

AGENCY OF EDUCATION

Barre, Vermont

TEAM: School Finance

ITEM: Will the State Board of Education grant renewal of general and special education independent school approval, to serve students in grades 9-12, within the disability categories of Intellectual Impairment, Specific Learning Disability Visual Impairment, Hearing Loss, Speech or Language Impairment, Orthopedic Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Emotional Disturbance, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Deaf-Blindness, Multiple Disabilities, and Traumatic Brain Injury to St. Johnsbury Academy, St. Johnsbury, VT?

SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the State Board of Education grants renewal of general and special education independent school approval, to serve students in grades 9-12, within the disability categories of Intellectual Impairment, Specific Learning Disability Visual Impairment, Hearing Loss, Speech or Language Impairment, Orthopedic Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Emotional Disturbance, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Deaf-Blindness, Multiple Disabilities, and Traumatic Brain Injury to St. Johnsbury Academy, St. Johnsbury, VT. This approval is for five years, through June 30, 2022, to coincide with the Academy's accreditation by NEASC.

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

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

State Board Rule: 2228 et. seq.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. St. Johnsbury Academy was founded in 1842 and is an endowed, four-year secondary school with a day and a residential co-educational program. The mission of the Academy is to teach good character by modeling and fostering compassion, respect, responsibility, and integrity, to foster a love for learning by challenging individuals to pursue knowledge, creativity, and intellectual self-reliance, and to encourage each individual to understand his or her relationships, rights, and responsibilities within a community that is itself part of the larger world.

2. St. Johnsbury Academy is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), an accrediting agency recognized by the State Board of Education under rule #7320. Other than routine updates, the school will be expected to file a Two-Year Interim Evaluation Report in April of 2019 and a Five-Year Report in 2022, at which time the school's accreditation will be reviewed.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

St Johnsbury Academy is seeking special education renewal in the areas of: autism spectrum disorders, deaf/blindness, deaf/hearing loss, emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment.

St Johnsbury Academy is located in St Johnsbury, Vermont and utilizes a quaint campus environment. St Johnsbury academy determines student placement into their programs on an individual basis. All students are placed based on individual need in the school's instructional programming and support services. Support services including interventions and remedial supports may be obtained within the regular classroom (Advanced placement/ Accelerated/Standard/Basic level), or in a support program (Study skills/Guide studies/or Individualized services).

St Johnsbury Academy currently serves 960 students. 37 students are in the guided study program and 35 students receive individualized services.

St Johnsbury Academy was visited by two special education consultants from the Vermont Agency of Education staff on 5/27/16. Agency employees interviewed staff, toured facilities, observed staff/student interactions and reviewed student files and IEPs. Observations and file reviews were conducted for students diagnosed with: other health impairment, traumatic brain injury, autism spectrum disorders, intellectual disability, and emotional disturbance. The staff was engaging, knowledgeable, 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. St Johnsbury Academy staff reported a positive and collaborative working relationship with Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to support the student's educational programs, although did note that paperwork, especially corrections and updates are not always provided in a timely or accurate manner.

The following rules were reviewed for compliance:

2228.1 – MET– St Johnsbury Academy demonstrated the policies, procedures and staff training to support students in the disability categories of: autism spectrum disorders, deaf/blindness, deaf/hearing loss, emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment.

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 minimum maintenance of (1) educational records, and coordination with LEA and parents through data and file review, (2) participation in evaluation and IEP procedures through IEP review, (3) implementation of IEPs through progress reporting and behavioral data.

2228.3.2 – MET – Special education teachers, speech-language pathologists, and occupational therapists were licensed by appropriate local state agencies.

2228.4 – MET – Policies, procedures and written agreement outline tuition and establish division of legal responsibilities with regards to students on IEPs.

Based on the rules for Special Education Approval for Independent Schools, St Johnsbury Academy has met the minimum requirements for independent school approval.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS: none

STAFF AVAILABLE:

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