

**AGENCY OF EDUCATION
Barre, Vermont**

TEAM: School Finance

ITEM: Will the State Board of Education grant initial special education approval, to serve students in grades 9-12 within the disability categories of Specific Learning Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorders (high functioning), and Emotional Disturbance, to Rock Point School, Burlington, VT?

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the State Board of Education grants initial special education approval, to serve students in grades 9-12 within the disability categories of Specific Learning Disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder (high functioning) and Emotional Disturbance, to Rock Point School, Burlington, VT. This approval is through June 30, 2018, to coincide with the school's NEASC accreditation period.

Approval is subject to the condition that the above captioned school immediately reports to the Agency of Education whenever any changes occur in enrollment, programs, policies, facilities, financial capacity, staffing or administration during the approval period.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Title 16 V.S.A. § 166(b)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. Rock Point School is a co-education day and boarding school. The mission of Rock Point School is to provide a small, supportive educational community for teenage girls and boys, where they can become successful students and learn skills for living in a community with peers and adults.
2. Rock Point School is accredited by the New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC), which is an accrediting body recognized by the State Board of Education pursuant to SBE rule #7320. Other than routine annual reports, the next major responsibility regarding accreditation will be the decennial evaluation visit scheduled for 2018.

SPECIAL EDUCATION REPORT:

Rock Point School is seeking initial approval in special education for the following areas: Specific Learning Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder (high functioning), and Emotional Disturbance. At this time Rock Point will only be accepting students that can make age approximate social connections; the school is unable to functionally support consistently aggressive, non-speaking or non-verbal students, or students with low levels of cognitive ability. Rock Point currently serves 27 students. Special education approval will enable Local

Educational Agencies (LEAs) to place students at Rock Point in the above listed disability categories.

Rock Point was visited by Christopher Kane, an AOE Special Education Consultant on May 26, 2016. Christopher Kane interviewed Rock Point staff, toured facilities, observed staff teaching and staff-student interactions, and reviewed a single LEA placed student file and IEP. The staff members were engaging, cooperative, and professional. The facilities were clean, the amount of space was appropriate for the number of students enrolled and organized as needed for the individual needs of the students. Rock Point staff reported a positive and collaborative working relationship with LEAs, although at present the majority of the students attending Rock Point are privately placed.

Observations of instruction indicate students are receiving individualized educational support and modification on an ongoing basis, regardless of the presence of an IEP or 504 plan. The students are also supported with social and emotional issues through a variety of school procedures. The policies, procedures and staff in place demonstrated competence in supporting students with diagnosis of high functioning autism (formerly known as Asperger's), non-violent individuals diagnosed with emotional disturbance, and students diagnosed with a specific learning disability.

The following rules were reviewed for compliance:

2228.1 – MET – As stated above Rock Point is adequately staffed and trained to support high functioning, non-violent students diagnosed with ASD, Emotional Disturbance and Specific Learning Disabilities.

2228.3 – MET – Observed written policies and/or procedures in the areas of: (1) admissions, (2) least restrictive environment, (3) discipline, (4) graduation, (5) faculty qualifications, and (6) faculty-student ratios.

2228.3.1 – MET – Evidence of maintenance of (1) educational records, and coordination with LEA and parents through data and file review, (2) participation in evaluation and IEP procedures through informal file review and policy review, (3) future implementation of IEPs through progress reporting, specific data collection procedures and schedules .

2228.3.2 – MET – The special education teacher holds a valid, VT Educator's License endorsed in special education. Related services will be provided through the LEA.

2228.4 – Policies and processes reviewed outline tuition, residential and room costs. Rock point is in the process of preparing a LEA agreement for instructional and non-instructional services to establish the division of responsibilities in regards to students on IEPs.

Based on the rules for special education approval for independent schools, Rock Point School meets the requirements for independent school approval.

COST IMPLICATIONS: none

STAFF AVAILABLE:

Cassandra Ryan, Finance Analyst
479-8545