

**AGENCY OF EDUCATION
Montpelier, Vermont**

TEAM: School Finance

ITEM: Will the State Board of Education grant renewal of independent school approval to serve students in grades K-12 to Grace Christian School, Bennington, VT, based upon the review by the Agency of Education and notification of continued New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation?

SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the State Board of Education grants renewal of independent school approval to serve students in grades K-12 to Grace Christian School, Bennington, VT, based upon the review by the Agency of Education and notification of continued New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation. This approval is for five years through June 30, 2026.

This approval is conditioned 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)
State Board Rule: 2223

1. An independent school may operate and provide elementary and 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 Board's rules for independent schools, promulgated as Series 2200 (Independent School Program Approval).
3. Grace Christian School is seeking renewal of general independent school approval. Grace Christian School was last granted renewal of State Board approval on October 20, 2016, through June 30, 2021.
4. Per SBE Rule 2223, approval may be granted without committee evaluation in the case of any school accredited by a state or regional agency recognized by the State Board for accrediting purposes.

BACKGROUND:

5. Grace Christian School's mission is partnering with parents to provide an exceptional spiritual and academic environment consistent with Biblical Truth. Grace Christian School serves students in grades K-12.
6. Grace Christian School is accredited by the New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC), which is recognized by the Vermont State Board of Education pursuant to State Board Rule #7320. Other than routine annual reports, the next major responsibility regarding accreditation will be the decennial evaluation visit scheduled for 2022.
7. NEASC, as part of its accreditation review, conducted an assessment of financial capacity. The application has satisfied NEASC's requirements, and the Agency recommends that the Board support NEASC's findings of adequate financial capacity, for the purposes of State Board approval.
8. Grace Christian School has a policy on the prevention and reporting of harassment, hazing, and bullying which is as stringent as the Agency's model policy.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS: none

STAFF AVAILABLE:

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