otherwise, need to follow the same rules and regulations.

7/6/2016 8:53 AM View respondent's answers

Independent schools should have guidelines/rules outlining specific triggers for Special Education evaluation. We have seen children who are not performing in independent schools who should have been evaluated and placed on an IEP to receive services. We have seen children who did not receive any type of intervention or remedial services who cannot read, and make great strides after working with our reading specialist. Independent schools who receive funds should have to report on student progress to the state as public schools are required to do.

7/6/2016 8:50 AM View respondent's answers

To continue to monitor their ability their ability to service special education students

7/5/2016 2:46 PM View respondent's answers

I would ask that they are capable of meeting the needs of students with disabilities and that they have strong general education as well as special education offerings. Often students who are sent to independent schools have less access to grade level content.

7/5/2016 1:41 PM View respondent's answers

Discipline policies/procedures for publicly funded students in independent schools should be the same as in public schools--- due process, limits on numbers of days of suspension, and so forth. Review the notion of an "independent center for technology education"-- esp for students generally enrolled in St Johnsbury. All students are not receiving a technical education or experience generally, however tuition is paid as if all students are. There is no system or process for accountability for academic outcomes for publicly funded students in independent schools. In addition to requiring independent schools to have a system for that, can there also be requirements that information regarding systemic and individual student outcomes be sent to the fiscally responsible district? In tuition paying districts, there is no reasonable way to measure or report on the efficacy of choice placements or fulfil a district's obligation to ensure the educational well-being of resident students. The system should probably align with VT's chosen accountability system (SBAC) if it is to be meaningful.

7/5/2016 11:55 AM View respondent's answers

Independent schools that receive tuition from public entities should be held to the same standards as the public schools, including but not limited to assessment systems and special education.

7/5/2016 10:36 AM View respondent's answers

No

7/5/2016 10:13 AM View respondent's answers

I would really like to see some kind of rules/recommendations for how SUs can

work more closely with independent schools when it comes to the delivery of services for special education students. I am responsible for the delivery of services at a local independent school in which a non-operating district has determined to be its home school. As the LEA, I make decisions on the delivery of services, but I have no real "input" into how those services are delivered. I know I can't choose who delivers the service in that the independent school hires the staff, but I have some real concerns about the ability of the personnel to carry out what services need to be delivered, yet I have no say in this. I think it compromises the service delivery to students to whom I am responsible.

7/5/2016 9:07 AM View respondent's answers

The majority of our students attend independent secondary schools, including students receiving special education. Independent schools accept most of our students with special needs, however, establishing a system of accountability for services IEPs are challenging. Our SU is responsible and held accountable for all students receiving FAPE according to special education law, however, independent schools enjoy a large degree of latitude for providing that FAPE. The AOE counsels us that we should work those issues out in the individual excess cost contracts with schools, however, that is unrealistic. Public schools are held to a higher standard for special ed compliance.

7/5/2016 9:06 AM View respondent's answers

Equity. The independent schools that I am familiar with (St J Academy, Lyndon Institute) retain the option to refuse admission to special education students, and they also maintain their right to dismiss (expel) ANY student at any time for any reason. This gives them the ability to "cherry pick" students and leave the responsibility for educating the most difficult students to another independent school that is willing to take them. The problem with this, in my opinion, is that the quality of the programs at the "lesser" independent schools is substandard in comparison to the programs at these two Institutes. St J Academy refuses any responsibility for assessment and case management of special education students who are placed there from one of the sending school choice towns. They do not allow any of their teachers or staff to sign or acknowledge any special education paperwork. In essence, their model of special education support is to provide "special classes" and often students are not being educated in mainstream classes. Teachers are not required to be licensed at independent schools. I can't be assured that my special education students are being taught by teachers who have an understanding of how to teach special needs students.

7/5/2016 8:16 AM View respondent's answers

My concern with independent schools is their ability to get AOE approved tuition rates that are excessive. These rates include far more costs (whole school) than what SUs determine excess cost when servicing sped students from other SUs.

7/5/2016 8:14 AM View respondent's answers

All schools are expected to have a continuum of services and a multi-tiered system of support for all students. There should also be a process that starts with the educational support team and moves through to a potential special education evaluation. This seems to be missing in some independent schools. They only are aware of part of the regulations. The level and quality of support and remediation for 504 and IEP students is severely lacking in some schools. Some

schools believe all of the expense of providing support for students is the responsibility of the home district. All schools need to understand the regulations and implement them uniformly. Cost needs to be clarified. Independent schools charge and "administrative fee" where public schools cannot include administration in their cost. There is definitely a double standard and a variety of contracts with independent schools. It is also very difficult to monitor progress and quality in special education services at independent schools. They are not required to do special education paperwork so the LEA does it and it can be very difficult to assess progress and monitor it. Independent schools need to be required to do the special education paperwork since that is a big part of the accountability in serving special education students.

7/5/2016 8:06 AM View respondent's answers

1. Review of staff licensing if needed and specific to special education. 2. Role of the independent school in working with the public schools on student assessment of state tests.

7/5/2016 7:58 AM View respondent's answers

Nothing new . . . only that independent schools should play by the same rules that the rest of us play under . . . or they should not receive state and federal funding.

7/4/2016 9:42 AM View respondent's answers

It is simply not a level playing field and it should be.

7/4/2016 9:31 AM View respondent's answers

Often the educational and behavior intervention used at private schools are not best practice. The independent schools are not held accountable to provide current best practice and often provide sub standard curriculum. It is a tough decision to send a child to an independent school as a result, yet some students need a different learning environment. Rules that require best practice for behavior, at minimum, PBiS practices, best practices are Applies Behavior Analysis (ABA) standards. As for curriculum, requiring a licensed teachers with the ability to teach specialized instruction with current research based curriculum. The long term outcome for students we send to independent schools is drop out and/or minimal skills for a successful adult life.

7/3/2016 9:39 AM View respondent's answers

There is a need for increased placement availability with a wider range of academic and therapeutic options in Franklin County. This may mean a flexibility with some of the rules. There is a need for increased options at tech centers for students who need "hand's on learning and apprenticeship programs that will also provide adapted academic content. Tech Centers are often very choosy about academic levels in accepting students. We have had several parents (who are successful electricians) tell us they would never have been accepted into tech centers today. This decreases options for kids who have different learning styles. This may mean increased flexibility with the rules. Residency is becoming very difficult to determine; there are many factors for this. For example, Increasing homelessness; kids moving in and out of custody; school districts creating MOU's with the school of origin and not including the school where the student is now attending; and state placed notifications can be very slow in getting to us. Students may be staying with family members, parents may divorce, keep a PO Box and both live in separate towns. It is unlikely having

districts hire " a residency officer" will be well received. It is likely to be thought of as one more mandate that will increase costs.

7/2/2016 3:40 PM View respondent's answers

If independent schools are receiving public dollars, then they need to be held accountable in all areas that are required of public schools. The SBE's requests are very appropriate in addressing the requirements that independent schools should follow.

7/2/2016 10:08 AM View respondent's answers

If independent schools are taking public money they should be made to have to conform to all rules and regulations that public school must conform to. They are currently only taking the kids that they want to take. This is not fair to the public because it is a misuse of public money for "all kids."

7/2/2016 5:26 AM View respondent's answers

I do not think we should allow public school dollars to go to any independent school that doesn't accept all students. I also don't think we should be sending tuition dollars outside of the country.

7/1/2016 6:53 PM View respondent's answers

Equal access Financial Accountability Quality standards review Educational accountability- same assessments and reporting as required of public schools Some private schools which special on providing services for special education students have questionable quality, limited oversight and insufficient outcomes, again more should be required by state authorities. Concerning moving a privately funded school to independent status, this should not be permitted due to the fact that these schools were built and supported by taxpayers and the resulting independent schools are discriminatory in their practices I.e. North Bennington.

7/1/2016 4:42 PM View respondent's answers

I'm not supportive of lessening the restrictions on the establishment of independent schools.

7/1/2016 3:55 PM View respondent's answers