

Site Review

Renewal- Okemo Mountain School

Independent School Review Report General Education

Site Review Conducted - December 13, 2022

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Site Review Scope of Work and Purpose

Okemo Mountain School (OMS) is a snow sport academy for students in grades five through twelve located in Ludlow Vermont. Students attend OMS because of their interest in alpine ski racing, freestyle/freeride skiing, or snowboarding competition.

OMS's administration submitted the school's renewal application and supporting documentation in a timely manner. The application is complete and meets all requirements under Rule 2227.

General Education

State Board of Education Rule 2225.2, 2225.5

Members of the Agency's Independent School Team met with OMS's staff on December 13, 2022. Staff interviews and classroom observations were conducted with the Head of School, assistant Head of School, administrative support staff and classroom instructors in history, English, math, Language Arts and Science.

School Philosophy

Okemo Mountain School's renewal application states that:

"OMS is dedicated to delivering a rigorous academic curriculum while providing an intense on-snow training schedule that would not be possible within a traditional school setting. The purpose of on-snow training is to prepare our students for competition in alpine ski racing, freestyle/freeride skiing, or snowboarding. Students are selected for admission based on academic performance and athletic capabilities. Students must possess a strong work ethic and be independent and self-motivated. OMS offers primarily a winter term tutorial program, but also offers full school year academics to a small group of student-athletes looking for a personalized approach to learning."

Program Objectives

Central to OMS's stated objectives is preparation of students "to communicate and access information and ideas using a variety of formats...[to become] critical thinkers and effective problem solvers. OMS values the balance of academic, athletic, and personal pursuits and teaches students how to manage these aspects of their lives."

School Enrollment

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

Students are enrolled in Okemo Mountain School through an application process. Out of state families wishing to enroll their child in OMS, may consider either the school year or one of the winter term options.

OMS's school-year program follows a traditional school year calendar. On the day of the Independent School Team's site visit, five Vermont students were enrolled in the school year program. The winter-term programs include a ten-week, three month and a five month program. The winter term program's rolling admissions begins on November 1st and the term concludes at the end of March or beginning of April, depending upon weather conditions. Current enrollment for OMS's winter term programs for the 2022- 2023 school year is 58 students.

Governance

State Board of Education Rule 2225.4

Okemo Mountain School's Governance Board relies upon nine volunteers to provide oversight for the academic programs, maintenance of the facilities, provides financial oversight, oversees all sports programs for both the traditional day and winter term program.

Minimum Course of Study & Required Assessments

16 V.S.A. §166(b), State Board of Education Rule 2225.5

OMS's school-year program offers a traditional curriculum for students in grades five through twelve. Students attend either small classes of two to four students or receive one-on-one individualized academic services. The Independent School Team observed that OMS's school-year and winter-term programs meet all State Board Rules for Minimum Course of Study.

Winter-term students meet with instructional staff in small groups or one-on-one to obtain support for completing assignments provided by their LEAs. OMS's instructional staff provide intensive academic support, academic enrichment activities and provide oversight of grade level assessment required by each student's LEA. Students enrolled in the school-year program are provided with the opportunity to take advanced placement courses and have access to a full range of traditional subjects that include second languages, the arts and physical education opportunities beyond winter sports.

Instructional staff utilize a variety of best practice instructional methods to ensure the school-year curriculum and winter-term academic support programs meet the needs of all learners by grade and ability level. Small class design or the one-to-one instructional model enables teachers to facilitate differentiated instruction to support each student's unique learning goals.

OMS's school-year and winter-term programs meet State Board Rule requirements for Minimum Course of Study.

Professional Staff

State Board of Education Rule 2225.8

The lead administrator at OMS is the Head of School. The Head of School has an Assistant who also acts as Admissions and Alumni Relations Coordinator. There is also a Development Coordinator and a Campus Life Coordinator. Academically, there is a Dean of Academics and a Registrar/Sending School Liaison. All teachers report directly to the Dean of Academics.

The OMS staff are qualified to teach in their assigned areas of responsibility. Many teachers have a Master's degree in their area of specialty. Teachers are encouraged to engage in regular content area and pedagogical professional development opportunities.

In-service training at OMS is scheduled regularly during August's in-service and throughout the school year. The winter-term staff are required to engage in annual training prior to November 1st. Professional learning opportunities are provided for the entire OMS staff as well as individualized programming for instructional staff development.

Staffing Safeguards:

OMS's Head of School and academic staff confirmed that all school-year and winter-term staff, coaches, volunteers, and winter athletic support staff have undergone fingerprinting and child/adult registry background checks.

Mandatory Reporting Procedures:

OMS has published the school's mandatory reporting policy in all of its handbooks. The school-year and winter-term staff receive annual refresher training in August and prior to November 1st respectively.

Health & Safety

The Independent School Team reviewed school file information regarding CPR and First Aid training schedules. Designated staff are certified in both areas and provide annual training to the entire OMS staff members.

The Head of School consults with the local fire and police departments to practice monthly fire drills and other emergency service drills. The facilities have a hard-wired fire alarm system in the main academic building and in the new training/gymnasium area.

Nursing Services, Medications, and Immunization Records:

Okemo Mountain School does not have a licensed nurse or other medical professional on staff. The Head of School relies upon emergency response staff at Okemo Mountain for any winter sport related injuries and a local area medical doctor to administer specialized health/medical services.

Immunization records for each student are contained in confidential digitized student files. All student immunization records are up to date. Signed parent permission forms are included with each student's medical records. OMS has designated staff members responsible for providing over-the-counter medicines, such as cold/flu or Tylenol and Advil. All medications are in a locked cabinet out of reach of students and medical logs are up to date.

Hazing, Harassment & Bullying Policies

OMS has adopted the Agency of Education's policy on hazing, harassment and bullying, which is published in staff, family, and student handbooks. Staff receive annual refreshers on these policies during either the August or November in-service staff meetings.

Facilities

State Board of Education Rule 2225.6

OMS's facility is a converted inn, which houses all administrative offices, academic classrooms, and student common spaces. There are 15 academic classrooms, which are small and meant to accommodate 1-2 teachers with 2-6 students. There is a science lab, a small library and a computer lab. In November of 2017, OMS completed construction of a 5,200 square foot fitness training facility where off-snow training takes place. This space includes locker rooms, coaches' offices, a large open training area with fitness equipment, a yoga room, a trainer's office, and an in-ground trampoline. Okemo Mountain School's buildings are in good repair, clean and well organized.

A security system, including video cameras, that monitor access and egress points into the main school building and between the academic and sports facility have been installed. Students and staff are provided with unique security passes to access all buildings.

Both facilities have a hardwired sprinkler system. An air exchange system via a grant from Efficiency Vermont has been installed.

Certificates of Occupancy for both facilities were on file.

Financial Capacity:

Okemo Mountain School submitted a profit/loss statement and a balance sheet. The most recent 990 was also provided. These documents confirm the school has met rule 2226.11 requirements and has the financial capacity to carry out its educational purposes for the period of approval.

Approval Recommendation:

The Agency's Independent School Team recommends a five-year renewal of Okemo Mountain School to the Secretary of Education. The school's academic programs, facilities and financial standing all meet State Board of Education requirements to operate as an approved independent school for students in grades five through twelve.