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Connected Circles, LLC Response (Returned to AOE 2/10/2023) to Independent School Review Report (Received 2/8/2023)

Thank you so much for the commendations of all of the things that we are doing right! We are here to serve students in the best way possible and to ensure that they receive the highest quality program. We are committed to providing, *“A community where all are seen, nurtured, and encouraged to embrace life-long learning.”*

**Synoptic Table of AOE Identified Deficiencies & Corresponding Response
 (Supporting evidence will be provided in detail below)**

AOE Identified Deficient Rule	CC Response
2225.5 Minimum Course of Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We disagree
2226.8.1 Professional Staff Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We disagree ● Evidence was and is (during site visit) available demonstrating this
2226.5 Methods of Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We disagree ● Evidence was and is (during site visit) available demonstrating this ● We request an opportunity to provide further evidence of this (as it was denied during the site visit)
2226.6(3) Certificate of Occupancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Was re-submitted on 1/31/23

****Before getting into our detailed response to the AOE’s findings, we would like to share how this approval process was made further difficult by the confusing references within the recommendation to specific sections of the Series 2200 Independent School Program Approval portion within the Vermont State Board of Education Manual of Rules and Practices. In attempting to locate references, we became confused by which version of documentation to utilize.**

Searches originated from both the Vermont State Legislature home page drill-down (Vermont Laws/Rules/State Agency Rules at Lexis/Nexis) and the State of Vermont Agency of Education drill-down (State Board Rules/State Board Rules and Practices), brought us to a Lexis Nexis

result reflecting the statement: "Below are State Board Rules as downloaded from the official versions posted by the Secretary of State on Lexis-Nexis." Document #[CVR 22-000-004](#), VT's Statutes Court Rules and Administrative Code, also has a disclaimer at the top stating "This document is current through Dec 14, 2022." For our purposes in searching for 2225.5, we found there is no listed section for 2225.5; rather, it reads "**Section 2225 Tuition from Public Funds, 2225.1 Tuition for Independent Schools in Vermont. (a & b), 2225.2 Tuition for Out of State Schools, and Section 2226 Application for Approved Independent Schools and Approved Independent Schools Ineligible to Receive Public Funds.**" Similarly, for 2228.1 (1) and 2228.1 (2) there is only **Section 2228 Length of Approval**. The history portion of the document reflects an effective date and the subsequent amendment dates through June 10, 2022.

However, the Vermont State Board of Education Manual of Rules and Practices, Series 2200 - Independent School Program Approval document, found on the Agency of Education website drill down (<https://education.vermont.gov/files/documents>) currently reflects **Section 2225 Application 2225.1 through 2225.11** in sequence, as well as **Section 2228 Special Education Approval of Independent Schools 2228.1 through 2228.9** in sequence. The history portion of the document reflects an effective date and the subsequent amendment dates through June 10, 2010.

It could be understood that these discrepancies might cause us and other schools within the approval process to be concerned that the Rules the Agency team is citing are obsolete and therefore not considered deficient.

Responses by Report Section/Identified Deficiencies

School Enrollment

16 V.S.A. §166(b)(4), State Board of Education Rule 2225.3

AOE Identified Discrepancy: "It is important to note that Connected Circles' owner contracted in FY23, with several Local Education Agents (LEAs), to serve students in the business. Enrolling LEAs are from both Chittenden and Washington counties, and enrollments were completed contrary to Secretary French's memo of August 23, 2022. The memo was to serve as a reminder of waiver requirements and to correct past non-compliant enrollment practices. The Agency's director of student support services division is working with involved LEAs and Connected Circles to bring student enrollments into compliance with statutory and State Board Rule requirements (State Board of Education Rule Related to Special Education Placement Waivers and Contracted Services)."

CC Response:

Connected Circles entered into contracts with several LEA's as a contracted service provider on July 1, 2022 as precedent had been set as past practice to do so. At the end of the 2021-2022 school year many students whom those contracts were entered into were displaced from their programs and in danger of falling through the cracks created by increased mental health needs and too few programs. When presented with the opportunity through the creation of Connected

Circles to provide some form of stability and consistency of services for these students who they had built trusting relationships with, our staff were committed to joining CC. The IEP teams and sending schools were fully on board with this less-traumatic transition. When the August 23rd memo was released to Special Education Directors, Connected Circles met with each of the LEA's (and each IEP team) to ensure that there was alignment with the Memo. Several program modifications were made to meet the requirements of the Memo which included instruction from the AOE to provide services in a students' community versus on-site at Connected Circles. While Connected Circles staff found these modifications (which students described as "isolationist" and "stressful" and question "what did I do wrong?") to not be in the best interest of students, they pivoted again, in a way that is admirable and continues to provide the most emotional support to these underserved students.

Delivery of Minimum Course of Study

AOE Identified Discrepancy: "The review team found that staff members could not identify or articulate either the school's stated philosophy or program objectives. In these interviews, instructional staff had some difficulty describing methods of instruction the future school would employ to develop and implement the curriculum."

CC Response: At the beginning of this school year, fall of 2022, Connected Circles staff spent several days engaging in foundational work around establishing our *why*. Using the work and process outlined by Simon Sinek, the following mission statement was crafted: "Connected Circles: A community where all are seen, nurtured and encouraged to embrace life long learning." The process which staff engaged in can be found in our Why Statement (Appendix 1). Given the timeframe of our *why* work (end of August 2022), the AOE site visit (October 2022), and the length of time Connected Circles has been in operation, it is reasonable that staff would describe the school philosophy in more broad terms rather than verbatim.

AOE Identified Discrepancy: "Additionally the interviews demonstrated that instructional staff could not describe or explain methods for developing Proficiency Based Learning opportunities or how to differentiate instruction based upon each Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Interviewed staff could not describe how they will determine appropriate assessment methods to the meet the needs of students by age, grade and ability level as defined in 16 V.S.A § 906 and Rule 2226.5"

CC Response:

While it may have appeared to the interviewer that instructional staff could not describe and/or explain methods of developing learning opportunities and/or how to differentiate instruction, we would disagree. Connected Circles provides 1:1 instruction based on the unique needs of each student. Our overall structure and methodology as a program is differentiated for each and every student. The instructors are required to use a lesson plan template (Appendix 2) in their planning. These tools, along with instructor-created proficiency scales and work samples were offered for review but the Agency's reviewer declined to view any of the documents provided. These would have provided direct evidence of the ways proficiency based learning is cultivated in our classrooms, and how instruction is differentiated between students based on their IEPs.

What follows is an illustration of how our Math instructor meets the needs of individual students:

Student 1: 17 year old male that struggles with depression and has a documented learning disability. Despite his depression, he is motivated to engage in traditional academics while he is at school, so he does not typically share his feelings unless there is something specific that is weighing heavily upon him or preoccupying his mind. After greeting him and asking “how are you today?” and “would you like to check-in about anything?”, it is time to get straight to the lesson plan. He benefits from a warm-up phase to begin his lesson, and has stated that he is “not good at 6’s and 7’s” (meaning he feels he struggles with single-digit multiplication and division problems that include either a 6 or a 7), so his warm-up phase begins with the accommodation of utilizing a set of flashcards that I made. We then go through four sets of flashcards together, one multiplication set and one division set for both the number 6 and the number 7, which helps to alleviate his anxiety relating to those numbers, and gets him ready for the factoring work he will have to do in order to convert fractions with unlike denominators to fractions with like denominators.

Student 1 benefits from both visual and verbal aids, as well as modeling, during the instruction phase of his lesson. He tends to struggle with conceptual material, so I will begin by creating a diagram that illustrates the quantitative reason why fractions with unlike-denominators cannot simply be added or subtracted the way fractions with like-denominators may. Student 1’s IEP states that he benefits from “chunking”, so I accommodate his individual learning preferences by grouping the lesson’s instruction into three clear concise blocks: factoring, greatest common factor, and equivalent fractions. I model how to factor five numbers (2, 7, 14, 16, and 32) by verbally describing the process while writing out the steps using numbers and symbols, as well as labeling elements of the problems that illustrate/involve key vocabulary words that have been identified in the lesson plan. I then define, identify, and label the greatest common factor for the number sets 7,14 and 16,32. Finally I model, on paper or whiteboard, three examples of how to consider two unlike denominators, find the greatest common factor, and use the GCF to convert the fractions so they have like denominators. These examples serve as visual aid accommodations and help student 1 greatly when he is practicing the skills necessary to adding/subtracting unlike fractions.

After the instruction phase of the lesson, Student 1 practices factoring a set of ten numbers, and adding and subtracting ten sets of fractions that have unlike denominators. During the practice phase of the lesson I offer Student 1 the accommodation of frequent check-ins. Student 1’s IEP indicates that he is capable of greater progress when he works closely with an instructor, is afforded extra time, and tasks are broken up into smaller steps. Thus Student 1’s class looks relatively unique in that his instruction and practice phases will take significantly longer than

other students because each problem will be broken down into its rudimentary steps and he will be offered an instructor check-in on each practice exercise.

Finally, he will be offered a formative assessment to gauge his ability to factor numbers, convert fractions to equivalents, and ultimately adding/subtracting fractions with unlike denominators. Student 1 is asked to complete a set of twenty problems, and just as the instruction and practice phase of his lesson may take more than one class period, the accommodation of extra time is very important so he may take more than one class period to complete the assessment. Although Student 1 works on the assessment problems without direct instructor assistance, I make sure to watch closely to identify any steps, or sub-steps, to the solution which he has practiced but is struggling to remember or perform accurately without direct assistance. Therefore, if Student 1 is not confident in his abilities it will be easier to review his work and focus on those steps that are the point of his struggles.

Student 2: 14 year old male that has been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and ADHD. He completes math work at an 8th grade level. He presents a great deal of oppositional behavior, when I attempt to provide a traditional learning environment (greeting, skill warm-up, lecture/instruction, practice, formative assessment) and has stated that he perceives traditional instruction as an insult to his intelligence. He demands to be allowed to work independently when presented with a lecture or instruction and will physically destroy prepared materials if he feels he is not dictating the structure of class. In order to provide him with the greatest potential to access his educational program I modify my generalized lesson plan. By creating a structural allowance rather than only providing a rigid class structure, he is more likely to succeed.

To optimize his educational program I give him a series of exercises and allow him to work independently, as check-ins tend to make him agitated and verbally aggressive. He prefers to work independently until he has completed the practice segment of his lesson. I then adapt the class structure so that the review phase of the work he has completed becomes the instruction phase. By reviewing his work and identifying problems, material, or elements of material that causes him to struggle I can integrate instruction into the lesson that will not disrupt the flow of his program as he perceives the instruction phase to simply be review of his work. With a heavy dose of praise and validation, I provide step by step examples of methods for solving the types of problems he answered incorrectly during his independent practice. By providing verbal instruction that accompanies the visual aid of writing out the solutions, Student 2 is able to accept instruction and make progress in his math studies. Furthermore, while "reviewing" the material that caused him to struggle, I incorporate instruction on "next step problems" i.e. problems that are more complex and build upon the skills developed in the current lesson. In this way, he is afforded the allowances of a quiet distraction-free environment, modified class structure so that he will accept instruction, and

assessment but feels that he has enough control over his learning that he will engage rather than dysregulate.

After completing the instruction/review phase of his lesson, I provide him with a formal summative assessment consisting of 20 questions that gauge his understanding of factors, equivalent fractions, and ultimately adding and subtracting fractions. The results of this assessment drive the planning and instruction for the next lesson.

Student 3: 17 male that qualifies for special education due to an Emotional Disability and his math skill level is around an 8th grade level. In his IEP, it has been identified that he needs help with math problem solving and behavioral management so his math classes may necessitate significant accommodations, however implementation of such accommodations are often case/situationally dependent. Some days Student 3 is able to engage in a traditional lesson plan (greeting, warm-up, instruction, practice, assessment) and other days he is too dysregulated to engage in class or complete any work independently and benefits from lesson modification based on a few key accommodations.

When Student 3 is dysregulated his behavior often presents as extremely loud and chaotic, so I extend the greeting phase of his class by spending extra time asking him what he has been working on at home/outside of school. He loves to work on cars, trucks, and heavy machinery as well as using heavy machinery for construction and recreating on vehicles like dirt bikes so the accommodation of extending the greeting phase of class serves two purposes: it tends to calm and focus him and it identifies subjects that been incorporated into his lesson to keep him focused and engaged. He is much more likely to engage in math class when his behavior is dysregulated if the lesson is based around one of his interests rather than typical math theory or real-world examples that don't apply to his interests.

On days when he is regulated he is able to excel in straight forward math classes, but on days that his behaviors are escalated he will need to be closely involved in determining to what real-world scenarios the lesson will be tailored. This accommodation is accomplished by asking Student 3 questions designed to engage him in conversation regarding one of his interests. Once he is talking, the instruction phase of his class becomes a dialogue between student and instructor that is recorded via numbers and words on paper or whiteboard. On the whiteboard, the skills designated in this lesson, factoring, finding equivalent fractions, and adding/subtracting fractions with unlike denominators will be applied to engine mechanics or 4-wheeler race times, for example.

In addition to modifying the structure of his lesson, he benefits from the accommodation of technology (i.e. calculators) and visual aids (most often the

product of our dialogue recorded on paper or on a whiteboard). Tailoring the lesson to his interests usually has a calming effect on him and technological and visual aid allowances encourage him to stay engaged as his lesson progresses. He is asked to practice the elements of the lesson by repeating the skills presented during the dialogue phase of the class, once again by applying them to his real-world interests. Once he has completed two repetitions of the necessary skill sets, as applied to his interests, he will be asked to practice ten problems that involve adding and subtracting fractions with unlike denominators in a more traditional format like a worksheet. Check-ins are very helpful for him while he is practicing his math skills, and although he doesn't need a check-in on each step or sub-step of a problem, he benefits from a check-in for validation or for review at the conclusion of each individual problem. Student 3 makes more progress when he works on more traditional formats of practice like worksheets, however, when he is dysregulated he won't be able to focus on any skill building activities without the conversation focused on his interests and applying those interests to the relevant math skills.

As the conversational element of his class is time consuming, he may be afforded extra time (essentially slowing down the pace of his lessons) in order to achieve the goals identified in the lesson/unit plans. Thus it may take more than one class period to get through the instructional and practice phases of his lesson before he is able to progress onto any assessments meant to gauge his ability/skill level. Once he feels confident in his abilities he is given a formal assessment: a series of twenty questions designed to showcase his abilities with regard to factoring numbers, converting fractions to equivalent fractions based on Greatest Common Factor, and ultimately adding and subtracting fractions with unlike denominators.

Our instructors are all experts within the content areas; however, they do not have the formal training in teaching methodology or the educational jargon, referred to as "Ed Speak" by Agency staff. This is the reason we initiated and contracted with Kids At the Heart and Center Educational Consulting, LLC on July 1, 2022 for regular and consistent consultation. The voluntary commitment among staff at Connected Circles to partner with a consultant for the purpose of ensuring rigorous and obtainable academic services are provided to the students we serve clearly shows it is a priority. Please see the attached Memo (Appendix 3) from the consultant that outlines the focus of the time spent with our instructors.

It is important to note that our educators were prepared to be observed instructing students and then interviewed by a site review team of three persons, as evidenced by the email quoted below from Agency staff, dated September 28, 2022:

"We generally arrive at a school about 9:30. After a brief "tour" of the facility, we will observe classes that are in session for approximately 20 minutes. Deb and I will observe separately, and we will want to interview the staff we observe sometime during the day. We will also want to review the records you have for the prospective school—how fire drill will be conducted, VCIC agreement, evidence that those involved with the children/youth have

been checked against the child/adult abuse registry, staff files, etc.

Tracy Harris will accompany us as the AOE's special education consultant. She will want to see the records you have on hand for the students you served this summer and those you are serving now. She will also want to speak to you as the special educator, the Clinical Coordinator, and one of the Connectors.

At the end of the visit, an exit interview will be conducted. If you have additional questions, please let me know."

In response, on October 27, 2022 Connected Circles provided a proposed schedule for the site visit. Although confirmation that the proposed schedule would meet the needs of the site review team was requested, a reply was not provided.

When two Agency reviewers arrived on the morning of October 31st and were given those schedules for observation of educators, it was stated that the information previously provided to Connected Circles by Agency staff was for school re-approval site visits, not initial visits. Connected Circles staff quickly shifted to meet the needs of the site review team while attempting to provide a supportive environment for our instructional staff, we requested that a team interview be conducted and this was denied. Not only were instructors caught off guard by this sudden change, they described the experience as a negative one where a reviewer was "intimidating and forceful," and "clearly was looking for a very specific answer, if she didn't get it she would repeat the same question", and came away with the impression that it "felt like she was trying to make us fail."

It should also be noted that during the exit interview, two findings were noted:

- 1) ADA bathroom
- 2) lack of a Social Studies teacher on staff or a qualified Humanities instructor.

At 3:45 on October 31, 2022, an email (Appendix 4) was received from the site reviewer summarizing the findings and asking to schedule a follow up conversation with the owner for the next day. The email indicates, "Please don't fret, nothing big I just need to discuss how to address the findings in the SBE report." A subsequent conversation between the owner and site visit reviewer the following day revealed concerns specifically related to the lack of "Ed Speak" from the instructors during their interviews. *Why wasn't this shared during the exit interview, in the presence of the other AOE representative? The email indicates that it was not a big deal, yet it presents as a finding in the report.*

This particular finding appears to be a subjective interpretation by one person. Site reviews for general education approvals are historically conducted by two people; on this day, it was completed by one.

We request that the State Board consider one or all of the following:

- 1) Consider the opinion of the consultant we work with.
- 2) Send an additional member of the Independent School Review team from the AOE to our campus to interview our instructors and view the lesson planning documents that were denied by the first site reviewer.
- 3) Approve our application based on the information we have provided here.

Professional Staff

AOE Identified Discrepancy: “Currently Connected Circles does not have a Social Studies/history instructor on staff and does not have any current staff members with background qualifications to provide social studies content area instruction...Therefore, at this time, Connected Circles does not meet the State Board of Education’s requirement for ...Minimum Course of Study under 16 V.S.A § 906”

CC Response:

Section 2227.5.1 of the Rules document dated 12/2022 states, “For teachers, a minimum of a bachelor’s degree in their field of instruction **or substantially equivalent time in training and experience in their field of instruction.**” Therefore, it is the belief of Connected Circles that we are not in violation of this finding at all as our instructors have that equivalent time in training and experience in their field of instruction.

However, it is correct that we currently do not have a Social Studies teacher on staff. From onset of operations, we have advertised (and will continue to do so) in the following ways: Regular postings on local Front Porch Forum sites, Indeed, LinkedIn, various social media sites, Vermont Job Link, the Connected Circles website, hardcopy posters distributed at local colleges and businesses, word of mouth, and more. Given the uncertainty of where we stand within the approval process, it has been incredibly difficult to hire anyone. An example of this occurred when we interviewed and offered the Social Studies position to a candidate that has taught in independent schools in the past. After being up-front with him regarding our status within the independent school application process he declined the position citing his need for ensured stability over possible uncertainty. We are committed to continuing our search for a Social Studies instructor and strongly believe that when we are approved we will be able to recruit additional staff.

16 V.S.A §906 indicates “learning experiences shall be provided for students in the minimum course of study.....”for purposes of this title, minimum course of study means learning experiences adapted to a students age and ability level.” 16 V.S.A §906 does not state that this role must be on staff. We have been creative in finding ways to ensure that students are provided with opportunities to engage with Social Studies, such as through Community College of Vermont (CCV) and the Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative (VTVLC).

In addition, we proposed the following to Agency staff to meet this need in the interim:

(1) Consultation from a licensed Social Studies teacher who would provide proficiency based social studies content with instructions ranging from Modern World History, US History, Civics, and an elective social studies of the student's choice (medieval, music history, etc.), all assessments for the related content, grading and feedback on all completed tasks and assessments, an email contact for clarifying questions and comments, and three hours a day, five days per week for a total of 15 hours per week.

(2) The possibility of applying for provisional licenses. Within the public school system, if a school is not able to hire a licensed teacher in a content area, provisionals are allowed to be applied for and are in effect while a teacher is working toward full licensure.

Response from Agency staff has been that these things are not options for independent schools and that this role must be on staff.

AOE Identified Discrepancy: "Currently Connected Circles does not have a Social Studies/history instructor on staff and does not have any current staff members with background qualifications to provide social studies content area instruction...Therefore, at this time, Connected Circles does not meet the State Board of Education's requirement for State Board Rules 2226.8 and 2226.8.1"

CC Response: State Board Rule 2226.8.1 pertains to Statements Regarding Professional Staff including: Professional Staff qualifications.

- (1) A job description for each position or a statement describing training, experience, and degree(s) required for each position.
- (2) A resume, vita, or description of appropriate qualifications for each current staff member.
- (3) Current assignment of each professional staff member

Connected Circles is fully in alignment with this Rule for all current staff. This documentation was available for review in the employees personnel files and offered to the review committee.

Facilities

State Board of Education Rule 2225.6

AOE Identified Discrepancy: "At the time of review, Connected Circles' facility did not meet Vermont's Public Accommodations Act requirements, in particular for the school's bathroom facilities. At the time of the site review, it was unclear if the school's main entrance and entrances for each class space, common spaces and lunch room areas are accessible."

CC Response: On August 18, 2022, we were in receipt of a Certificate of Occupancy from the State Fire Marshall that indicated our facility met the requirements of being a school. During the AOE site review, it was stated that an ADA bathroom is a requirement of the State Board of Education. To prevent further delay of our application's progress we immediately converted an office into an ADA bathroom. On January 31, 2023 an updated certificate of occupancy was issued by the State Fire Marshall and submitted to AOE staff.

Special Education Report

AOE Identified Discrepancy: "2228.1 (1) The facility needs modification to make it fully accessible."

CC Response: Please refer to the Point-in-Time Site Review Addendum that states the AOE's, "Independent School team can confirm that the owner of Connected Circles has met the State Board of Education facilities requirements under SBE Rule 2225.6."

Connected Circles, LLC Response to the AOE Recommendation

AOE Recommendation: "The Agency's review team does not recommend initial approval to the Secretary of Education, at this time for Connected Circles due to identified deficiencies in the schools program. Program deficiencies have been confirmed in the following areas: Minimum Course of Study 2225.5, Title 16 V.S.A §906, professional staff requirements 2226.8.1, Connected Circles' staff inability to articulate appropriate methods of instruction and evaluation on how to meet the needs of students by age, grade, and ability level as defined by 16 V.S.A §906 Rule 2226.5 and pending submission of Certificate of Occupancy to completion of renovations to the first floor of the facility 2226.6(3)."

CC Response:

We would like to reiterate our opening statement regarding the confusion surrounding which version of the Rules were being referenced by the Agency's Team for citing which Rules we were not in compliance with. Depending on which document is considered "official", it is conceivable that some of the Rules cited by Agency Site Review staff are not applicable.

We believe that ***we do meet the minimum course of study*** firstly given that 2227.5.1 of the 2022 document allows for instructors to have equivalent time in training and experience in their field of instruction rather than a degree or licensure. All of our instructors have both degrees and experience in the field in which they are instructing. Secondly, our efforts and ability to find creative opportunities to bring Social Studies to the students we serve and our continued exploration and active pursuit of an on-staff Social Studies instructor. The minimum course of study requirement does not state this need must be met by employees.

In the midst of a mental health crisis in our nation and state, it feels unethical to continue to hold up our ability to serve students on our campus and in our program due to staffing shortages and a bureaucratic process that is pushing some of the states most vulnerable students aside.

In regards to 2226.8.1, we disagree that our staff has an inability to implement appropriate methods of instruction and evaluation. We would like to reiterate our belief that this finding appears to be a subjective interpretation by one person. Site reviews for general education approvals usually are conducted by two people; on this day, it was completed by one, and the documents that were offered to the review team to demonstrate how this is done were declined.

We would like to propose and/or offer for the consultant that we have been working with an opportunity to provide information about the work that they have been doing with our instructors, ask for the 2nd general education person to come to campus and interview our teachers, and/or approve our request for independent school approval based on the evidence we have provided.

At the same time, we must highlight the urgency around this matter. We continue to have students that are not receiving an education in a supporting learning environment in which they had been previously thriving.

In summary, the AOE's recommendations indicates that we are deficient in the following:

AOE Identified Deficient Rule	CC Response
2225.5 Minimum Course of Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We disagree (see evidence above)
2226.8.1 Professional Staff Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We disagree ● Evidence is and was available demonstrating this
2226.5 Methods of Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We disagree ● Evidence is and was available demonstrating this ● We would like to be able to provide further evidence of this.
2226.6(3) Certificate of Occupancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Was submitted on 1/31/23

If there is any way for Connected Circles to be on the upcoming State Board Agenda on February 15th, we would be forever grateful. This would allow us to begin transitioning students back to our campus immediately following the upcoming February break. This would be a student centered decision by allowing a logical transition for our students. We recognize that this would also indicate the need for a special meeting of the subcommittee to review all of this information. The staff at Connected Circles is prepared and committed to being present at the upcoming meetings to answer any/all questions that members of the board may have.

APPENDIX

Connected Circles Opening Inservice

August 22, 23, & 24, 2022

8:30-3:30

Appendix 1

August 22nd

8:30-9:00

Introductions

Getting to know each other/team building activity

9:00-12:00 Find Your Why

Set the context (45 min)

Acknowledge that we will be spending time on this today, there will always be other distracting and more important work to be doing, today, this is our priority

Kelly share a why story:

Illuminate what's possible when a group of people are united in service to a higher power
Ask for all to be present and engage in the process, there may be times when we might become uncomfortable or feel vulnerable, I ask that we stay with the process and work through it

In Pairs - Prompt (each person gets 2-3 minutes of time to share)

Think back to the time when you entered into this line of work, what inspired you to do so? What inspires you to keep coming back?

Invite one or two to share

Golden Circle:

WHATS: services and job functions we perform

HOWS: values, guiding principles and actions that make us stand out

WHY: defines what we stand for— it is the collective purpose, cause or belief

THINK, ACT & COMMUNICATE from the inside out

People don't buy WHAT we do, they buy WHY we do it

Take a 15 min break

- The Why Discovery Process (2 hours)

Divide into 3 groups (approx same size)
3 chart papers, stand around the chart paper

Conversation 1 (20 minutes)

Tell Specific stories of why you have been most proud to do this work.

- Write a sentence or phrase that will help team members recall stories later
- Use SPECIFIC people or moments- the more specific the better
- Outcome can be big or small, affect all or just one- importance is to highlight the emotional response in the person telling it
- At least three stories per group

Reporting Out (25 min)

- Each group shares the stories that resonated with the others

Conversation 2 (10 minutes)

- In each of your stories, what was the specific contribution the organization made in the lives of others?
- Capture the verbs or action phrases that capture the essence of the contributions implied or expressed in the stories

Verbs are important because our ultimate aim is to discover a WHY that is actionable, describing what we HAVE done

The action phrase must be linked to one or more of the stories

EXAMPLE : "In this story, we showed up and _____"

Each team come up with at least 10 verbs/action phrases

Reporting Out (10 min)

Each team reports out their verbs– every one of them (even if repetitive)
Captured on the chart in front – ALL words written on one chart paper

Conversation 3: What's your impact? (15 min)

What did the contributions of your work allow others to go on to do or be?

Reporting Out (20 min)

Write down the impact of the action; the difference it made in the lives of others

12:00-1:00 Lunch & fun (team building)

- Cornhole, golf, etc- outside

1:00-3:30

Draft a Why Statement (45 min)

- Basic Structure of a why statement To _____ so that _____.
To- the contribution that we make
So that- the impact or effect that contribution has on others

Conversation 1 and 2 correspond to the contribution element

Conversation 3 corresponds to the impact statement

Describing the world that we would like to live in and articulating the action we need to take to make it happen

Candidate Why Statement (25 min)

2 groups - draft a why statement

Reporting Out (5-10 min)

Each team reports out – state the WHY and link to two of the stories shared earlier

Wrapping Up (10-15 minutes)

What are some ways that we might be able to bring this to life? What are actionable things/steps that we can take to bring this to life?

Lesson Planning Document

Performance Indicator/Learning Target:

By the end of this lesson learners will be able to? (define, identify, explain, model, etc)

Key prerequisite skills and relevant vocabulary:

Materials, resources, tools:

Transferable Skill(s):

Warm-Up: Include prerequisite skill practice

Presentation & Instruction:

Practice: Guided and/or Independent

Formative Assessment - Gauge Learning Progress:

Closure to Lesson:

Teacher Notes/Reflection:

Teacher Checklist: "SMART" criteria

S = is the performance indicator/learning target **specific**?

M = is the performance indicator/learning target **measurable**?

A = is the performance indicator/learning target **attainable**?

R = is the performance indicator/learning target **relevant**?

T = is the performance indicator/learning target **time bound**?

Unit Planning Document

What - Essential Learning

Priority Standard(s):

Proficiency Scale- (Link)

Summative Assessment: Evidence/Performance Task

Why - Essential Questions/Hooks

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How - Performance Indicators/Learning Targets

Learners need to know? Content, Skills, Relevant Vocabulary	Learners need to do? Application that demonstrates understanding
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Resources - Representative of equity, diversity, gender, race

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Document designed by - Kids at the Heart and Center, P. Arnold 2021 (Based on Understanding By Design, Wiggins and McTighe & Professional Learning Communities At Work, DuFour)

May 27, 2021

Proficiency Scale Template: Draft

Priority Standard(s):

Criteria	Performance Indicators	Feedback	Next Steps
Expanding (4):			
Proficient (3):			
Developing (2):			
Beginning (1):			
No Evidence (0):			

4 = Collection of evidence with this proficiency shows the student has exceeded the expectation for this proficiency.

3 = Collection of evidence with this proficiency shows that the student has developed a deep level of competency that meets the expectation for proficiency.

2 = Collection of evidence with this proficiency shows that the student is making progress toward meeting the proficiency. They may need more time with key vocabulary, skills, and concepts to refine and/or develop a deeper level of competency.

1 = Collection of evidence with this proficiency shows the student is at the starting point for meeting this proficiency. This may mean the student needs more time and practice understanding vocabulary, skills, and key concepts.

0 = Student refusal to engage in learning results in no collection of evidence.

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What: Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment Work 2022-2023

Who: Connected Circles Teachers

The Connected Circles teachers are utilizing three templates when planning units and lessons. The templates are Unit Plan, Proficiency Scale, and Lesson Plan.

The Unit Plan template is the big picture component which guides them through the process of identifying the specific Connected Circle proficiencies for the unit. They then link the Proficiency Scale, brainstorm possible end of unit performance tasks, list what students need to know (the essential content, skills, and vocabulary) and identify what students must be able to do. The Unit Plan also has them thinking about equity practices specifically around removing potential barriers, incorporating accommodations or modification unique to each student, and finding resources that represent diversity and are of interest to each individual student.

The Proficiency Scale is developed during the Unit Plan process where the proficiency criterion for the learning standard is clearly defined. The teachers then expand the scale to include criteria language for beginning, developing, and expanding levels of understanding. Some teachers, when they feel it to be helpful based on their knowledge of each student, are reviewing the Proficiency Scale with the student at the beginning of the unit so they understand what is expected for them to know and be able to do.

The Lesson Plan template guides them through the detailed process of designing the instructional time with students. The level of detail in the lesson plan is much more granular. Teachers are identifying the performance Indicator/learning targets for the lesson. What the expectation for understanding is by the end of the lesson such as learners will be able to define, identify, explain, model, etc. They are focusing on any needed key prerequisite skills and relevant vocabulary. They are thinking about the resources and materials that support access by eliminating potential barriers and supporting each students unique learning profile and specific accommodations. The Lesson Plan then guides the teacher through the process of structuring the 45-minute class time. It is important to highlight that the teachers are adapting their unit and lesson plans to meet each student where they are at. The destination (proficiency standard and learning targets) is the goal for all students. The roadmap and journey to the destination is unique and different for each student.

We are also engaging this year in dialogue and discussion around equity, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and project-based learning.

Hello Kelly,

Thank you for providing the AOE with a warm welcome today. I wanted to touch base on a couple of approval requirements, after checking in with Pat Pallas-Gray.

Pat confirmed that:

1. ADA bathroom issue is a big area of concern for the State Board, please make sure to contact a contractor or the landlord right away.
2. Connected Circles must have a social studies teacher on staff or a qualified humanities instructor in order to both meet Minimum Course of Study and professional staff requirements for approval.

I apologize for forgetting to mention in the exit interview some additional areas of concern regarding Minimum Course of Study requirements and wondered if you would be available tomorrow afternoon to chat via Teams.

I meant to discuss them with you during the exit interview this afternoon. I was trying to cover all topics while filling in for Pat's absence due to illness. Please don't fret, nothing big I just need to discuss how to address findings in the SBE report.

I am available 10:00- 12:00. Let me know what works for you and I will send a Teams meeting invitation!

Regards,



J. Deborah Ormsbee

Independent School Program Manager

Agency of Education

National Life Drive, Davis 5

Montpelier, VT 05602

Addendum for Independent School Applications - 2022

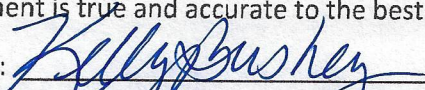
The State Board of Education's (SBE) [Rule Series 2200, Independent School Program Approval](#), changes were recently finalized through the rulemaking process. While the bulk of amendments to Rule Series 2200 take effect concurrent with Act 173 on July 1, 2023, four sections of the rules take effect immediately on adoption, which is May 10, 2022. Those rule sections taking immediate effect are: Rule 2223 (Procedure), Rule 2224 (Reciprocity), Rule 2226 (Application) and Rule 2227 (Approval).

Each entity seeking initial approval or renewal of approval is required to affirm compliance with Rule Series 2200 provisions that were not in effect at the time of application. This addendum document contains the four (4) additional assurances and must be signed by the Head of School. Upon submission to the AOE, your signed addendum will be attached to your application.

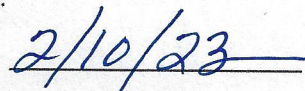
1. The school complies with the Vermont Public Accommodations Act (Title 9 Vermont Statutes Annotated, Chapter 141) in all aspects of the school's admissions and operations.
2. The school's facilities meet all applicable State and federal requirements.
3. The school complies with the requirements of 16 V.S.A. § 255 relating to criminal record checks and checks of the Child Protection Registry and the Vulnerable Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Registry.
4. The school has adopted a policy on record maintenance and retention that, at minimum, provides for the timely and confidential disposition of student records in the event of the school's closure.

Head of School: by signing below, I hereby affirm I am an authorized officer or administrator of the applying independent school, affirm that this school meets the statutory conditions contained herein, and this statement is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

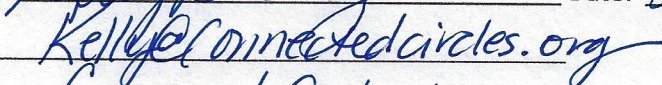
Head of School:



Date:



Email Address:



Name of School:

