

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: 325 168 185#

Date: June 28, 2023

Present

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

Agency of Education (AOE): Maureen Gaidys, Deborah Ormsbee, Josh Souliere, Cassandra Ryan, Pat Pallas Gray

Others: Kendra Rickerby, Gary Blodgett and Expeditionary School at Black River board members, Trevor Barlow, Eric Warren, Tasha Ball, Kristen Careau, Nerissa Edwards, Judy Pullinen.

Call to Order/Roll Call/Amendments to the Agenda

Tom Lovett called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m. There were no amendments to the agenda.

Approve Draft Minutes from the May 3, 2023 Meeting

Jenna O'Farrell made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 3, 2023 meeting. Tom Lovett seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Public to be Heard

There was no public to be heard.

Independent School Approvals

Initial Approval

Expeditionary School at Black River

Josh Souliere provided an overview of the report. The Agency of Education's Independent School Team recommends a one-year approval to the Secretary of Education with the following conditions:

1. Content area staff must be hired prior to the first day of school and approved by the Agency of Education as meeting SBE Rule 2226.8.1. Qualifications for all school year 2023- 2024 staff

must be submitted to the Agency of Education Independent School Team allowing for a minimum of five days to review (prior to the start of school).

2. ESBR must develop and maintain on file a plan for staff professional development and evaluation prior to the first day of school.
3. ESBR must develop and maintain on file a plan for serving all students pursuant to SBE Rule 2229 prior to the first day of school.
4. ESBR must have a plan in place for delivery of required state assessments by January 1, 2024.
5. ESBR's direct instruction must be delivered by qualified staff to student(s) who are physically in attendance at the school.
6. ESBR must continue its assessment of all incoming students for literacy and math.
7. ESBR must develop or purchase a written curriculum to meet the Minimum Course of Study for age, grade and ability level. Added by the Committee, "A written framework must be in place prior to the first day of school, with a more fully developed curriculum prepared for reapplication."
8. Prior to implementing a flexible pathway learning opportunity, ESBR must seek technical assistance from the Agency. Added by the Committee, "ESBR will reach out to Agency staff, no later than July 21st, to determine a date by which technical assistance will be scheduled, engaged in, and plans outlined as part of the reapplication process."

Discussion took place regarding documentation observed and expectations of school staff prior to the start of the 2023-2024 school year. Agency staff were satisfied with what they were provided with for documentation and are prepared to support the school.

A motion was made by Tom Lovett and seconded by Lyle Jepson to recommend to the full State Board of Education, based upon the visiting team's recommendations and requirements to the Secretary of Education, with the additions as outlined in #7 and #8, a one-year independent school approval for general education instruction for the Expeditionary School at Black River ending June 30, 2024. The motion passed unanimously.

Pond Brook Project

Josh Souliere provided an overview of the report. The maximum capacity is 20 students. At the time of the visit, there were 14 students. Taken from the Agency Staff report – "During each semester at Pond Brook, 12- to 15-year-old students will embark on different interdisciplinary explorations of science, society, mathematics, culture, art, literacy, technology, and health through the lens of the Vermont landscape. Students spend much of their time in hands-on engagement with the natural world as well as in a variety of creative projects, problem-solving challenges, community service and team building activities."

The Agency's Independent School Team recommends initial approval of the Pond Brook Project, for the term of two years, to the Secretary of Education. The school's proposed academic program, staffing qualifications, facilities, and financial standing all meet State Board of Education Rules to operate as a general education independent school serving students aged twelve through fifteen.

A motion was made by Tom Lovett and seconded by Jenna O'Farrell to recommend to the full State Board of Education, based upon the visiting team's recommendation to the Secretary of Education, a two-year independent school initial approval for general education instruction for Pond Brook Project ending June 30, 2025. The motion passed unanimously.

Public to Be Heard

There was no public to be heard.

Adjourn

Tom Lovett moved to adjourn the meeting. Jenna O'Farrell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Lyle Jepson

