

# **Maine Charter School Commission**

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## **Renewal Application for a Public Charter School**

**2018 - 2033**

**Submitted by**

**Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences**

**25 Shaker Road**

**Gray, Maine 04039**

*Primary Contact:*

Jacinda J. Cotton-Castro, Executive Director, (207) 570-3353, [jacinda@fiddleheadschoool.org](mailto:jacinda@fiddleheadschoool.org)

*Application approval by the school's governing board: September 26, 2017*

*Application submission date: September 27, 2017*

**Maine Charter School Commission**

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Augusta, Maine

043330182

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# Maine Public Charter School Renewal Application Form

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**Name of public charter school:** Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences

**Name of entity that holds the charter:** Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences

**Name/Title of primary contact person:** Jacinda J. Cotton-Castro, Executive Director

**Mailing address:** 25 Shaker Road, Gray, Maine 04039

**Telephone:** (207) 657-2244

**Email address:** jacinda@fiddleheadschoo.org

**Physical address of school:** 25 Shaker Road, Gray, Maine 04039

**School's initial opening date:** September 3, 2013

**Current grades enrolled:** Pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade

**Grade levels to be served per *current* charter:** Pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade

**Maximum projected enrollment per *current* charter:** 133 (current) up to 140 maximum enrollment

***Proposed* grade levels to be served at full enrollment for *second charter term*:** Pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade

***Proposed* maximum projected enrollment at full growth for *second charter term*:** 140

## Renewal Application Certification

**Signature of School Leader:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Name:** Jacinda J. Cotton-Castro

**Signature of Board Chair:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed name:** Alison Moser

**Charter Renewal Applications must be submitted to the Maine Charter School Commission in both print and electronic (on a thumb drive) form by 5:00 PM, Friday, September 29, 2017.**

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# Introduction to the School

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Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences, one of Maine's first charter schools, serves Pre-Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. Located in Gray, Maine, the school was approved by its authorizer, the Maine Charter School Commission in February of 2013. It opened to 44 students in September of 2013, and has 133 students enrolled for the current academic year. Each year the waitlist exceeds 90 students with little advertising.

As one of Maine's first public charter schools, we continued to build community connections in our catchment area. We are the first charter school in Maine to include a public pre-school component, and one of only three operating charter schools in the state serving elementary-aged children. Fiddlehead School is an early childhood public educational institution and a model worthy of state and national attention as it implements a progressive, non-traditional approach to educating the whole child in a predominately rural state. Fiddlehead offers a unique approach to education where children of diverse backgrounds are welcomed to explore freely and where their interests and insights are valued and encouraged.

Fiddlehead School provides for the foundational needs of growing children in a community where ALL children, teachers, and families learn together in a nurturing environment where we honor children's curiosities, interests, and uniqueness and facilitate progressive learning at the highest level. At Fiddlehead, children demonstrate competency in state and national standards for literacy, mathematics, science, visual and performing arts (violin, theater, fine arts, etc.), and Spanish as they develop vital skills and habits of mind for 21st century life, work and citizenship, which includes: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and compassion.

The mission of Fiddlehead School is to unfold the potential of children in a respectful, loving environment through authentic and meaningful experiences that sustain a sense of wonder, foster a love of learning, and embrace the interconnectedness of all things. When people walk through the door, they can actually feel the love and community connection that Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences provides.

**Table A – Introductory Information**

Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences			
Year Opened	2013	Current Enrollment	133
Maximum Enrollment	140	Current Grade Span	Pre-K – 5 <sup>th</sup> Grade
Chartered Grade Span	Pre-K – 5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Students on Waitlist	90*

\*= at time of lottery

# Executive Summary

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**Table B – Current Year Enrollment and Demographic Information**  
*(Please note these may adjust slightly when final numbers are submitted in October)*

<b>Enrollment</b>	
Students Enrolled	133
Students on Waiting List	30
<b>Sex</b>	
Male	76
Female	58
<b>Ethnicity/Race</b>	
White	123
Black	6
Hispanic	2
Asian	2
Other	0
<b>Special Populations</b>	
Students with Disabilities	36
English Language Learners	0
Homeless Students	0
Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	44

We are proud of Fiddlehead School and all that we have accomplished in our first four years of existence. We have a highly sought-after, quality progressive educational program that we believe can be a model for all of Maine. We look forward to taking time to deepen and strengthen our approach, while still holding tightly to our philosophy and mission. Looking further ahead, we have enthusiasm for a future that may include replication of our model.

## Educational Program

Our innovative educational model is based on a Reggio Emilia-inspired philosophy and emphasizes emergent curriculum, ecological teaching and learning, arts integration, and inquiry-based learning—all areas of development tied to a high level of learning and building a strong educational foundation. The Reggio Emilia approach is a pedagogy that believes in the potential of each child as a capable learner seeking to make meaning of his or her world. Teachers are researchers and learners, co-constructing knowledge along with the children, and not just holders and givers of knowledge. Key to the program is a child-centered approach to teaching, an emphasis on the principles of respect and responsibility of the individual to self and others, and the importance of community.

Fiddlehead School's emergent curriculum is based on Reggio Emilia principles and practices in which the questions and interests of children guide the direction of learning. At the same time, in order to ensure that our students are developing valued knowledge, skills, and habits of mind as described in the K-12 Maine Learning Results and Common Core State Standards, our teachers draw on established curriculum frameworks in literacy, mathematics, and science as well as resources across multiple learning domains to support teaching, learning, and assessment. In concert with the Reggio Emilia-inspired approach, complementary methods of place-based education, multiple intelligences, emergent curriculum, arts

integration, and inquiry-based learning are included and build upon the work of Piaget, Vygotsky, David and Francis Hawkins, Loris Malaguzzi, and Howard Gardner.

*“Our image of the child is rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent and, most of all, connected to adults and other children.” (Loris Malaguzzi)*

**Commendation:** Climate and discipline are supported with a collaborative, restorative process. Students understand and articulate what amounts to small, middle-size, and big problems and have known processes to work through them. Self-regulation uses natural or logical consequences.

## Vision for the Future

### *Short-Term Focus*

Though we have by no means perfected our model, we have a strong foundation that we wish to continue to build upon. In the Looking to the Future section, we have identified areas of growth for our school to undertake in the next two years to deepen and strengthen our model.

The Board of Directors, in partnership with the Executive Director, families, and staff, will be working through a process of reflection in November of 2017. Through this reflection, we will set short-term goals for the next two years relating to the quality of our model and curriculum. The process will include a Board Retreat, and the findings of this retreat will be brought to the Fiddlehead community. After prioritizing these findings we will partner with an organization that will help us in developing our long-term goals.

### *Community & Local Connections*

At Fiddlehead, the community continues to be viewed as an extension of the classrooms and includes visits to surrounding businesses, parks, libraries, and other attractions such as: The Libby Hill Trails, Shaker Village, The Maine Wildlife Park, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Weather Station (NOAA), Pineland Farms, Norumbega Woods, Gray Public Library, Sabbathday Lake, Gray Transfer Station, Gray-New Gloucester Animal Hospital, Gray Shop and Save, Thompson’s Orchard, and the greenhouse and gardens of Shafer Landscaping. Through hands-on learning based in the real world, problem solving becomes meaningful and students connect more authentically with their community (Sobel, 2004/2005).

As you can see, we are deeply embedded within our community and we will continue to make strong local connections as we grow through the years.

### *Leadership & Governance*

We have a very strong team with highly skilled administration, staff, and Board Members who are passionate and committed to the mission and vision of this organization. The governing board and the administration have clearly defined roles and continue to work on clarity around these roles as the organization evolves. The Governance Committee has also put significant effort into reviewing and refining the protocol for considering and approving new Board Members, and is now in the process of reviewing the bylaws for any needed revision. Goals for the rest of this school year and the beginning of the next include defining the role of the Board and, specifically, the role of the Governance Committee within the Board; building relationships with potential future members toward a more efficient and

effective onboarding process when the need next arises; and considering the benefits and possible recruitment of Board or committee advisors. As part of our reflection and planning process, the Executive Director and Board will continue to strengthen and refine internal communication and roles and responsibilities.

**Commendations from the Maine Charter School Commission:** The Governing Board and the administration have clearly identified roles and work distribution which have evolved over time of the charter.

*Long-Term Vision and Planning*

Rural isolation is a challenge to school choice for children and families within the state of Maine. As described in the Looking to the Future section, we are interested in working with specialists in undertaking a feasibility report for possible future Fiddlehead School replication. With this feasibility report, we may identify other potential locations with crossroads and access to other families where we could continue to aid in the redesign and re-creation of education in Maine by eventually opening more Fiddlehead School locations. The choices in Maine are very limited; traditional-modeled schools (steeped in teach-to-the-test) and private schools (which only a small percentage of families can access and afford) are the only options for most residents. After taking the next few years to further solidify our strong foundation, we believe we will have a responsibility to the future children in Maine to consider replicating our successful model in more rural areas to make choices more accessible.

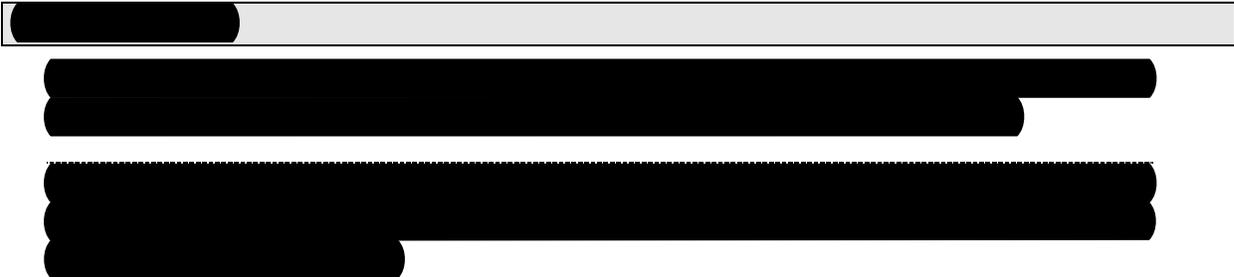
# Looking Back: The Record of Performance

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## Academic Performance

*Indicator & Measure: Student Academic Proficiency: State Assessments - ELA*

**In 3rd , 4th, and 5th grades, the ELA target is:** *The percent of students scoring proficient or above on the ELA portion of the Maine State Assessment will meet or exceed the state’s percentage of students scoring proficient or above.*



[Redacted]



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Both the Work Sampling System and MEA data point to trends we are using to inform our professional development, staffing choices, and instruction and curriculum decisions.

**Our plans to reach targets that we did not meet this past year include:**

- Continuing work on fidelity in regard to math instruction and curriculum, coupled with continued staff-wide professional development on the teaching of mathematics
- Target inter-rater reliability as it pertains to use of the Work Sampling System, including the system’s correlation with Common Core standards

**Evidence of Progress in Performance Targets Related to Academic Performance and Academic Growth**

We have chosen to use the nationally-normed Iowa Test of Basic Skills as the indicator with which to measure student academic growth.

The Iowa Test of Basic Skills publishes data on expected growth for students. These growth expectations vary based on the starting place of the student. From *Measuring Student Growth with the Iowa Assessments, ITP Research Series*: “The Iowa Growth Scores can be used to determine whether an individual student or a group of students has made a year’s worth of growth given the change that was *expected* of that student or students. Expected growth is based on a nationally representative group of students who took the appropriate assessments at the grade level of interest. When a student has grown as much as expected since the previous year, this student is keeping pace with other students in the nation...The Iowa Growth Score represents the increment of the gain score that is different than the expected growth. As with gain scores, the sign of this value is important. If the value is positive, then the student has exceeded expectations in growth. When the value is zero or close to zero, then the student has met expectations in growth. When the value is negative, then the achievement level of the student has not increased as much as would be expected based on a nationally representative sample of students.”

**Table D: Expected Change in Standard Scores on Iowa Test of Basic Skills- Reading**

Grades	Expected Growth if student starts around the 10 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Expected Growth if student starts around the 25 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Expected growth if student starts around the 50 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Expected growth if student starts around the 75 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Expected growth if student starts around the 90 <sup>th</sup> percentile
3 <sup>rd</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup>	9	11	15	19	20
4 <sup>th</sup> to 5 <sup>th</sup>	7	10	14	15	16

**Table E: Expected Change in Standard Scores on Iowa Test of Basic Skills- Math**

Grades	Expected Growth if student starts around the 10 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Expected Growth if student starts around the 25 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Expected growth if student starts around the 50 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Expected growth if student starts around the 75 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Expected growth if student starts around the 90 <sup>th</sup> percentile
3 <sup>rd</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup>	11	13	15	18	23
4 <sup>th</sup> to 5 <sup>th</sup>	10	10	14	18	19

## Gain Scores for ITBS

Gain scores, otherwise known as **observed growth**, quantifies the change in performance from one year to the next. It is calculated by finding the difference between the student's National Standard Score (NSS) in two consecutive years. We have calculated the gain scores from our first two years of ITBS testing for both individual students and classes as a whole, using the NSS.

### Our results

#### Cohort: 3rd grade 2015-2016 to 4th grade 2016-2017

Class Average of Composite Gain Scores= **+16.11**

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% of cohort meeting or exceeding expected growth in reading= **56%**

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% of cohort meeting or exceeding expected growth in math= **33%**

#### Cohort: 4th grade 2015-2016 to 5th grade 2016-2017

Class Average of Composite Gain Scores= **+11.85**

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% of cohort meeting or exceeding expected growth in reading= **54%**

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% of cohort meeting or exceeding expected growth in math= **46%**

Our goal for student growth is consistent with our WSS goals - 65% of students meeting or exceeding expected growth. We did not hit that number last year but ***will continue to work towards it through targeted academic interventions and professional development.***

## Our Strengths

When reviewing the results from our Spring 2017 Panorama Survey, we see some significant strengths that rise to the top for our school and that we plan on maintaining.

### Student Category

- **STUDENTS FEEL EXPECTATIONS ARE HIGH.** Students at Fiddlehead School report 81% favorably regarding Rigorous Expectations, which is 9% above the MCSC elementary average and near the 60th percentile compared to other similar elementary schools across the country.
- **STRONG RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS.** Fiddlehead is near the 70th percentile when compared to other similar elementary schools across the country. Additionally, students at Fiddlehead School report 81% favorable when it comes to Student-Teacher Relationships—7% above the MCSC elementary average.

## Family Category

- **1ST GRADE FAMILIES.** Though the overall topic score is Fiddlehead's second to lowest at 43%, Family Engagement at Fiddlehead School is 29% higher than the MCSC average; compared to other similar elementary schools across the country, it ranks near the 80th percentile. In particular, families of 1st grade students respond 37% above the school average, at 80% favorable. It is noteworthy that this was our only classroom to utilize a private social media group to stay connected and share updates and photos of classroom activity.

## Teacher & Staff Category

- **USEFULNESS OF FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION PROCESS.** Teachers report well above average favorability when it comes to the usefulness of feedback (78% favorability) and the amount learned from the teacher evaluation process at school (61% favorability).
- **STRONG PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.** When it comes to Professional Learning, teachers report most favorably about how valuable professional development opportunities are, with 83% of the staff believing that the opportunities provided are 'quite valuable' or 'extremely valuable'.
- **RESPECT BETWEEN STAFF AND FAMILIES.** With a 9% increase from Spring 2016, Fiddlehead teachers report 82% favorably on Staff-Family Relationships. Most notably, over 80% of teachers believe families are quite or extremely respectful, fair, caring, and friendly.

We address our Areas of Growth from the Panorama Survey in the Looking to the Future section of this application.

## Financial Performance

Fiddlehead School is current in meeting its liabilities, including but not limited to the annual audit, payroll taxes, debt service payments, and employee benefits. We plan to continue our efforts of sustainability and now that we are at nearly full enrollment capacity, planning should be systematic. Within this sustainability mindset we are committed to make every effort to compete on overall compensation and benefit options for our employees.

One of the Finance Committee's goals for this year will be putting in place both a short-term and a long-term financial strategy and diversifying our financial portfolio composition through grant writing and fundraising.

### Key objectives are:

- Increasing our already established reserve account from \$50,000 to \$300,000 within the next 3-5 years
- Developing a special education contingency account
- Setting goals for grant development to target both small and large grants

Fiddlehead School follows Maine public school accounting guidelines and has internal accounting controls in place to safeguard assets. We maintain accurate financial records in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

**Commendations from the Maine Charter School Commission:** Fiddlehead School enjoys parent and community involvement. Fiddlehead families raised close to \$10,000 for the outdoor classroom and music program.

## Organizational Performance

The Board of Directors, in partnership with the Executive Director, will be identifying both Board and Administrative goals for this academic year and reflect on what is working well and what is not and the action steps needed to continue to grow as a progressive Charter School.

One additional staffing need for the 2018-2019 academic year will be the creation of the Atelierista position, which is critical within the Reggio Emilia philosophy and is much like an Artist in Residence. Because of our emphasis on the Arts and Sciences, our Atelierista will be *both* an artist and scientist in residence.

**Commendations from the Maine Charter School Commission:** Fiddlehead School continues to assess and respond to staffing needs with the hiring of a business manager and front desk-community coordinator.

# Looking to the Future

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## Adjustments to the Performance Framework

Extensive work has been done on the framework of Fiddlehead Charter School and our first four years have shown positive results. All that is needed now is time to collect consistent data and use them to refine our instruction for improvement in student learning.

## Planned Changes and Timelines

The first four years of Fiddlehead Charter School saw constant growth through the addition of one new grade each year, and consequently many new staff members, policies, and programs. We dedicated these early years to growing the school as planned while maintaining fidelity to the mission and the model. We intend to take at least the next two years to reaffirm our model and refine and enhance its implementation in a number of ways, described below. We believe taking this time to strengthen our school and collect performance data will deepen our impact on students in Southern Maine and ensure our students are enjoying anticipated social and educational outcomes.

Highlights of our short-term plans are addressed below according to the application outline; Table E details our goals, timelines, and allocated resources. Longer-term plans are described at the end of this section.

## *Education Plan*

**Implementation of mission and vision:** Now that we have reached our full pre-K to 5th grade size, we believe it is important to take some time to deepen and strengthen the ways in which we carry out our mission. In the spring of 2017, staff and Board members returned their focus to examining our values as educators and as a community. Early work in this area led to facilitated staff conversation and self-reflection as well as focused discussions about goals within the Board. This November, the Board will be holding a full-day retreat in order to identify our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Through this process, we will develop & prioritize our goals for the short term.

## *Academic Program*

**Atelierista:** During our growth and development, many classroom teachers came to us with talents ranging from ecological teaching and learning to instruction in clay, theater, and music. One of our goals for the 2018-2019 academic year is to add, finally, the position of Atelierista to our instructional team. The Atelierista has a dual role: to create projects that introduce new concepts to our children, and to connect with classroom projects in order to extend learning, spark student curiosity, and explore learning in new ways. The Atelierista is an essential component of the Reggio Emilia-inspired approach at Fiddlehead School. This person will work with students in our studio—our Atelier, to be created—which will be equipped with a variety of open-ended materials to allow students to explore, experiment, and express themselves. In the studio, children may explore light and shadow with a projector; construction using wooden blocks, cardboard tubes, and boxes; and a wide variety of open-ended materials, clay, and mark-making materials which they can use to create images and tell stories. At our school, the Atelierista will focus on both art and science.

**Literacy & Mathematics:** Improving student outcomes in math & literacy will be another focus. Our Coordinator of Teaching and Learning, along with our teaching staff, is working on goals and curriculum revisions that will boost both math & literacy performance in reaching our Charter Performance Targets, while maintaining fidelity to the model.

**Special Student Populations:** Fiddlehead continues to serve a higher-than-average percentage of students with special needs. This has a heavy impact on our school budget, as well as creating challenges in staff allocation and the implementation of the Reggio Emilia approach. Plans are in place to examine how we allocate staff and to implement changes that will be in keeping with best practices (such as less reliance on 1-on-1 assignments) and with our school values. Fiddlehead has recently hired a new Special Education Director who has many years of experience in the field and seeks to operate from an individualized, child-centered approach. (Also see Addressing Special Issues section.)

**Assessment:** No substantive changes identified

## *School Climate and Discipline*

**Diversity Committee:** We strive for a school culture in which every student who walks through our doors feels not only safe, but welcomed and embraced. In the spring of 2017, we convened a Diversity Committee comprised of both staff and Board members. The Diversity Committee is researching and considering ways in which our school can welcome and support all members of our community, including those who may be most at risk or marginalized, from policies to school events to the language used on

our student forms. Diversity training for staff specifically addressing issues of gender is scheduled for Fall 2017.

**Student Grit:** We believe that the attribute of grit is a natural match with our tenet of student-led learning and exploration, and we are therefore somewhat perplexed by the low student grit results in our Panorama survey. We will therefore put emphasis into identifying ways to foster student grit.

### *Organizational Plan*

**School Calendar & Daily Schedule:** No substantive changes identified

**Student Recruitment & Enrollment:** We will continue to revamp our messaging and branding and to fully develop a marketing strategy. Goals are twofold: attract families who are a natural fit for Fiddlehead but who may be unaware of our program, and accurately present the school's philosophy to interested families so they can make a well-informed decision on whether to enroll.

**Staffing & Human Resources:** Hire Atelierista (see above); expand staff benefit options to improve overall compensation and contribute to employees' satisfaction and retention.

**Management and Operation:** After a period of time spent focusing on deepening and strengthening the implementation of our school model, we may consider a Feasibility Report for future replication of the Fiddlehead model (see long-term goal discussion below).

**Parent and Community Development:** We hope to maintain strong parent involvement and work with parent volunteers to ensure the inclusion of new families. We want to regain the parent involvement we saw in our earliest years and find ways to maintain a small community feel despite our school's growth in size. We will also focus on strengthening the parents' connection to their children's education. This may include suggestions for involvement with student learning at home and inviting parents into the learning through special events at school. We expect these efforts will promote children's curiosity and commitment to learning as well as parents' interest and participation in children's learning.

### *Governance Plan*

**Governing Body:** No substantive changes identified

**Governing Board Composition:** No substantive changes identified

### *Business and Financial Services*

**Budget:** No substantive changes identified

**Financial Management:** No substantive changes identified

**Facilities:** No substantive changes identified

**Transportation:** No substantive changes identified

**Insurance:** No substantive changes identified

**Food Service:** No substantive changes identified

**Closure Protocol:** No substantive changes identified

*Education Service Providers*

No substantive changes identified

**Table E: Short Term Goal Details**

DESCRIPTION OF GOALS	TARGET DATE	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE
Board Retreat	November/Dec 2017	Board & Administration
Continue to develop more clarity on the role of the Board & Administration.	Sept - Nov 2017	Board & Executive Director
Develop future goals in keeping with the values and mission of the school.	2017-18 school year	Board & Executive Director
Survey 2016-2017 graduating class to see how they are doing & gather information to further refine our program.	2017-18 school years	COTL & Staff
Continue to strengthen early literacy and mathematics outcomes.	2017-19 school years	COTL & Staff
Expand and enhance our Arts & Sciences curriculum and programs.	2017-19 school years	Administration & Staff
Continue to develop a growth mindset. Utilize the data that we have been gathering these past few years as a baseline, so that we can use this quantitative and qualitative information for continuous improvement.	2017-19 school years	COTL & Staff
Continue to develop continuity between grades by improving inter-rater reliability within our Work Sampling System. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refine and norm performance indicators</li> <li>• Continue to put out solid local-based assessments</li> </ul>	September 2017 & annually COTL to develop timeline and planning/PD process	COTL & Staff
Refine Fiddlehead School’s messaging and branding and fully develop a marketing strategy (print advertising, website development, social media platforms, etc.) in order to attract families with the right “fit.”	October – December 2017 Staggered media launch to begin January, 2018	Executive Director
Continue to develop PEPG system.	2017-18 school year	PEPG Team

DESCRIPTION OF GOALS	TARGET DATE	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE
Clearly define the melding of the Reggio model with Experiential Learning/lower grades with upper grades in a hands on-minds on learning environment.	2017-18 school year	ED Committee & Administration
Address high percentage of Special Education students and how to maintain model fidelity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake a complete review of special education and how it fits with the Reggio philosophy</li> <li>• Continue to explore the overlap between Special Education students and the Reggio philosophy</li> <li>• Articulate how the Reggio philosophy and the Common Core State standards can be simultaneously upheld</li> </ul>	Beginning December 2017 – through the year	ED Committee & Administration
Continue to build and improve alternative & traditional staff benefits with offerings such as health care and retirement savings.	2017-19 school years	Personnel Committee

**Long-Term Goals - Strategic Planning**

Rural isolation is a real challenge to school choice for children and families in Maine. Fiddlehead Charter School has maintained a lengthy wait list each year, illustrating that families are eager for options in education. With choices so limited, we have begun to consider the possibility of future replication of our model in other rural areas, which would increase accessibility to alternative options.

If the focus on deepening and strengthening our quality of academic and social learning at Fiddlehead over the next two (or more) years proves successful, we will then begin looking into a feasibility study on replication. With approval from the Board at such time, the school would undertake the research necessary to determine if replicating our model in one or more Maine locations would be advised.

Objectives within a feasibility study would include a high level overview of our strategic vision, specific details for rolling out new school(s), risk assessment, and market analysis. We would also explore our organizational capacity, human capital evaluation, and a financial plan. Such a substantive expansion would require additional data analysis and research-based evidence after our initial charter is renewed.

# Addressing Special Issues

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In the first four years of our charter, we had two unanticipated challenges: a high percentage of students with special needs and the pressure exerted on our Reggio Emilia philosophy as we expanded into upper elementary grades. As we work to deepen and strengthen our model, we maintain an eye to both the students with special needs and the growing and changing needs as our students mature. We plan to reconcile these special issues while remaining true to the Reggio Emilia philosophy that is our foundation.

The 2017-2018 school year will include a complete review of how our Reggio Emilia philosophy can best serve our students in special education. We will also consider how our focus on the education of each individual child, key to the Reggio Emilia philosophy, can enhance the individualized education plan (IEP)/Individual Learning Plan (ILP) process. We will continue to explore the overlap between Special Education and the Reggio philosophy, where the individual's learning needs are paramount.

We are committed to ensuring that our students moving to middle school are academically prepared and able to integrate with their peers from other schools without difficulty. Our Executive Director, Board, and teaching staff take seriously the responsibility of providing a quality level of educational instruction that meets Common Core State Standards while remaining true to our underlying Reggio Emilia philosophy. The outgoing class of 2017 enjoyed three years of instruction with the same teacher, and exceeded expectations on standardized testing. We are applying lessons learned within that cohort and looking for opportunities for improvement that can be applied to the third through fifth grade classrooms on an ongoing basis. Early experience has shown that the upper grades require the leadership of a strong and experienced teaching team that understands both the Reggio Emilia philosophy and the importance of academic milestones.

# Appendices

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## Appendix A: Governing Board Turnover

Fiscal Year	Total Membership	Members Joining	Members Departing
2013-14	9	9	3
2014-15	9	1	4
2015-16	6	5	6
2016-17	5	2	1

*Total membership approximates number of Board members as of July 1 of Fiscal Year; current Board has 7 members.*

In our earliest years, the Board saw some movement of members. At the same time, 3 key founding members stayed until the end of their term in June 2016. Since that time, we created a Governance Committee, who put some focus into developing a recruitment process. Through this process, we have created quarterly lists of potential board members to vet. We currently have 7 Members on our Board of Directors and feel this number is ideal.

### Current Board of Directors

Alison Moser, Chair  
Poland, Maine 04274  
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Board Start Date: March 2015

Kathleen Kiley Clements, Vice Chair  
New Gloucester, Maine 04260  
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Board Start Date: January 2016

Alyson Spencer-Reed, Secretary  
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Board Start Date: October 2015

Melanie Prinz, Treasurer  
Gray, ME 04039  
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Board Start Date: March 2017  
Adam Gilman, Member  
New Gloucester, Maine 04260  
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Board Start Date: January 2016

Penny Collins, Member  
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Board Start Date: July 2017

Bill Doughty, Member  
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Board Start Date: July 2017

Jacinda J. Cotton-Castro, Executive Director  
New Gloucester, ME 04260  
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## Appendix B: Staff Turnover

**Commendations from the Maine Charter School Commission:** Fiddlehead School continues to assess and respond to staffing needs with the hiring of a business manager and front desk-community coordinator.

	2013 - 2014	2014 - 2015	2015 - 2016	2016 - 2017
<b>Administrators</b>				
Number and FTEs	2 Total 1.1 FTE	2 Total 1.4 FTE	3 Total 2.4 FTE	3 Total 2.4 FTE
Departures during school year	0	0	0	0
Departures at end of school year	0	0	0	1
% Departures	0%	0%	0%	1 of 3= 33%
<b>Teachers Only</b>				
Number and FTEs	4 Total 4 FTE	9 Total 9 FTE	9 Total 9 FTE	10 Total 10 FTE
Departures during school year	0	2	1	0
Departures at end of school year	1	1	2	3
% Departures	1 of 4 = 25%	3 of 9 = 33%	2 of 9 = 22%	3 of 10 = 30%
<b>Other Staff (TA's, Bus Driver, etc.)</b>				
Number and FTEs	6 Total 5.375 FTE	9 Total 8.375 FTE	13 Total 12.375 FTE	11 Total 10.375 FTE
Departures during school year	1	1	0	0
Departures at end of school year	1	2	3	2
% Departures	2 of 6 = 33%	3 of 9 = 33%	3 of 13 = 23%	2 of 11= 18%

### Explanation of Staff Turnover

We are seeing less turnover in staff over the four-year period. Teachers have seen the most fluctuation. Staff members moved on for a variety of reasons, including family circumstances, retirement, and the fit with the Reggio Emilia model.

## Appendix C: Student Turnover

	2013 - 2014	2014 - 2015	2015 - 2016	2016 - 2017
Number	44	79	98	123
Departures during school year	4	4	4	4
Departures at end of school year	5	7	4	4
% Departures	9 of 44 = 20%	11 of 79 = 14%	8 of 98 = 8%	8 of 123 = 7%

### Explanation of Student Turnover

Families have left our school for a variety of reasons, including: philosophical differences, moving away, families transitioning their child(ren) to the public middle school (starts in 5th grade), and moving to a school with a larger peer group.

As the data shows, we are now experiencing a smaller percentage of total departures as we continue to grow.

## Appendix D: Projected Budget

Assets	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8
Current Assets				
Cash and cash equivalents	\$285,947.26	\$250,000.00	\$250,000.00	\$250,000.00
Internal balances	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Intergovernmental Receivables	\$26,380.50	\$26,644.31	\$26,910.75	\$27,179.86
Inventories	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Depreciable capital assets, net of accumulated depreciation	\$37,852.21	\$95,252.21	\$81,084.21	\$66,916.21
Total Assets	\$350,179.97	\$371,896.52	\$357,994.96	\$344,096.07
Deferred Outflows of Resources				

### Liabilities

Total Current Liabilities	\$48,631.75	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Accrued Summer Salaries	\$60,235.76	\$62,042.83	\$63,904.12	\$65,821.24
Accrued vacation	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Accrued interest	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Accrued Expenses	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Unearned Revenue	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Long-term liabilities				
Portion due or payable within one year:				
Capital lease obligations	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Bonds payable	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Portion due or payable after one year				
Compensated absences	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Capital lease obligations	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Notes payable	\$57,400.00	\$43,232.00	\$29,064.00	\$14,896.00
Net pension liability	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total liabilities	\$166,267.51	\$105,274.83	\$92,968.12	\$80,717.24
Deferred Inflows of Resources	\$0.00			
Net Position				
Net investment in capital assets	-\$19,547.79	\$52,020.21	\$52,020.21	\$52,020.21
Restricted				
Special revenue funds	\$0.00			
Capital project funds	\$0.00			
Unrestricted	\$203,460.25	\$214,601.47	\$213,006.63	\$211,358.61
Total Net Positions	\$183,912.46	\$266,621.68	\$265,026.84	\$263,378.82

# Endnotes

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Edwards, C., K. Gandini, and G. Forman (eds.). *The Hundred Languages of Children*. (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Press, 1993).