



Members, State Board of Education EQS Rules Update Committee  
Vermont Agency of Education  
1 National Life Drive, Davis 5  
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

Dear Committee Members:

As leaders of approved independent schools that have been serving the educational needs of our students and communities for many years, we write to inform the committee's work with respect to updating the Education Quality Standards (EQS). Specifically, we offer comment on the proposal from the Act 1 Working Group to apply the EQS to approved independent schools.

Central to the foundation of our long-standing success in achieving high quality outcomes for our students and communities, is independence in governance, leadership, and finances; curriculum development, content, and instruction; recruitment, evaluation and professional development of faculty and staff; learning environment; and graduation requirements, among other areas. Our institutions are accredited by NEASC and meet the highest standards of educational and institutional quality. The NEASC standards address the goals contained in the EQS and the accreditation process involves a rigorous process of self-study and reflection, continuous improvement, and peer review.

Our institutions maintain an ongoing commitment to fostering a school environment free from discrimination not only because it is required of us by federal and state laws and rules, but because it is critical to support students and faculty of all backgrounds and identities to thrive in our school communities.

We, along with our boards of trustees, are dedicated to education excellence and ensuring a safe and welcoming school for our students, faculty, and staff. NEASC accreditation ensures our schools achieve these goals while maintaining the independence that has supported high-quality outcomes for our communities. While we support the ability of an independent school to choose to adopt EQS as a method of school evaluation, we do not believe that application of the EQS to our institutions is necessary, nor should it be required, to further ensure quality and the provision of safe and welcoming school environments.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions. We are eager to support your efforts to strengthen opportunities and improve outcomes for all students in Vermont.

Sincerely,

Mark H. Tashjian  
Headmaster, Burr and Burton Academy

Dr. Sharon L. Howell  
Headmaster, St. Johnsbury Academy