

AGENCY OF EDUCATION
Montpelier, Vermont

TEAM: School Finance

ITEM: Will the State Board of Education grant an amendment to the general independent school approval for Mount Mansfield Ski Club & Academy to add a school-year program to its current offerings for grades 7-12?

SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the State Board of Education grants an amendment to the general independent school approval for Mount Mansfield Ski Club & Academy to add a school-year program to its current offerings for grades 7-12 for a term through June 30, 2021 to coincide with the school's current approval period; and,

This approval is conditional on the requirement that the school reports to the Agency of Education within five business days 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)
SBE rules 2200

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. An independent school may operate and provide elementary or secondary education if it is approved by the State Board of Education.
2. The State Board of Education shall approve an independent school if it substantially complies with the State Board's Rules for independent schools, promulgated as Series 2200 (Independent School Program Approval). Only independent schools that are approved by the SBE may receive public tuition dollars.
3. Mount Mansfield Ski Club & Academy (MMSCA) is seeking an amendment to add a school-year program to its current offerings for grades 7-12.
4. On behalf of the Secretary of Education, J. Deborah Ormsbee and Pat Pallas Gray visited MMSCA on January 8, 2020.
5. MMSCA, for the last 26 years, has operated a State Board approved five-year, winter-term program for students in grades 7-12.

6. The recommendation is for amendment approval through June 30, 2021, to coincide with MMSCA's current approval period.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS: none

STAFF AVAILABLE:

J. Deborah Ormsbee, Independent School Review Coordinator

Independent School Review Report

General Education & Special Education

REPORT

January 8,
2020- Review

**Mt. Mansfield Ski Club &
Academy
Stowe, VT**

Request for Program Amendment

Submitted by

Independent School Review Team Members:

Education Representatives:

J. Deborah Ormsbee & Pat Pallas-Gray



The AOE's independent school review team met with the Director of Academics of Mt. Mansfield Ski Club & Academy (formerly known as Mount Mansfield Winter Academy) on Wednesday, January 8, 2020. Interviews were conducted in the school's main office located on the first floor of the school building in Stowe.

In March of 2018, the Mt. Mansfield Ski Club Board and the Mt. Mansfield Winter Academy Board merged. This governing board includes an Executive Director, a Director of Academics, an Athletic Director, and a Finance Director. The governing board and the program's directors are requesting an amendment to expand the Academy's educational offerings by adding a school-year program to its five-month, winter-term program. This winter-term program has been in existence and approved by the State Board of Education for the last 26 years.

The Academy's new program objectives are aligned with State Board of Education Rule 2200 Series and:

- Will continue to provide athletic and academic programming for up to 60 students
- Will continue to offer intensive, core instruction and assessment
- Will provide an opportunity to earn a Capstone Diploma over a two-year course period, with the focuses on research, collaboration, and presentation
- Will continue to provide extra-curricular academic opportunities to include advanced placement courses, foreign languages, Fine Arts, Music, STEM, Service Learning, Business, Economics and Health
- Will continue to align the curricula offerings with the Common Core and the Next Generation Science Standards
- Will continue to implement, through the academic staff, comprehensive grade level literacy and math instructional services as well as advanced learning opportunities through an expanded academic program
- Will continue to have access to specialized services, as needed, such as but not limited to speech language specialist, occupational therapy, or mental health services for the students
- Will continue to house school-based counseling services, as needed, for the students
- Will continue to provide comprehensive winter athletic programs staffed by former national and international athletes, professional level coaches, physical fitness and training experts and sports physiology specialists

Mt. Mansfield Ski Club & Academy's amendment request and supporting documentation was complete at the time of submission.

Program Amendment Requests

Mt. Mansfield Ski Club & Academy is requesting a program amendment to include a school-year academic and athletic program, in addition to its current State Board Approved five-month winter program.

Program Description & Enrollment*Vermont Rule 2225.3 16VSA §166(b)(4)*

The Academy's ski racing program was founded in 1934 expanding in 1992 to include educational services. Currently, Mt. Mansfield Ski Club & Academy is an independent day and boarding school providing educational services for up to 50 male and female students in grades 7-12. The school received final Board approval in 1993. Since its founding, the Academy has offered a five-month, high-quality academic program for student-athletes competing in winter sports at the elite level.

The Academy's mission statement describes the program in the following manner:

... "The ambition of the Mt. Mansfield Ski Club & Academy is to provide the support and direction necessary for each young person to achieve their personal potential, goals and dreams... by providing a quality academic and athletic program for student-athletes... it is our belief that each student-athlete be treated as a unique individual..."

Currently, each student receives individualized academic and athletic programming. Central to the Academy's program are values that "nurture academic excellence, commitment, independence, personal responsibility, respect and confidence."

Students will continue to receive rigorous academic opportunities, access to extensive personalized learning plans, and project-based instruction, as well as, direct instruction in a classroom setting with grade level peers. Students enrolled in the school-year program will continue to have access to individualized instruction, as needed.

Students in the five-month winter program currently receive state assessment opportunities from sending LEAs. However, the Academy's expanded program will include and provide state assessment opportunities as required.

Student Records & Confidentiality*Vermont Rule 2273.1*

AOE representatives verified that Mt. Mansfield Ski Club & Academy's student records and electronic filing system continues to meet State and Federal confidentiality requirement standards. Student education records and other related paper documentation are kept in a secure, locked storage facilities in the school's main office.

Professional Staff*Vermont Rules 2225.8*

The Academy will continue to employ its current professional staff for the five-month winter program. Upon receiving amendment approval, from the State Board, program administrators will employ full time teaching staff to provide high quality instruction in both programs.

The academic program at the Academy is rigorous and exceeds the State Board of Education's minimum course of study requirements. Once approved, the Academy's expanded program, will provide students with greater access to capstone diploma opportunities, as well as, high quality academic enrichment courses and community service-learning experiences.

Mt. Mansfield Ski Club & Academy currently employs professional staff qualified to provide academic or athletic instruction for all students. All education staff have at least a bachelor's degree in his/her field of instruction and many hold master's degrees. Both the academic and athletic program staff have opportunities to participate in professional development opportunities to improve academic and athletic program instruction.

The Director of Academics has a Master's degree in counseling and provides students with services that address both personal and sports related mental health needs. Additionally, the Director of Academics developed, implemented and supervises the residential life program that ensures each student's social needs are met and programs are developmentally appropriate for each grade level.

Facilities, Health & Safety*Vermont Rule 2272.2, 2272.4 & 2273.1***School Facilities & Safety Materials:**

Construction on a new school building is currently underway. AOE staff were afforded the opportunity to review blueprints, architectural schematics and documentation of safety features included in construction of the new facilities.

The Academy's new building will house the academic program, administrative office space, a conference room, ELA/History classrooms, fine arts and music space, a new, fully equipped STEM/science lab, all of which will be on the first and second floors. Installation of sprinkler systems, fire alarms and multiple emergency egress locations are included in construction plans. Both the science and STEM workshops and labs will be equipped with emergency first aid and eyewash stations. Students who participate in the five-month winter program will be afforded access to all learning spaces housed within the new building.

The current school building, post-construction, will be converted to dorms for residential students and will retain the school kitchen, cafeteria, activity rooms, school laundry facilities and residential staff housing. There are sufficient bathrooms for both the male and female sections of the residential space and a single-use transgender bathroom available if needed. Most dorm rooms have a private bathroom facility.

Monthly fire and school safety drills are conducted in collaboration with local officials, police and fire departments.

Safety information including location maps, fire extinguishers and emergency contact numbers are prominently posted in multiple, highly visible areas in the Academy's current school building. Emergency directions and other pertinent information include easily understood emergency pictograms and corresponding emergency contact numbers in each of the common areas of the school, classroom area, activities room, cafeteria, hallways and main office. Once construction of the new school facilities is completed, a set of emergency posters and other required safety equipment will be installed in each room and major thoroughfare.

First Aid and other life-saving equipment are visible and meet health and safety requirements, including date of last inspection. All staff members have completed First Aid and emergency response, specialized training. Coaching staff receive additional, specialized training to provide sports related first aid to student athletes, as needed.

Nursing Services and Medications:

The Academy has designated day and over-night staff that dispense medications, as required to students. Strict safety protocols are currently in place and will be practiced at the new school facilities, post-construction. Additionally, all school personnel are trained on storage, use and disposal of Epi-pens and trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of food allergies.

The Academy's staff are trained on procedures that school personnel follow when required to address blood borne pathogens, infectious body fluids and toxic substances. In addition to medical precautions and procedures, kitchen and nutrition staff are trained on food safety as recommended by the USDA's safety requirements.

The school's kitchen meets USDA and Vermont Department of Health standards for school nutrition programs. Particular attention is paid to maintaining food allergy standards.

Immunization Policies & Records:

Mt. Mansfield Ski Club & Academy's student immunization records are contained in a secure, confidential locked filing system in the program director's office. These procedures will be duplicated once administrative offices are transferred to the new school building.

Staffing Safeguards:

Background checks are conducted prior to start date for all newly hired employees. Fingerprint supported criminal record checks and VT adult/child abuse registries are checked annually. All reports are contained in a confidential filing system available for review upon request.

Health, Wellness & Hazing Policies:

The Director of Academics reported that the Academy has developed strong anti-bullying, anti-hazing and anti-harassment policies and corresponding procedures that are updated and reviewed with staff, annually. Parents are provided with a copy of these policies, Academy expectations and procedures for addressing issues with enrolled students. These policies will be adapted, as appropriate, and mirrored for the school-year program. Agency of Education review team members were in receipt of school policies at the time of site review.

Mount Mansfield Ski Club & Academy

Financial Capacity

Mt. Mansfield Ski Club & Academy’s students are parentally placed; therefore, tuition costs are paid by student’s family. At the time of program review, AOE staff members confirmed Mt. Mansfield Ski Club & Academy has sufficient financial capacity to provide academic services to enrolled students, as well as completion of construction on the new academic building, and renovation of the current building into dorm space.

At the time of program review, Agency staff confirmed that all Mt. Mansfield Ski Club & Academy’s accounting practices meet requirements for fiscal capacity under State Board of Education Rules Series 2200 ... [the] “program has financial capacity to carry out its educational purpose for the period of approval.” ¹

Independent School Team, Agency of Education Recommendations

Mt. Mansfield Club & Ski Academy’s programming meets all State Board of Education Rules and educational requirements under 16 V.S.A. It is the recommendation of the Agency of Education’s Independent School Team that the Academy be granted a program amendment to add a school-year program to run concurrently with the approved five-month winter program.

¹ Guidelines for Vermont Approved and Recognized Independent Schools, Rule Series 2200, Vermont State Board of Education, 2009., pg. 22.