

Site Review

Renewal– Mid Vermont Christian School

**Independent School - Renewal
General Education**

Site Review Conducted - October 11, 2022

Submitted by Independent School Review Team:
J. Deborah Ormsbee & Pat Pallas-Gray



Site Review Scope of Work and Purpose

Mid Vermont Christian School (MVCS) started in 1987 and graduated its first senior class in 1997. It is a 501(c)(3) interdenominational Christian School grades K – 12, not affiliated with any one church and follows a traditional school year calendar. The Agency of Education’s Independent School Team conducted a general education site review on Tuesday, October 11, 2022.

General Education

State Board of Education Rule 2226.2

Members of the Agency’s Independent School Team met with MVCS staff at the school campus located at 399 West Gilson Road in White River Junction. School staff present for interviews were the head of school, the education program director, content area instructors and an elementary education instructor. Mid Vermont Christian School is a member school of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI).

School Philosophy

MVCS’s application states that:

“The philosophy of the Mid Vermont Christian School has at its core the belief that God is central to all knowledge and learning. The apostle Paul said, “in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). From this foundational truth spring several distinctive features of our educational philosophy. The goal of a Christian education is to guide children into a lifelong relationship of knowledge, service, and love for God through spiritual, intellectual, physical, and social training. Using God’s Word, the Bible, as our preeminent textbook, we expose children to every facet of human knowledge and experience through this authoritative filter. Each discipline is examined through the framework of our Christian beliefs and values. The Word of God clearly states that parents are responsible for the education of their children. Christian parents who desire to fulfill their Biblical responsibility of bringing up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4) may do so at MVCS.”

Program Objectives

The school’s specific academic objectives align with its mission statement. Methods for delivery of academic learning and social development includes a specific set of core values for students. “...The mission of the school is to glorify God by preparing students for college and for life through a program of academic excellence established in Biblical truth. We rigorously seek academic excellence, so that all students may be well-equipped to examine and process facts, react or initiate action when necessary, and live a productive God-honoring life.”

School Enrollment

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

The Agency of Education’s Independent School Team confirmed that on the day of the site review ninety-eight students are enrolled at MVCS. Twenty-one part-time, homeschooling

students attend various music, art, and other academic enrichment programs available at MVCS. All full-time students are enrolled through a non-discriminatory admissions process.

Families contact MVCS's main office, request an application packet and schedule a time to meet with the head of school, and other appropriate school staff members in either the elementary or middle/high school programs. After an interview with the head of school, prospective students spend a day at MVCS to shadow potential classmates to determine if the school is a good fit for his or her learning goals. The head of MVCS indicated that no students have been refused enrollment at the school with the exception of students with an individual education plan (IEP) with learning needs requiring a greater level of special education services. All other IEP and 504 Plan students are enrolled and supported through collaborative push-in special education services with Hartford SD staff.

The school's student/family handbook includes information about MVCS's admission policies and procedures, including the school's non-discrimination enrollment policies.

Governance

State Board of Education Rule 2226.4

MVCS is an independent Christian school whose governance members include parents. The renewal application states that:

"The parents of the school, who are members of the Association, elect the Board of Directors to represent them. In turn, the Head of School directs the school under the supervision of the Board of Directors. The Parent Association features two types of membership: full membership and associate membership."

"To become a full member of the MVCS Parent Association, a person must be in agreement with the school's doctrinal and philosophical positions, regularly attend a Bible-believing church, and sign a statement to that effect. Full members are entitled to vote and may serve on the Board of Directors. Associate members are spouses of full members who, for whatever reason, do not feel comfortable with the doctrinal or philosophical statements. Associate members may serve the school in a variety of capacities; however, they may not vote or serve on the Board of Directors. All parents, teachers, and staff at MVCS are expected to attend the Association Meetings in January and in June each year."

Minimum Course of Study

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

MVCS's handbook includes a description of the school's academic program and states that "The methods of instruction include use of printed materials, activities, projects, labs, field trips, lectures, group work, community resource visitors, reliable internet resources, and students teaching other students. We have a library in [the elementary and middle/high school buildings] with guidance and college information and internet-accessible computers and iPads available. We have a guidance counselor who is also a teacher in the Jr./Sr. High. He spends many hours going over student records, schedule choices, transcripts, etc. to be able to assist the Jr./Sr. High students with their current and future goals."

Instruction is academically appropriate for each grade K–12. Furthermore, MVCS’s curriculum is differentiated to meet the needs of students requiring additional supports in core areas as well as providing academic enrichment for students in need of additional learning opportunities. The head of school works collaboratively with Hartford School District’s Director of Special Education. Students enrolled in MVCS, with an IEP receive push-in services, when appropriate to ensure each student accesses general education programming.

During classroom observations, the Agency’s Independent School Team confirmed that instruction methods supported the school’s stated philosophy and academic objectives. Additionally, each class observation demonstrated methods for addressing appropriate multi-grade, differentiated instruction for the elementary program. Content area instruction for middle and high school age students is differentiated to accommodate multi-graded classes, when needed, to ensure teachers meet the academic skill and cognitive development of each child. Methods of instruction and authentic assessments were reflective of measurable student progress in both the elementary and Middle/High school programs.

Observed class instruction in both the elementary and middle/high school verified instruction is robust, integrates Vermont Common Core Standards, and assesses student learning benchmarks formally and informally. Academic assessments utilize traditional grading methods and report cards are provided to families each academic quarter. Mastery of grade level skills and knowledge are emphasized by all instructors for each grade level, K – 12.

In addition to core classes, MVCS students have access to classes in physical education, languages, fine arts, music, and a variety of electives. Extra-curricular activities, such as a competitive sports program provides students with a well-rounded school experience.

Professional Staff

State Board of Education Rule 2226.8.1

All of MVCS’s instructional staff are qualified to teach in their area of assignment. Some teachers either hold a Vermont educator’s license or are working toward meeting licensure requirements.

Teachers take an active role in developing the school’s curriculum and ensure learning opportunities include appropriate transitions between grades, K- 12. Curriculum development is the product of a collaborative effort between instructors by grade, K – 12. Special attention is given to grade level achievement and transition from elementary to middle school and on to high school. Formal classroom observations and review of lesson plans are conducted regularly by the head of school.

The academic program director meets regularly with each teacher to discuss classroom management issues, student needs, discuss problem solving strategies and to establish a thoughtful professional development plan. During interviews with MVCS’s head of school it was revealed that “MVCS provides educational seminars dealing with various areas of the school program and curriculum. Faculty take online college course and attend local classes for CEU credit. Also, the staff is encouraged to use a professional day to visit other schools to glean

from other professional teachers.” MVCS’s staff are encouraged to include observations in public schools as well as other independent schools.

MVCS’s staff are required to participate in several in-service professional development opportunities and topics for the FY23 school year range from refreshers on mandatory reporting, important policies to social emotional learning objectives, and on how to teach students on media education. MVCS’s application included an enumeration of professional development opportunities.

Staffing Safeguards & Mandatory Reporting

State Board of Education Rules 2227.12

The Agency’s Independent School team confirmed that all MVCS staff have completed fingerprinting and child/adult registry background checks. Verification forms for each staff member is included in an official file.

MVCS has a published mandatory reporting policy in both the staff and family handbooks which complies with 16 V.S.A. §§ 251-260. The head of school conducts annual training in mandatory reporting during August in-service, prior to the start of school each year.

Health and Safety, Nursing, and Immunization

State Board of Education Rules 2226.7

MVCS has formal plans in place for fire, active shooter and shelter in place drills which are held monthly. All staff receive training in First Aid and CPR. Medical equipment and first aid kits are easily accessed throughout the building. MVCS does not employ a school nurse and does not administer any student medications.

Student health information is included in student files including parent/family medical emergency release forms and current student immunization records. All student files are locked in a secure cabinet in the head of school’s office and included in secure digitized student filing system.

Hazing, Harassment & Bullying Policies

At the time of review, the Independent School Team members confirmed that MVCS has adopted the Agency of Education’s policies and protocols for hazing, harassment, and bullying. The policy is included in staff and family handbooks. Each policy is reviewed during staff in-service training in August prior to the start of school.

Facilities

State Board of Education Rule 2226.6(3)

Both the elementary school and middle/high school buildings are clean, well-organized, and welcoming. Each building includes a main office, classrooms, a conference room and a library. The middle/high school building has a well-maintained full-sized gymnasium, a room for music instruction, and storage for materials.

Emergency exit posters and maps are prominently displayed, at appropriate heights, by grade level, to ensure students can read and understand graphic instructions. Both school buildings are hardwired for fire alarm and sprinkler systems, each of which are inspected annually. The HVAC/air exchange system is inspected and in good working order. A current Certificate of Occupancy is on file at the Agency of Education.

Financial Capacity:

State Board of Education Rule 2226.9

Mid Vermont Christian School submitted audit information, indicating the school has met SBE Rule 2226.11 requirements, and has the financial capacity to conduct its educational purpose for the period of approval.

Initial Approval Recommendation:

The Agency's Independent School Team recommends a five-year renewal of Mid Vermont Christian School to the Secretary of Education. The school's academic program, facilities and financial standing all meet State Board of Education requirements to operate as a general education independent school for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade.