

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 a maximum of 8 male residential students and 14 male day students, ages 6-14 in grades K-8, within the disability categories of Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), Emotional Disturbance (ED), Speech or Language Impairment (SLI), Intellectual Disability (ID), Other Health Impairment (OHI), Developmental Delay (DD), and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to Brookhaven Learning Center, Chelsea, VT?

SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the State Board of Education grant renewal of general and special education independent school approval, to serve a maximum of 8 male residential students and 14 male day students, ages 6-14 in grades K-8, within the disability categories of Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), Emotional Disturbance (ED), Speech or Language Impairment (SLI), Intellectual Disability (ID), Other Health Impairment (OHI), Developmental Delay (DD), and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to Brookhaven Learning Center, Chelsea, 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 period.

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. Brookhaven Learning Center is seeking renewal of approval to serve student's in the disability areas of ID, SLD, SLI, OHI, ED ASD, and DD simultaneously with renewal of approval to provide general education
4. Upon receiving Brookhaven Learning Center's applications, the Secretary appointed a review committee to visit the school and make a recommendation as required by SBE Rule 2222. Because Brookhaven Learning Center 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: Brookhaven Treatment and Learning Center

Date: May 22, 2019

Independent School Visit and Review

Purpose of Review: Will the State Board of Education grant renewal as an approved independent school to Brookhaven Treatment and Learning Center in Chelsea, Vermont

Background Information

Brookhaven Treatment and Learning Center, for the purposes of the remainder of this report (BTLC), is an Approved Vermont Independent School seeking renewal as a kindergarten through eighth grade licensed and approved independent school. The BTLC currently has 15 students enrolled. These students come from nine different supervisory unions in Vermont and New Hampshire. The mission of the school is “to provide educational services to male youth with emotional / behavioral / learning disabilities in a therapeutic environment.” Each member of the administration and staff were able to articulate the school’s mission as well as its philosophy, which is to “encourage learning through experiential activities as well as supported academic learning.”

The school has a long history of serving this population of students and has been an approved Vermont independent school for many years.

The school governance model as described in the application is accurate. The Board of Directors meet on a monthly basis. The names and addresses of the board members are contained in the application.

Daily Program:

The daily program includes all the subjects and special classes one would expect in a school setting including but not limited to: basic communication skills including reading and writing; mathematics; physical education and health education; English, American and other literature; Science; art education; and citizenship, history, and government.

Each student is scored on a daily basis using a tool called a Daily Assessment Rubric (DAR). Additional learning opportunities include an Applications Block for exploring and developing skills applicable to their lives outside of school

(maintenance, life skills, fitness and expressive arts etc.) The school uses Interdisciplinary Thematic Units to unify their studies. This combines a very comprehensive curriculum with special projects and experiential learning opportunities.

The daily routine includes a full schedule of academics combined with daily psycho educational groups led by a member of the clinical team.

The adapting of the methods of instruction and the adapting of each students learning experiences in order to address differences in students' ages and abilities was articulated by administration and staff. This was also observed during the visit to classrooms and explained in detail in the BTLC application.

This reviewer arrived at BTLC just before 9:00 am. I was greeted by and met with the Executive Director, the Clinical Coordinator and the Special Education Coordinator (who also oversees the regular education instruction). I was given a tour of the school facility and I was then able to meet with the classroom teachers. I followed the teacher meetings with observations of classroom instruction and student interaction with their teachers. I then met for an extended period of time with the Clinical Coordinator and Special Education Coordinator to review the Independent School GenEd Checklist and to view and peruse policies, procedures, manuals, certificates, handbooks, records, financials etc.

I concluded my visit at 1:30pm with an exit interview with the three above mentioned administrators.

Description of Facilities

The facilities were well maintained, clean, and met all of the safety standards and procedures including ADA Accessibility. The Learning Center was comprised of three Class Rooms, a Comfort Room for quiet time/space, three individual Quiet Rooms, a Sensory Room, a playground, large field, an outdoor pavilion (enclosed for physical activities) as well as offices and meeting spaces.

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 BTLC application and is well adapted to the age and abilities of the students. (See Daily Program Section in the application) It is derived from a

variety of best practices curricula as well as the Common Core State Standards. The academic program is structured while providing opportunities to practice social skills and participate in group activities.

Staffing: Adequacy; Qualifications; Professional Development

The number of staff and faculty at BTLC is adequate. The team consists of a special education coordinator, three classroom teachers, a student support specialist, a clinical coordinator, an Executive Director and several support staff who provide meals, maintenance, and residential supervision.

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

Professional Development and In-Service trainings are numerous with many being required. There are many additional volunteer training offerings of which staff members are encouraged to participate in. The various professional development and training opportunities are detailed in the application and reflect the serious nature of having staff capable of delivering a high level of instruction but also meeting student emotional and behavioral needs.

All staff and faculty are provided the opportunity to attend professional development off-site trainings, seminars, and coursework. In-service trainings for staff members are provided over the course of 8 days with trainings averaging 8 hours each day. These vary from curriculum planning, to program development, to First Aid/CPR and more.

Financial Stability and Capacity

BTLC (also known as Brookhaven School for Boys, INC.) presented in their application Financial Reports including an Independent Auditors Report by a CPA dated for 2017/16. Upon request the reviewer was given a hard copy of new Financial Reports including an Independent Auditors Report also by a CPA dated 2018/17. This is in hard copy and is being sent my mail. Both of these reports provide evidence of the financial stability and continued sustainability of the Brookhaven Treatment and Learning Center.

Student Attendance and Assessment Records. Fire Drill and Safety Records.

These records were reviewed and found to be in very good order.

Operating Schedule; Number of Instructional Hours. The school maintains an operating schedule that includes a total number of instructional days and hours each year of 982 hours and school days of 181 per year.

Policies: Admission, Health and Safety, Discipline, Harassment/Bullying Etc.

Review of the school's handbook and emergency and safety procedures reveal that the school has developed policies for health and safety, admission, discipline and more. The school has 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. Attached as well is the BLTC "Student Files Protocol" which is a very comprehensive document.

School Improvement Plans

Aside from traditional/annual maintenance projects there are no plans for major facility improvements in the near future.

Summary and Recommendation

BTLC provided an application that was extremely detailed, well written and informative. The site visit gave me a complete picture of the school as it is in 2019 and how it has grown and developed over the years. (Brookhaven History mailed under separate cover). Meeting with administrative staff, faculty and support staff gave me a complete picture of the important service that BTLC has provided for young men in the past and at the present time.

My time in the classroom gave me a valuable sense of the rigor and vigor of the curriculum, the engagement of students and the dedication of the teachers. There was a real evidence of a community of purpose and adherence to the mission throughout the school.

BTLC meets the most important of AOE standards and requirements for an Approved Vermont Independent School. As indicated in this report and on the checklist, they have 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

Brookhaven Treatment and Learning Center

**Submitted by
Special Education Review Team**



Approval Recommendation

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

Note on Approval:

The AOE recommends that Brookhaven Treatment and Learning Center 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).

Rationale

On the date of the visit (6/5/19) Brookhaven's data and documentation system was unable to confirm the delivery of special educator services through the provision of student schedules. The system in place was extensive however was missing occasional student specific services as well as provider titles, that would allow the confirmation of services. Based on post-visit submissions (dated 6/25/19) from Brookhaven, the Agency of Education finds that the submitted documentation alleviates documentation concerns and therefore issue a five-year approval for Brookhaven. The Agency will review in five years to ensure these recommendations are implemented systemically.

School Description

Brookhaven Treatment and Learning Center is located in Chelsea, Vermont. Brookhaven serves male students, aged 6-14, grades K-8. Currently Brookhaven serves 15 students from nine Vermont supervisory unions/districts and New Hampshire. Brookhaven is approved to service the disability categories of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), developmental delay (DD), emotional disturbance (ED), intellectual disability (ID), specific learning disability (SLD), other health impairment (OHI) and speech or language impairment (SLI).

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 seven Vermont students. The students reviewed qualified under the disability categories of emotional disturbance, other health impairment and specific learning disability.

Review Findings

2228.2 - Brookhaven 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).

Note on Evidence

Additional

2228.3 - Brookhaven 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 – Brookhaven 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, Brookhaven did not provide a system that would allow the confirmation of IEP service delivery. Supplementary materials provided (6/25/19) documentation for the services present on reviewed IEPs or contacts made to LEAs to address outstanding issues.

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

2228.4 - The Brookhaven Treatment and Learning Center demonstrated policies, procedures, and written agreements outlining tuition and establishment of the division of legal responsibilities with regards to students on IEPs.

Note on Evidence

At the time of the review, two agreements were signed after the enrollment date. Supplementary materials provided (6/25/19) documentation indicating a change in guardianship resulted in a new agreement in one instance and LEA delay in returning agreement.

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