

AGENCY OF EDUCATION
Barre, Vermont

TEAM: School Finance

ITEM: Will the State Board of Education grant an amendment to enable students in grades K-12 to be served at St. Michael Catholic School in Brattleboro, VT?

SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the State Board of Education grants an amendment to enable students in grades K-12 to be served at St. Michael Catholic School in Brattleboro, VT. This approval is for three years through June 30, 2020, to coincide with the school's current accreditation and approval period.

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)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. St. Michael Catholic School is designated as a Parish School within the Diocese of Burlington, VT, which was founded 138 years ago. St. Michael School serves students in grades K-9. St. Michael Catholic School is requesting an amendment to add grades 10-12.
2. St. Michael Catholic School closed the high school portion of its programming in 1968, due to declining enrollment and a steady move away from faith-based education. In 2015, the school requested an amendment to add grade 9, which was approved by the State Board of Education. In response to numerous continued requests from area parents and students over the past four years and a strong desire by the St. Michael Parish community to continually grow the school to meet the needs of their Catholic community, Bishop Coyne, Diocese of Burlington, approved the plan to add grades 10-12.
3. St. Michael Catholic School is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and 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 2020. NEASC, as part of its accreditation review, conducted an assessment of financial capacity. The applicant has satisfied NEASC's requirements, and the Agency recommends that the Board support NEASC's findings of adequate financial capacity, for the purpose of State Board approval.

4. The current St. Michael Catholic School facility originally housed grades K-12. Grades 7-12 will now be located on the second floor of the building. Adding grades 10-12 does not require additional building costs. The facility meets all state and federal rules and regulations.
5. The minimum course of study for grades 10-12 meets the requirements outlined in 16 V.S.A. § 906. In addition, students will take Latin and religious education as part of their daily instruction. The school will continue to utilize the local supervisory union's special education department to help identify a student with special needs. St. Michael Catholic School will continue their level of service to students already identified, and meet annually to update their IEP or 504 plans. All students with special needs receive accommodations in both classwork and homework; the accommodations do not alter the course content.
St. Michael Catholic School continues to have a Title I teacher on staff to meet the needs of the range of students in the school.
Students with high ability will continue to be served by the Johns Hopkins CTY program and other high level online classes will replace their regular class work while remaining in the classroom with peers. The school continues to utilize the Brooks Memorial Library at the end of the street for all grades. Multiple copies of literature and other books needed for curricula studies are purchased. Each student has his/her laptop or tablet for school use.
6. Two additional teachers were added to the staff. The senior teacher has numerous years of experience as a high school teacher in small Catholic high schools; the other teacher is a recent graduate who works in both the middle and high school. The addition of the 9th grade in 2015 has not altered the governance and administrative structure of the school. The administration and the SMS School Board, under the guidance of the Diocesan Superintendent, is investigating the need for a headmaster and guidance/admissions person as the high school grows.
7. St. Michael Catholic School has a policy on the prevention/reporting of harassment, hazing, and bullying that is as stringent as the Agency's model policy.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS: none

STAFF AVAILABLE:

Cassandra Ryan, Finance Analyst
479-8545