

State Board of Education Independent School Approval Review Committee

Draft Meeting Minutes

Meeting Place: Virtual Teams Meeting/Video/Teleconference

Call in #: 1-802-828-7667

Conference ID: 916 898 394#

1 National Life Drive, Davis 5

Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

Date: February 4, 2022

Present:

State Board of Education (SBE) Subcommittee Members: Tom Lovett-Chair, Patrick Brown, Lyle Jepson, Jenna O'Farrell

Agency of Education (AOE): Patrick Halladay, Cassandra Ryan, Pat Pallas-Gray, Deborah Ormsbee and Maureen Gaidys

Call to Order/Roll Call/Amendments to the Agenda

Tom Lovett convened the committee at 1:01 pm and called the roll; Mr. Brown, Mr. Jepson and Mr. Lovett were present. Jenna O'Farrell arrived shortly thereafter. There were not amendments to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes from 01-10-22

A motion was made by Lyle Jepson and seconded by Tom Lovett to approve the minutes from 1-10-22. Patrick Brown abstained. The motion carried.

Public to Be Heard

No public were present

Presentation of AOE Process in Making Recommendations Re: Approval

Patrick Halladay, Cassandra Ryan, Pat Pallas-Gray and Deborah Ormsbee were in attendance to provide an overview of the independent school review process. Patrick provided an overview of staff involved in an independent review. AOE staff include members from Education Quality, Finance, Student Support Services, Federal Programs, Legal Counsel, and the Secretary's Office. State agencies such as the Department of Mental Health are also often included.

Initiation of reviews can be requested for new schools. For those requesting continuation AOE reaches out six months prior to expiration.

Types of applications:

1. General Education with accreditation i.e. New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)
2. General Education without accreditation
3. Special Education

Often independent schools are applying for more than one approval.

Patrick reviewed the process for Accredited General Education School approval. Individual staff responsibilities were outlined with associated timelines. He pointed out that Non-Accredited General Education School applications include additional criteria including faculty qualification checks and a site visit. In addition to a general application for schools offering special education, there are faculty qualification reviews and a site visit with AOE Special Education staff.

Patrick reviewed topics relating to recommendations for limited approval or denial. General Counsel and the Secretary review each prior to sharing their recommendations with an independent school. The Secretary has some discretion in the outcome. Pat provided examples of limited approval, such as the need to have targeted requirements met. Conditional approval is no longer considered a category.

Patrick reviewed the process for site visits, including specific categories found on a standardized checklist. The categories included school philosophy, admissions and enrollment, calendar and assessment participation, student records, staffing and licensure, minimum course of study, health and safety plans, special education rules and practices, etc.

Pat pointed out that, as part of the site visit, the AOE asks specifically why a student would not be admitted. They also ask if and why a student has been asked to leave in the past five years. Non-discrimination policies are reviewed.

Patrick Brown suggested adding “diversity” when reviewing for Rule 2225.5 regarding “Can the administration and staff describe the methods of instruction and how the instruction is adapted to reflect difference in students’ ages and abilities?”

Tom provided an update from the Rule 2200 Committee, which may suggest a revision to the application form.

Cassandra provided a spreadsheet that outlines the list of independent schools and each school’s current status, date of expiration, AOE comments, type of application, last approval dates, etc. Cassandra was open to modifying the template to provide information that the Committee is interested in seeing.

Pat pointed out that National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is the accreditor of three stand-alone kindergartens.

Tom pointed out that part of the work of the committee is to remove from Rule the list of accrediting agencies that meet the standards required. Eliminating the list from Rule provides additional flexibility when updating the list of approved accredited organizations.

There is a backlog of approvals, all of which have continuing approval until their application is addressed. On-site visits have been stalled by COVID-19. Desk reviews have taken place. There is a group of schools that are awaiting approval of the new Rule.

COVID-19 and waiting for the new Rule has resulted in 33 schools needing to be renewed or awaiting approval. When 2022 renewals come due 61 schools will be awaiting renewal and/or approval. On June 30, 2023, 24 more school approvals are scheduled to expire.

Approval of the process for virtual review has expired. Patrick Brown suggested that the procedure be reviewed again for potential extension due to the continued concern of COVID-19. Deb suggested that the site visit is often beneficial to the review process compared to a desk review. On site visits are preferable because they allow for student file reviews, interviews with staff, immunization record monitoring, how medications are stored and distributed, etc. A menu of options, with the hope that a site visit can take place in the future, is the preference.

When asked if staffing patterns are hindering the work of renewals, it was suggested that there is a need to fill the positions that are currently open. If fully staffed, the process can work more effectively. Resources to “catch up” in the short-term would not necessarily be needed in the long-term.

The 2200 Rule revision is going through the process. Tom asked about the number of schools that might be ready for approval in April and May. This was difficult to determine due to a variety of factors.

Tom asked what strategy would be best to communicate with the Agency so that the committee can create its workflow of reviews. Cassandra recommended that the Agency could alert the committee when 30-day reports have been made available to the schools. It is expected that within 45 days a recommendation could be presented to the committee, with some variation, if needed.

It was suggested that Tutorial, Teen Parent Education Program and Kindergarten approval reviews should come to the committee. Tom will confirm this. Tom suggested that there are no considerations in Rule revisions that would hold up those from coming to the committee.

Review of Committee Work Schedule

Tabled until the next meeting.

Other

Tom will have a poll sent out to set up the next meeting. The agenda will include:

- Discussion of standards for approving accrediting agencies
- Development of a committee work schedule
- Other

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:08 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Lyle P. Jepson