



**ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2018-2019**

***The Maine State Charter School Commission will provide thoughtful stewardship in authorizing and monitoring public charter schools consistent with State statutes to create unique, high-quality learning options for Maine students.***

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| School Information |

**February 2020**

On August 22, 2019 an announced on-site visit was made to the Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences. The Maine Charter School Commission (MCSC) Review Team, MCSC school liaison, and MDOE Special Services team members team held interviews with school leadership, and the school’s Governing Board. They also reviewed data provided by the school. Information gathered from documents, interviews and on-site observation was used to determine the extent to which the school has met its contracted performance targets. This report addresses the school’s performance relative to the performance framework. Attachment A is the site visit report, which includes observation and discussion notes from the site visit.

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| Commission Liaison | Dr. Fern Desjardins |
| MCSC Executive Director | Bob Kautz |
| MCSC Director of Program Management | Gina Post |
| Commission Consultant | Joe Drago, CPA |
| Commission Consultant | Dr. Joe Mattos |
| MDOE Special Services | Dr. Roberta Lucas |
| MDOE Special Services | Collette Sullivan |

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| School’s Mission | To unfold the potential of children, in a respectful, loving culture through authentic and meaningful experiences that sustain a sense of wonder, a love of learning and embrace the interconnectedness of all things. |
| School’s Vision | To provide for the foundational needs of growing children in a community where children, teachers, and families learn together in a nurturing environment. |

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| Section 1: School Information |

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| School Name | Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences |
| Address | 25 Shaker Road, Gray, ME 04039 |

Governing Board

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| Board Chair | Bill Doughty |
| Board Vice Chair | Penny Collins |
| Board Treasurer | Melanie Prinz |
| Board Secretary | Carolyn Beem |
| Board Member | Vincent Micale |
| Board Member | Douglas Lynch |
| Board Member | Ben Kramer |
| Board Member | Sally Morris |

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| Executive Director | Jacinda Cotton-Castro |
| Coordinator of Teaching and Learning | Joanna Frankel  |
| Special Education Director | Lee Arnold |

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| Year Opened | 2013 |
| Years in Operation | 6 |
| Number of Sending Districts | 16 |
| Grades Served | PreK-6 |
| Current Enrollment | 153\* |
| Students on Waiting List | 49\* |

\*As of October 1, 2019, certified enrollment count

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| Section 2: Indicator Summary Table |

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| **Indicator** | **Exceeds** | **Meets**  | **Partially Meets** | **Does Not Meet** | **Other** |
| **Student Academic Proficiency** |
| Target 1 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| Target 2 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| Target 3 | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| Target 4 | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Student Academic Growth** |
| Target 1 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| Target 2 | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| Target 3 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| Target 4 | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| Target 5 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| Target 6 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| **Achievement Gaps** |
| Target 1 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| Target 2 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| **Student Attendance** |
| Target 1 |  |  |  | **X** |  |
| Target 2 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| **Student Enrollment**  |
| Target 1 | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| Target 2 | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Financial Performance and Stability** |
| Target 1 |  | **Healthy** |  |  |  |
| Target 2 |  | **Healthy** |  |  |  |
| Target 3 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| **Governance Board Performance and Stewardship** |
| Target 1 | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| Target 2 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| **Facilities** |
| Target 1 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| Target 2 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| **Parent & Community Engagement and School Climate** |
| Target 1 |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| Target 2 | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| Target 3 | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| Target 4 |  |  |  | **X** |  |
| Target 5 |  |  |  |  | **NA** |

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| Section 3: Demographics |

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| Section 4: Academic Proficiency |

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| **Measure** | **Target** | **Results** |  |
| Percentage of students scoring in the meets or exceeds categories on the MEA in ELA in grades 3-5 | The percentage of students in grades 3-5 scoring in the meets and exceeds categories on the MEA will be equal to or higher than the state average in the meets and exceeds categories on the MEA. | 59% met or exceeded state expectations, state average 56% | Met  |
| Percentage of students scoring in the meets or exceeds categories on the MEA in math in grades 3-5 | The percentage of students in grades 3-5 scoring in the meets and exceeds categories on the MEA will be within 20% below or higher than the state average in the meets and exceeds categories on the MEA. | 32% met or exceeded state expectations, state average 36% | Met |
| Percentage of students PreK-2 Meets Proficiency in ELA as measured by the Work Sampling System spring administration | The percentage of students in grades PreK-2 meeting Proficiency in the Language and Literacy portion of the spring Work Sampling System will be 65% or greater. | 75% proficient | Exceeded |
| Percentage of students PreK-2 Meets Proficiency in math as measured by the Work Sampling System spring administration | The percentage of students in grades PreK-2 meeting Proficiency in the Math portion of the spring Work Sampling System will be 65% or greater. | 80% proficient | Exceeded |

**Discussion**

Fiddlehead school met both of its academic proficiency targets on the MEA (ELA and math) for students in grades 3-5. It exceeded both targets for academic proficiency on the Work Sampling System for grades PreK-2.

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| Section 5: Academic Growth |

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| **Measure** | **Target** | **Results** |  |
| Percentage of students PreK-1 making growth in ELA as measured by the Work Sampling System fall and spring administrations | The percentage of students in grades PreK-1 showing growth in the Language and Literacy portion of the spring Work Sampling System will be 85% or greater. | 79% showed growth | Met |
| Percent age of students PreK-1 making growth in math as measured by the Work Sampling System fall and spring administrations | The percentage of students in grades PreK-1 showing growth in the math portion of the spring Work Sampling System will be 85% or greater. | 89% showed growth | Exceeded |
| Students in gr. 2-5 will show progress in their learning through growth in their NWEA RIT scores in ELA reading and language from fall to spring of each school year. | Students will show progress in their learning through growth in their NWEA RIT scores from fall to spring of each school year. | 83% of students showed growth | Met |
| Students in gr. 2-5 will show progress in their learning through growth in their NWEA RIT scores in math from fall to spring of each school year. | Students will show progress in their learning through growth in their NWEA RIT scores from fall to spring of each school year. | 98% of students showed growth | Exceeded |
| Growth on NWEA as measured by projected growth on MAP assessment | School will gather baseline data in year one of using the NWEA and will then establish a plan to meet goal of 70% of eligible students meeting their projected growth on NWEA ELA reading and language by the end of school year 2022-23. | Year 1 baseline – 50% of students met or exceeded projected RIT growth | Met |
| Growth on NWEA as measured by projected growth on MAP assessment | School will gather baseline data in year one of using the NWEA and will then establish a plan to meet goal of 70% of eligible students meeting their projected growth on NWEA math by the end of school year 2022-23.  | Year 1 baseline – 55% of students met or exceeded projected RIT growth | Met |

**Discussion**

The school met targets for ELA on both the Work Sampling System (gr. PreK-2) and the NWEA growth target (gr. 3-5). The school exceeded targets for math on both the Work Sampling System (gr. PreK-2) and the NWEA growth target (gr. 3-5). The school met the remaining two targets by reporting baseline data.

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| Section 6: Achievement Gaps |

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| **Measure** | **Target** | **Results** |  |
| Achievement gaps in proficiency between major subgroups on the Maine State Assessments. | The school will provide evidence of closing identified achievement gaps of major subgroups (English learner, special education, gender, economically disadvantaged, 504, ethnic and racial minorities). | Achievement gaps were present between males and females on the MEA.Math- males outperformed females by 16%ELA- females outperformed males by 17%Achievement gaps were present between students with an IEP and students without an IEP.Math- students without an IEP outperformed students with an IEP by 35%ELA- students without an IEP outperformed students with an IEP by 39% | Met |
| Achievement gaps in growth between major subgroups on the NWEA. | The school will provide evidence of closing identified achievement gaps of major subgroups (English learner, special education, gender, economically disadvantaged, 504, ethnic and racial minorities). | Achievement gaps were present between males and females on the NWEA.Math- males outperformed females by 9%Achievement gaps were present between students with an IEP and students without an IEP.Math- students without an IEP outperformed students with an IEP by 10%ELA- students without an IEP outperformed students with an IEP by 16%% | Met |

**Discussion**

The only subgroups large enough to report are sex and special education.

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| Section 7: Attendance  |

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| **Measure** | **Target** | **Results** |  |
| Chronic absenteeism rate | Schools will have 10% or fewer students classified as chronically absent on the last day of school. | 25% chronic absenteeism rate, decrease of 2% from previous year | Did not meet |
| Average Daily Attendance Rate | Schools will have an average daily attendance rate in grades preK-8 of 93% or higher. | 93% average daily attendance rate | Met |

**Discussion**

The school met its average daily attendance target but did not meet its chronic absenteeism target.

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| Section 8: Enrollment |

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| **Measure** | **Target** | **Results** |  |
| Enrollment throughout the school year | 85% or more of eligible students enrolled on the last day of school will be the same students who were enrolled on State Student Count Day. | 96% of eligible students enrolled on the last day were enrolled on Oct. 1 | Exceeded |
| Recurrent enrollment from one year to the next | 85% or more of eligible students enrolled on the last day of school will have completed an Intent to reenroll form for the next year. | 99% of eligible students enrolled on the last day completed an intent to reenroll for 19-20 | Exceeded |

**Discussion**

The school exceeded both enrollment targets; during the year enrollment and reenrollment.

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| Section 9: Finances |

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| **Measure** | **Target** | **Results** |  |
| Near Term Measuresa) Current Ratiob) Unrestricted Days Cashon Hand | School evaluates its Near-Term Financial Health using the Financial Performance and Stability outline provided by the Commission. | Near term measures evaluated | Near Term Measures are healthy. |
| Sustainability Measuresa) Total Marginb) Debt to asset ratio | School evaluates its Financial Sustainability using the Financial Performance and Stability outline provided by the Commission. | Sustainability measures evaluated | Sustainability Measures are healthy. |
| The school has an annual financial audit conducted. audit and management letter are submitted to the commission. audit has no material findings or misstatements. | Unmodified opinion on [consolidated] financial statements: no material weaknesses, significant deficiencies or reportable instances of noncompliance and other matters identified in the other information accompanying the auditor’s report on financial statements or in the auditor’s report on internal control over financial reporting and on compliance and other matters. | FY 2018 clean audit was completed | Clean Audit |

**Discussion**

The school’s near-term measures and sustainability measures are healthy. The school had a FY 2018 audit and provided a copy to the Maine Charter School Commission. The audit was clean and met the target.

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| Section 10: Governance Board Performance and Stewardship |

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| **Measure** | **Target** | **Results** |  |
| Public Accountability: Transparent, responsive, and legally compliant Board operation. | The Governing Board will hold a minimum of 6 meetings per school year. | 11 meetings held | Exceeded |
| Public Accountability: Transparent, responsive, and legally compliant Board operation. | Timely publication of Board meeting agenda and minutes upon approval. | Agenda and minutes posted  | Met |

**Discussion**

The board met 11 times during the SY 2018–19 and posted agendas and minutes on its website.

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| Section 11: Facilities |

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| **Measure** | **Target** | **Results** |  |
| School facilities meet Meet Local and State requirements | The school certifies that its facility (or facilities) meet all local and state requirements for public school facilities. | Facilities have appropriate certifications. | Met |
| Capital Improvement Plan  | The school has a current capital improvement plan approved by its governing board. | School has approved plan. | Met |

**Discussion**

The school met its facilities targets. The facility is reported to meet all requirements and the board has a capital improvement plan, which includes finding a new space for the school, large enough to accommodate the new grades being added in the next two years.

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| Section 12: School Climate |

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| **Measure** | **Target** | **Results** |  |
| Reporting of behavior incidents | The school will follow the Maine DOE required reporting for incidents of behavior. | Reported as required | Met |
| Panorama Survey- Family Participation | 40% of families will participate in the Panorama survey. | 89% participation | Exceeded |
| Panorama Survey- Student Participation | 65% of eligible students will Participate in the Panorama survey. | 94% participation | Exceeded |
| Panorama Survey- Teacher/Staff Participation | 70% of teachers/staff will participate in the Panorama survey. | 51% participation | Did not meet |
| Panorama Survey | Annually, the school will review its survey results and develop an action plan to address areas for continued improvement. Plan and outcome will be submitted to the Commission. | Not required in 2018-2019 | NA |

**Discussion**

The school reported incidents as required by MDOE and met the reporting target. The school exceeded two of the three survey participation targets; family participation and student participation. The teacher/staff participation rate did not meet the target.

The school was not required to submit its action plan in 2018-19.

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| Section 13: Mission and Vision Implementation Evidence and Results |

*(See Page 2 for School’s Mission and Vision)*

Fiddlehead School’s early childhood program (Pre-K and K) is play-based, allowing for student exploration. Teachers facilitate social learning, helping the youngest students gain the skills necessary to work and play with others and navigate a group learning environment. In the early years FSAS balances emergent curriculum, in which projects and topics arise from the interests and questions of children, with curriculum that is more teacher-directed.

In the half-day Pre-K Program, the domains of math, literacy, art, and science are introduced through the availability of engaging materials, teacher-guided provocations and projects, and exploratory play. As students transition to full-day Kindergarten, exploration continues both indoors and outdoors, with the integration of small-group, direct teaching experiences. Concepts are presented using a hands-on approach to learning, as students are given a variety of modes through which to learn new material.

In first and second grades students have repetitive exposure to concepts and skills through concrete materials, exploration, and direct teaching. This occurs within the context of a hands-on environment in which multiple pathways to learning- verbal, visual, tactile, etc. are accessed. Exploration continues to be nurtured, while basic skills are taught as a means for a larger purpose. The shift from a more emergent curriculum to a more interdisciplinary model begins to take place, as students work on projects and thematic learning that bridge subject areas and continue to foster creativity.

Students enter the upper grades of 3-5 ready to use their basic building block skills for larger, in-depth projects and interdisciplinary studies. Increasing independence is nurtured as students gain command over the tools of their own learning. Projects become longer term as students refine their work, incorporate feedback, and go into greater depth with concepts and topics. A sense of responsibility is fostered as students prepare for the transition to middle school grades.

Students in grades 6​ ​continue growth toward both greater independence and increased collaboration through a blended multi-age and grade-leveled program. Students begin moving between teachers for subjects, while maintaining a homeroom that builds community and a steady adult presence. Curriculum is based around in-depth studies into rich topics that span subject areas and offer continued skill-building and content coverage along with longer term projects, collaborative discussions, and hands-on opportunities for showing understanding.

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| Section 14: Site Visit Report |

**Maine Charter School Commission**

**Monitoring Site Visit Report October 31, 2019**

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| REPORT DATE | October 31, 2019 |
| SCHOOL NAME: | Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences |
| ADDRESS: | 25 Shaker Road, Gray, Maine 04039 |
| GRADES SERVED: | PreK - 6 |
| ENROLLMENT: | 135 students (school year 2018-2019) |
| YEAR OPENED: | September 2013 |

Monitoring Site Visit Purpose

The primary purpose of site visits is to inform authorizer decisions, both imminent, such as assessing a school’s readiness to open, and longitudinal, when a visit is undertaken mid-term as part of routine monitoring.

The purpose of monitoring visits is to gauge the overall progress a school is making toward the goals outlined in its charter. In most cases, the authorizer will already possess some quantitative data about that progress – test scores, attendance rates, and other annual outcomes, so a monitoring visit can help explain the context behind that data and explore the school’s fidelity to its approved program.

Site visits are a mechanism for collecting additional evidence regarding a school’s performance against the expectations memorialized in its contract and contribute to the body of data authorizers utilize to ultimately make renewal recommendations. They also provide staff with the opportunity to review and analyze documentation that may be better understood on-site, such as factors impacting attendance, or rates of academic growth across subgroups. Site visits can also provide a basis for authorizer judgment or intervention where there is limited state assessment data yet available.

Monitoring Site Visit Process

Monitoring Site Visits are based on both the criteria set forth in the school’s performance framework and the school’s alignment with its mission. The categories in the performance framework are student achievement, school climate and family engagement, governance, and finance.

The following participants conducted the monitoring site visit:

* Bob Kautz, Executive Director
* Gina Post, Director of Program Management
* Fern Desjardins, Maine Charter School Commission Liaison
* Roberta Lucas, MDOE
* Collette Sullivan MDOE
* Joe Drago, Consultant
* Joe Mattos, Consultant

The monitoring site visit was conducted on August 22, 2019 at Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences. Team members used the Site Visit Manual to plan for and conduct the visit. Prior to the site visit, team members reviewed documents and other information related to the school’s mission and performance framework.

Key documents and other information reviewed by the team prior to and at the time of visiting included (as applicable):

* School calendar
* Current enrollment and demographics
* Staff roster
* Current organizational chart
* Board meeting minutes
* Board member meeting attendance
* School’s strategic plan
* Current Education Service Provider contract
* Professional Development calendar and agendas
* Staff evaluation tool
* Administrator evaluation tool used by governing board
* Panorama school climate survey results
* School’s self-assessment
* Previous year’s monitoring report
* School’s performance framework
* Copies of current recruitment materials
* Student enrollment application

Focus group interviews were held with groups at the school. Groups were asked a standard set of questions as well as school specific questions created for this visit.

Focus group interviews held by the team:

* Governing Board
	+ Bill Doughty, Board Chair
	+ Doug Lynch
	+ Penny Collins
	+ Sally Morris
	+ Allyson Spencer Reed (former Board Member)
* Executive Director
	+ Jacinda Cotton-Castro
* Leadership Team
	+ Rachel McMullen, Business Manager
	+ Karen Johnson, Administrative Assistant
	+ Joanna Frankel, Coordinator of Teaching and Learning

Monitoring Site Visit Findings

1. **Mission Alignment**
* It is evident that the focus of the Fiddlehead School of the Arts and Sciences is about achieving its Mission (purpose) and Vision (how the Mission is implemented) e.g. a child-centered learning experience based on beliefs that support effective teaching practices and student learning. Decisions made by the Board, Leadership Team and school staff are based on promoting and achieving its mission and vision.
* Parents and the public are very aware of Fiddlehead’s mission and vision. A Fiddlehead marketing brochure clearly defines Fiddlehead’s mission, its beliefs about how children learn and develop, how specific instructional practices support student learning, and Fiddlehead’s goals and outcomes for its graduates. Fiddlehead’s integrity as a school is based on successfully achieving its stated mission and vision.
* The Coordinator of Teaching and Learning plays a key role in supporting the mission of the school via ongoing analysis of student performance data and working directly with teachers to improve their classroom instructional practices through professional development activities and feedback via classroom- based observations.
1. **Student Achievement**
	* Student performance is measured primarily by Pearson’s Work Sampling System (WSS) which is a framework for portfolio-based assessments in grades PK to 5. Developmental checklists document student learning, which is summarized into seven domains and reported to parents three times during the school year. A WSS will be created for the upper grades as those new grades are added (up through grade 8).
	* Comparisons of student performance versus state performance on state assessments (MEA) shows Fiddlehead’s students performing below state performance in ELA and Math. In respect to NWEA assessment results, no comparisons or conclusions have been made because there is only one year of NWEA testing data.
	* There is a lack of student performance information in respect to students’ growth in the areas critical thinking, communication (writing), and problem solving, which are stated as outcomes for Fiddlehead graduates.
2. **School Climate and Family Engagement**
* This cycle of site visits did not include meeting with focus groups of students or parents. However, the Panorama Survey conducted at the end of the 18/19 school year did provide staff, parent and teacher perceptions on School Climate and Family Engagement. These perceptions included (national norms in parentheses):
	+ Parent Survey - High favorable responses for School Learning Climate, 90% (90th percentile) and School Safety, 96% (90th percentile).
	+ Staff Survey - High favorable responses for School Climate, 84% (90th percentile)
	+ Student Survey - Safety, 80% (99th percentile)
	+ Teacher Survey - High favorable responses for school climate, 71% (90th percentile) and Staff and Family Relationships, 80% (90th percentile).
1. **Governance**
* Fiddlehead’s Board of Directors is comprised of capable professionals with varied backgrounds and qualifications in the areas of finance, educational programming, and business and legal environments. It is currently looking for a board member that has a background and/or experience in development and fund raising.
* The Board is singularly focused on supporting Fiddlehead’s mission with appropriate resources, polices, personnel, etc. Potential board members are vetted to insure individuals who want to be on the Fiddlehead board support Fiddlehead’s mission and do not undermine the work of the board with “personal” agendas or issues.
* Board members communicate regularly with each other and with the Executive Director in an open and honest fashion in respect to both immediate and long term matters.
* Board members are very much aware of their responsibilities as board members (e.g. budgets, policies, evaluation of Executive Director) and perform them in a manner that does not micromanage the operation of Fiddlehead.
1. **School Leadership**
* The School Leadership Team is comprised of capable individuals who have experience and expertise in performing their job performance responsibilities in finance, school operations, and for improving teaching practices and student learning.
* Fiddlehead’s Executive Director (Jacinda Cotton-Castro) has been the driving force since the inception of Fiddlehead in 2013. She is a multi-talented individual who possesses the skills and traits as a visionary, business entrepreneur, and effective school leader.
* Jacinda’s professional and personal demeanor promotes an open, trusting and cooperative learning environment for the Fiddlehead Leadership Team and staff.
1. **Finance**
* Recent addition of an experienced business manager will facilitate increased ownership and understanding by the school leadership and key administrative staff of budgeting - especially the allocation of resources to educational staff and program - and of financial results analysis and of reporting to the Board and Finance Committee.
* Given the available resources from conservative planning and growth in enrollment, Fiddlehead is encouraged to use its capacity to fund supplemental and new and innovative student and education related programming.

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| Section 15: Commendations and Considerations |

**Commendations**

* Fiddlehead School has a strong board of varied skills and backgrounds, as well as active sub-committees.
* The school has continued to increase student academic growth and proficiency.
* The school has a Coordinator of Teaching and Learning who supports teachers and instruction with professional development and ongoing feedback.
* Over the past two years, FSAS has devoted itself to honing the communication of its mission, resulting in a school community of understanding and support.

**Considerations**

* While the school has effectively communicated its mission, it appears to be lacking the structure to collect evidence and measure growth for portions of the mission including critical thinking, communication, and problem solving, though some of this may be collected through the student portfolios.
* The school continues to struggle with student attendance and a high level of chronic absenteeism.
* Increased teacher and staff participation on the school climate survey may allow the school to better analyze and goal set around the school’s climate.