

AGENCY OF EDUCATION
Barre, Vermont

TEAM: School Finance

ITEM: Will the State Board of Education grant year-round general and special education independent school approval to serve a maximum of 12 male adolescents ages 12-17 in grades 7-12, within the disability categories of Emotional Disturbance (ED), Specific Learning Disability (SLD), Intellectual Disability (ID), Speech or Language Impairment (SLI), Autism (ASD) (High Functioning), and Other Health Impairment (OHI), to Fay Honey Knopp Memorial School in Rutland, VT?

SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the State Board of Education grant year-round general and special education independent school approval to serve a maximum of 12 male adolescents ages 12-17 in grades 7-12, within the disability categories of Emotional Disturbance (ED), Specific Learning Disability (SLD), Intellectual Disability (ID), Speech or Language Impairment (SLI), Autism (High Functioning), and Other Health Impairment (OHI), to Fay Honey Knopp Memorial School in Rutland, VT, for a term through June 30, 2024; and

This approval is conditional 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 process.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Title 16 V.S.A. § 166 (b)
State Board Rule: 2228 et seq

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. An independent school may operate and provide elementary or secondary education if it is either approved or recognized 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. Fay Honey Knopp Memorial School is seeking renewal of approval to serve student's in the disability areas of ASD, ED, ID, OHI, SLD and SLI simultaneously with renewal of approval to provide general education
4. Upon receiving Fay Honey Knopp Memorial School's applications, the Secretary appointed a review committee to visit the school and make a recommendation as required by SBE Rule 2222. Because Fay Honey Knopp Memorial School was seeking renewal of approval to provide both general education and special education services, the recommendation consists of two separate reports.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS: none

STAFF AVAILABLE:

Cassandra Ryan, Fiscal and Regulatory Compliance Coordinator

**Vermont Agency of Education
Independent School GenEd Review for SBE Approval
Steven Lorenz, Reviewer**

Name of School: Fay Honey Knopp Memorial School

Date: May 30, 2019

Independent School Visit and Review

Purpose of Review: Will the State Board of Education grant renewal as an approved independent school to Fay Honey Knopp Memorial School in Rutland, Vermont

Background Information

Fay Honey Knopp Memorial School, for the purposes of the remainder of this report (FHK), is an Approved Vermont Independent School and is part of a comprehensive treatment program for adolescent males who have engaged in sexually harmful behaviors. FHK 's mission and goals are dedicated to "providing a supportive and safe educational environment that enables each student to reach their potential." FHK is seeking renewal as an approved Vermont independent school. FHK currently is able to serve up to 12 enrolled students. At the time of this visit there were 8 students enrolled. Students placed for assessment, short term and long term treatments are mixed in class groups. There are three different classrooms within the school as well as an industrial arts classroom. The staffing of the school is more than sufficient with a team of 2-Full Time teachers with additional support from a Special Educator and an Interventionist and Behavioral Specialist. The Fay Honey Knopp Memorial School is one of several other Independent Schools run by the Howard Center and is the only one of its kind serving this population of male adolescents in Vermont.

The school has been serving this population of students since 1992 and has been an approved Vermont independent school for many years.

All administrators and staff I met with were able to clearly articulate the schools philosophy.

The school governance model as described in the application is accurate. The Board of Trustees meet on a regular basis as a full body as well as working in smaller committees and are responsible for formulating and approving policies that govern agency operations; administration; personnel; working conditions; finance' services etc. The names and addresses of the board members are contained in the application.

Daily Program:

The school schedule follows a relatively traditional school schedule Monday-Friday with a 6 week summer program. There are also a myriad of opportunities to provide in-depth experiential learning opportunities including but not limited to: field trips, community-based activities, a variety of projects and so on. The daily program includes all the subjects and special classes one would expect in a school setting including: basic communication skills; reading and writing; Fine Arts; Life Sciences, mathematics; physical education and health education; English, American and other literature; the Sciences; citizenship, civics, history, and government. Life Skills is an essential part of the program. Additionally there is an in-depth Health Education and Personal Nutrition curriculum.

Each student at FHK develops a personalized learning plan with the guidance and support of FHK staff. The PLP's are reviewed and updated during the school year. The PLP guides the daily program for each student. Upon the identification of each student's strengths, goals and interests, students and staff work together to meet their unique and individualized needs via a variety of activities. These activities include academic instruction as well as volunteer work, vocational course work, artistic expression, athletic outlets and employment opportunities.

School Site Visit

This reviewer arrived at FHK just before 8:00 am. I was greeted by and met with Shelly McGinnis the Program Director, and Allie Graft the Assistant Director from 8am to 8:45 am. I was next given a tour of the program and facilities for 45 minutes meeting a variety of support staff and observing classes. Shelly McGinnis and I then spent an hour reviewing personal records, student files, school policies, handbooks, certificates etc. I then had the opportunity to meet with the classroom teachers Interventionist and Behavior Specialist for 45 minutes. After a brief lunch break I was able to meet with three students who volunteered to talk with me about their experiences and the school program. The day was closed out with a meeting with Shelly McGinnis and Allie Graft to ask final questions and discuss the program after my meetings and tour.

Description of Facilities

The facilities were well maintained, clean, and met all of the safety standards and procedures including ADA Accessibility. The Vermont Achievement Center owns and maintains the properties, which are leased by the Howard Center. The campus included the classroom building with an industrial arts shop, a sensory intervention room, and bathrooms, the residence that houses the students, an outdoor basketball court, a large play field, 2 sheds for storage, and the administrative offices.

Minimum Course of Study and Required Asset 16 V.S.A. § 906.

The minimum course of study, as prescribed in 16. V.S.A § 906, is provided and documented in the FHK application and is adapted to the ages and abilities of the students. (See Daily Program Section in the application) Of further note FHK has moved to a proficiency-based grading system, per state of Vermont requirements that schools' graduation requirements be rooted in demonstrations of student proficiency, as opposed to time spent in classrooms. As a result of this, the curriculum at FHK is developed based on the Vermont Agency of Education's content area-graduation requirements and the State standards are used to assess student skill development and progress.

Staffing: Adequacy; Qualifications; Professional Development

The number of staff and faculty at FHK is more than adequate, as is indicated in their application and per my visit and meetings with faculty and staff.

Administration and teaching staff have a number of undergraduate degrees and advanced degrees, with a deep, intensive and relevant number of trainings and experiences.

Professional Development and In-Service trainings are too numerous to mention in this report, however they can be accessed in the FHK application. Based on my interviews with FHK faculty, administrators and staff members it was obvious that FHK recognizes the importance of on going professional development. FHK professional development and in-service opportunities are guided by the expectation that all staff/faculty members will have the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfill all of their job responsibilities.

The school has a budget allotted per employee to support professional development. Parallel to the myriad of development and improvement opportunities required and offered, FHK places a high value on: supervision, peer interaction, collaborative teaming and participation on interdisciplinary teams to increase student's insight and skills.

Since the last AOE review the FHK team has broadened their focus and strengthened their educational foundation by increasing their knowledge of trauma sensitive schools and collaborative problem solving with students as well as proficiency based learning.

Financial Stability and Capacity

FHK presented in their application Financial Reports including a Draft Independent Auditors Report by a CPA dated for 2018. Upon request the reviewer was given a hard copy of the final Financial Reports including an Independent Auditors Report dated June 30, 2018 for the Howard Center, Inc. and Subsidiaries. This is in hard copy and is being sent my mail. Also requested by the reviewer was a Financial Statement for the Fay Honey Knopp Memorial School, which is also being delivered via hard copy. Both of these reports provide evidence of the financial stability and continued sustainability of FHK and the Howard Center.

Student Attendance and Assessment Records. Fire Drill and Safety Records. These records were reviewed and all were found to be available, up to date and in good order.

Operating Schedule; Number of Instructional Hours. The school maintains an operating schedule and provided in their application a school calendar of 204 student days and 14 in-service days.

Policies: Admission, Health and Safety, Discipline, Harassment/Bullying Etc. Review of the school's policies, handbooks and emergency and safety procedures reveal that the school has developed policies for health and safety, admission, discipline and more. The school has and presented a policy on prevention of harassment, mandatory reporting of child abuse (as well as training) and all other policies required and desired to operate a school efficiently, effectively and safely. These are noted on the checklist (attached) and in the school's application.

School Improvement Plans

The reviewer was not made aware of any plans for major facility improvements in the near future.

Summary and Recommendation

The Fay Honey Knopp Memorial School provided an application that was extensive and allowed the reviewer to discover the complexities and high quality of the educational services being delivered to the students. The site visit gave me a clear picture of the quality of the educational program and the dedication of the staff and faculty to providing the best instruction and services possible to this unique student body. It was clear that there is a community of purpose honored and carried out by all the stakeholders at FHK.

It was evident to this reviewer that FHK currently meets the most important of AOE standards and requirements for an Approved Vermont Independent School. As indicated by me in the documentation submitted in this report and on the checklist, FHK has fulfilled all that is expected and required of a Vermont Independent School seeking GenEd approval. I would recommend the SBE grant a renewal for 5 years.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Lorenz

Independent School Special Education Review Report

REPORT

July 3, 2019

Fay Honey Knopp

Submitted by
Special Education Review Team



Approval Recommendation

Five-year approval in the disability categories of; autism spectrum disorder (ASD), emotional disturbance (ED), specific learning disability (SLD), intellectual disability (ID), speech or language impairment (SLI) and other health impairment (OHI).

Note on Approval:

The AOE recommends that Fay Honey Knopp ensure implementation of the following prior to its next review:

- a) Consistent ongoing documentation system to confirm delivery of all IEP services, including case management services. The documentation system for all services should include;
 - a. Name of student
 - b. Specific service provided
 - c. Service provider
 - d. Date of service
 - e. Time/length of service
- b) Review staff licensure status annually to ensure a licensed special educator is on staff and able to provide the special education services outlined in student Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).
- c) Consistent application of agreement policies to ensure that all non-instructional agreements are in place within 30 days of enrollment.

Rationale

On the date of the visit (6/6/19) Fay Honey Knopp's data and documentation system was unable to confirm the delivery of special educator services via the electronic data collection system. That system provided excellent documentation on the implementation and progress reporting of IEP goals, but was missing student specific services, and provider titles, that would allow the confirmation of services. Based on post-visit submissions (dated 6/24/19) from Fay Honey Knopp, the Agency of Education finds that the submitted documentation alleviates documentation concerns and therefore issue a five-year approval for Fay Honey Knopp. The Agency will review in five years to ensure these recommendations are implemented systemically.

School Description

Fay Honey Knopp is located in Rutland, Vermont. Fay Honey Knopp is able to serve up to 12 students, grades 7-12 between the ages of 12-17. Fay Honey Knopp serves male adolescent students who reside at the Howard Center's Park Street Residential Program for treatment of sexual harming behaviors. Currently Fay Honey Knopp is approved to service the disability categories autism spectrum disorder (ASD), emotional disturbance (ED), specific learning disability (SLD), intellectual disability (ID), speech or language impairment (SLI) and other health impairment (OHI).

Review Description

During the visit the Agency employees interviewed staff, toured facilities, observed staff/student interactions and reviewed student files and IEPs. Comprehensive file reviews were conducted for six Vermont students. The students reviewed qualified under the disability categories of emotional disturbance, and other health impairment.

Review Findings

2228.2 - Fay Honey Knopp demonstrated the policies, procedures, staff training and resources to support students in the disability categories of; emotional disturbance (ED), specific learning disability (SLD), intellectual disability (ID), and other health impairment (OHI).

2228.3 - Fay Honey Knopp demonstrated that they have 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 – Fay Honey Knopp demonstrated 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 file review and progress reporting.

Note on Evidence

At the time of the review, Fay Honey Knopp did not provide a system that would allow the confirmation of IEP service delivery. Supplementary materials provided (6/24/19) documentation for the services present on reviewed IEPs, or contacts with LEAs to resolve inconsistencies. Supplementary materials also demonstrated updates to the electronic data collection system to ensure increased fidelity in the future.

2228.3.2 - Fay Honey Knopp meets expectations regarding licensed staff. On the date of visit, the special education teacher was licensed by the Agency of Education.

2228.4 - The Fay Honey Knopp demonstrated policies, procedures, and written agreements outlining tuition and establishment of the division of legal responsibilities with regards to students on IEPs.

Questions: Contact Chris Kane at chris.kane@vermont.gov