

AGENCY OF EDUCATION  
Montpelier, Vermont

**TEAM:** School Finance

**ITEM:** Will the State Board of Education grant renewal of independent school approval to serve students in grades 6-12 to Vermont Commons School, South Burlington VT, based upon the review by the Agency of Education and notification of continued New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation?

**SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

**That the State Board of Education grants renewal of independent school approval to serve students in grades 6-12 to Vermont Commons School, South Burlington, VT, based upon the review by the Agency of Education and notification of continued New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation. This approval is for five years through June 30, 2026.**

**This approval is conditioned 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 period,**  
**and**

- 1. The lawful requirements pertaining to facilities in 2226.8 include compliance with Vermont's Public Accommodations Act (9 V.S.A. § 4500 - 4502), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity of any person in a "...school, restaurant, store, establishment, or other facility...".**
- 2. The lawful requirements pertaining to fire drills in 2226.8 includes compliance with 16 V.S.A. § 1481, which, among other things, requires that "a drill shall be held at least once in each month during the school year and a record of the date and time of the drill, together with the time consumed in completing the procedure, shall be kept in the official school register, and such register shall be open at all times for inspection by representatives from the Fire Safety Division of the Department of Public Safety or the Agency of Education."**
- 3. The lawful requirements pertaining to immunizations in 2226.8 include compliance with 18 V.S.A. § 1121, which includes a requirement that "no person may enroll as a student in a Vermont school, regardless of whether the student has been enrolled in the school during a previous school**

year, unless the appropriate school official has received a record or certificate of immunization issued by a licensed health care practitioner or a health clinic that the person has received required immunizations appropriate to age as specified by the Vermont Department of Health.”

4. General compliance with state and federal health and safety regulations, as referenced in Rule 2225.7, which, among other things, would include 33 V.S.A. § 4913, requiring “any mandated reporter who reasonably suspects abuse or neglect of a child shall report in accordance with the provisions of section 4914 of this title within 24 hours of the time information regarding the suspected abuse or neglect was first received or observed,” and 16 V.S.A. § 255, requiring background checks for employees or other persons having unsupervised contact with children.

**STATUTORY AUTHORITY:** Title 16 V.S.A. § 166 (b)  
State Board Rule: 2223

1. An independent school may operate and provide elementary and secondary education if it is approved 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. Vermont Commons School is seeking renewal of general independent school approval. Vermont Commons School was last granted renewal of approval by the State Board in February 21, 2017 through October 1, 2021.
4. Pursuant to SBE Rule 2223, the State Board of Education may grant independent school approval to an accredited school upon evidence the school is continuing to meet the standards for accreditation.

**BACKGROUND:**

5. Vermont Commons School is an approved independent day school for students in grades 6-12. The students at Vermont Commons School experience a unique blend of academics and global immersion, master fundamental academic disciplines, grasp the profound interdependence of the natural and human systems they inhabit, and graduate with the values, knowledge, skills, and commitment necessary to become ethical and engaged ecological citizens.
6. Vermont Commons School is accredited by the New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC), which is recognized by the Vermont State Board of Education pursuant to State

Board Rule #7320. The next major responsibility regarding accreditation will be the decennial evaluation visit scheduled for 2022.

7. 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 purposes of State Board approval.
8. Vermont Commons School has a policy on the prevention and reporting of harassment, hazing, and bullying which is as stringent as the Agency's model policy.

**FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:** none

**STAFF AVAILABLE:**

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