

AGENCY OF EDUCATION

Barre, Vermont

TEAM: School Finance

ITEM: Will the State Board of Education grant renewal of general independent school approval, to serve students four to nine years of age, to the Sugarwood School of Rutland, Vermont?

SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the State Board of Education grants renewal of general independent school approval, to serve students four to nine years of age, to the Sugarwood School of Rutland, Vermont. This approval is for five years, through June 30, 2022.

Approval is subject to the condition that the 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: 16 V.S.A. § 166 (b)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

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1. Sugarwood School addresses the crucial primary years of a student's life. The school's basic premise is that intelligence and imagination are intimately integrated with a rich environment for optimal learning opportunities. The school opened in 2006. Enrollment is limited to seven or eight students, four to nine years of age, to ensure personalized instruction balanced with collaborative group skills. The school is intentionally designed to be a single teacher/administrator facility.
2. The State Board of Education last granted independent school approval to Sugarwood School through June 30, 2016.
3. Sugarwood School was visited on behalf of the Secretary of Education by Brian Morgan on March 27, 2017.
4. Sugarwood School occupies a single, extremely well equipped, 22' x 26' room on the first floor of the east wing in the residence of the founder/teacher. Students eat in the dining room, read, play, and have lessons in the living room of the home. An exterior door leads directly to a large lawn just off the driveway. There is a direct access, vented 1/2 bathroom and an in-room utility sink. A 6' x 8' wooden stage rises 4" above the floor near the center of the south wall with stage lighting and sound system. A set of eight

“cubbies” with baskets near the entry door provides for storage of student items. There is also an LED projector attached to the ceiling. The school meets all state and federal safety requirements, and a copy of the Certificate of Occupancy (CO) issued by the Division of Fire Safety is on file at the Agency of Education.

5. The minimum course of study, as prescribed in 16 V.S.A. § 906, is provided and adapted to the age and abilities of the students. While the curriculum is very rich, and individual attention is never lacking, the school is committed to following the Vermont Framework of Standards. The school is to be complimented on its novel way of teaching material, e.g. mathematics using coins of different denominations; the periodic table through music, etc. In addition to the fundamental disciplines, students learn Spanish, American Sign Language, and they study recorder, violin, and tap dancing. These enrichment additions all strengthen memorization skills, as well as the understanding of rhythm, music notation, and performance skills.
6. The school has the resources including financial capacity and qualified staff to meet its objectives. Sugarwood School is intentionally designed to be a single teacher/administrator facility. Peggy CoZi, a highly experienced educator, is the teacher/administrator, and her husband, Chris CoZi is the ‘business manager’ and general handyman. The school provided evidence of financial capacity via a notarized letter supported with a balance sheet of previous and current income and expenditures.
7. The health, safety, attendance, and assessment records are in good order. In addition to weekly conferences with parents to report a student’s progress, students keep a personal portfolio on their learning experience.
8. The school maintains an operating schedule that includes a total number of instructional hours each year that is not less than that required of a public school serving the same grades.
9. The school has a policy on prevention and reporting of harassment, hazing, and bullying that is as stringent as the Agency’s model policy.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS: None

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