

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: 794 189 100#

Date: September 6, 2023

Present

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

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

Others: Barbara Barrett, Community Schoolhouse

Call to Order/Roll Call/Amendments to the Agenda

Tom Lovett called the meeting to order at 1:02pm. There were no amendments to the agenda.

Approve Draft Minutes from the June 28, 2023 Meeting

Lyle Jepson made a motion to approve the minutes from June 28, 2023 meeting. Jenna O'Farrell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Public to be Heard

There was no public to be heard.

Independent School Approvals

Renewal

Community Schoolhouse - Brattleboro

Josh Souliere addressed independent school renewal and an amendment request for Community Schoolhouse to add a high school program (grades 9-12). The required applications were submitted to the Agency of Education in a timely manner including corresponding supporting documents. The school has met all the State Board of Education requirements under Rule 2227.

Community Schoolhouse is seeking renewal as a therapeutic school and at this time, is also requesting an amendment to their approval status, to add a high school program for students in grades nine through twelve. Community Schoolhouse's administration is seeking to enroll sixteen high school aged students during the 2023-2024 school year. Community Schoolhouse currently operates a therapeutic day school for a maximum of 30 students in grades K-8. Enrollment of an additional 16 high school students will bring total enrollment student census to 46 for the upcoming school year. Community Schoolhouse also operates a short-term residential stabilization and assessment program, which is licensed by the Department for Children and Families (DCF), to serve a maximum of six students ages 5-12. This renewal and amendment request specifically addresses the renewal of Community Schoolhouse's therapeutic day school, the therapeutic classroom utilized for the residential students, and addition of a high school program. The school will continue to operate on a school-year calendar. The Agency's review team met with Community Schoolhouse staff to conduct a review on Tuesday, January 10, 2023. Interviews were held at the school's location in Brattleboro, Vermont. Staff members present for interviews were the principal, the special education coordinator, licensed special educators, classroom instructors, the program manager and instructors for the classrooms which serve the residential children placed by DCF/DM. They have three teachers for the high school level. They are well qualified and experienced. Special educators are embedded in the program. They work to meet all graduation requirements from the variety of high schools they serve. The goal is to return students to their sending school. On average, students stay for one or two years, but some stay longer. Regardless, they graduate from their sending school. A job shadowing experience is in continuous development. There is a staff member in place to help create partnerships. They hope to have a certificate of occupancy by the end of September for the high school program and open on October 2, 2023.

All revenue is derived by tuition from sending schools.

The Agency's Independent School and Special Education Teams recommend to the Secretary of Education a five-year renewal of Community Schoolhouse to operate as an approved therapeutic school, including approval of the amendment request to add a high school program. Community Schoolhouse has met all requirements to operate as an approved therapeutic independent school under State Board of Education Rules serving students in kindergarten through twelfth grade in the day program, and for ages five-twelve, in the classroom for residential students.

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 recommendation to the Secretary of Education, a five-year independent school renewal as a therapeutic school for the Community Schoolhouse with the addition of a high school program ending June 30, 2028. The motion passed unanimously.

Backlog

Assurances were due this week. There are schools that need to be contacted. Agency staff will have updated data for the September State Board of Education meeting. There are 13 reports being prepared or in review. There are 14 visits that need to be completed. They are being scheduled and completed. There are 20 schools that are backlogged, which are reliant upon the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) or other Association approved process.

Public to Be Heard

There was no public to be heard.

Adjourn

Lyle Jepson moved to adjourn the meeting. Jenna O'Farrell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 1:22p.m.

Minutes prepared by Lyle Jepson.

