

**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 7-12, within the disability categories of Intellectual Disability (mild), Specific Learning Disability, Speech or Language Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Emotional Disturbance, and Autism Spectrum Disorder, to Jean Garvin School, Williston, 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 7-12, within the disability categories of Intellectual Disability (mild), Specific Learning Disability, Speech or Language Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Emotional Disturbance, and Autism Spectrum Disorder, to Jean Garvin School, Williston, VT. This approval is for five years, through June 30, 2022.**

**Approval is subject to the condition that the school 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:**

1. Jean Garvin School is a therapeutic day school designed to provide academic, social, behavioral and therapeutic services to boys and girls in grades 7-12. The school opened for services in July 1997. The school is a consortium model founded through the collaboration among six area school districts and the Howard Center's Children Youth and Family Services. The mission of Jean Garvin School is to provide an educational program offering unique therapeutic learning opportunities to inspire personal change and well-being. Jean Garvin School is not a permanent educational placement for students, but rather the school's primary focus is to prepare students to return to less restrictive educational environments.
2. The State Board of Education last granted general and special education independent school approval to Jean Garvin School on May 17, 2012 through June 30, 2017.
3. Brian Morgan visited Jean Garvin School on behalf of the Secretary of Education on March 9, 2017.

4. The school is located in a commercial business district in Williston. The surrounding area has retail shops and service businesses. The school itself occupies a single building with an open area behind, which provides some outdoor gross motor space. The attractive school building comprises four classrooms each designed to hold up to eight students, a kitchen and an open dining area that seats up to 20, a conference room that seats up to ten people, an office spaces for the School Director, Operations Manager, Assistant Director, Educational Counselors, Special Educator and Interventionist, School Clinicians, an out-of-room intervention space with two cubicles, and a Contemplation/Mindfulness Space, two bathrooms and a shower room. The building is cleaned nightly by the Howard Center environmental services.
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. The school has the resources to support its educational purposes. Classes that were observed and teachers who were interviewed indicate that the school offers a very effective educational program. Twenty-eight students were enrolled on the day of the visit.
6. The school has the resources including financial capacity and qualified staff to meet its objectives. The staff includes four licensed, full-time subject area teachers, a full-time Teaching Interventionist, two full-time Educational Counselors, two full-time School Clinicians, a full-time Special Educator, and a paraprofessional. A full-time School Director and Assistant Director, both licensed in special education, and a full-time Operations Coordinator, support the staff. All staff members are fully qualified by degree, training, or experience for their positions. All staff members benefit from professional development opportunities, as well as regular in-service training.
7. The health, safety, attendance, and assessment records are in good order. Fire drill and lock-down drill records were well kept, both electronically and in hard copy.
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.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Jean Garvin School, part of the Howard Center network, is seeking re-approval in the areas of speech or language impairment, autism spectrum disorders, intellectual disability (mild), emotional disturbance, other health impairment, and specific learning disability for students in grades 7-12. Agency of Education staff visited the Jean Garvin School, located in Williston Vermont, on 4/24/17. Currently, there are 28 Vermont students receiving educational services at Jean Garvin School. The students are grouped by age and ability, are taught by lead teachers with the support of special education, counseling and direct support staff. The facilities were bright, open, and clean and the amount of space is appropriate for the number of potential

students. The space has the resources to provide academic, behavioral, and community education. The design, layout and organization of the space is flexible and conducive for teaching a wide range of students and for creating a variety of working environments. During the visit, the Agency employees interviewed staff, toured facilities, observed staff/student interactions, and reviewed student files and IEPs. Observations and file reviews were conducted for six Vermont students. The students were receiving services under the categories of autism spectrum disorder, other health impairment, emotional disturbance, and specific learning disabilities. The staff was engaging, knowledgeable, cooperative and professional. Jean Garvin staff reported a positive and collaborative working relationship with Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to support the student's educational programs. Staff professional development and training take the form of a general new hire training for all Howard Center employees, as well as teaching and behavioral principals specific to Jean Garvin. Employees also receive ongoing support and observations from supervisory staff. Staff reported feeling supported with on-the-job training with specific students and behavior plans as well as ongoing feedback during observations and meeting times.

The following rules were reviewed for compliance:

2228.1 – MET– Jean Garvin School demonstrated the policies, procedures and staff training to support students in the disability categories of speech or language impairment, autism spectrum disorders, intellectual disability (mild), emotional disturbance, other health impairment, and specific learning disability.

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, schedule review, and behavioral data.

2228.3.2 – MET – Special education teachers hold valid VT Educator licenses endorsed in special education.

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

Based on the rules for special education approval for independent schools, Jean Garvin School has met the minimum requirements for independent school approval.

**FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:** None

**STAFF AVAILABLE:** Cassandra Ryan, Finance Analyst, 802-479-8545