**Report on 7th Grade Pre-Opening**

**Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences**

**September 8, 2020**

On August 18, 2020, Maine Charter School Commission (MCSC) staff met via Zoom with members of the Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences’ (FSAS) governing board, the Head of School, and staff members to review the school’s pre-opening requirements for the new grade seven.

After a discussion of enrollment, educational programming, staffing, facility, and budget, MCSC staff believe the school is prepared to open for grade seven.

Maine Charter School Commission Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences

Gina Post Jacinda Cotton-Castro, Executive Director

Amy Allen Doug Lynch, Board Member

Bob Kautz Bill Doughty, Board Chair

Kerry Loupe, 6th Grade Teacher

Lori Towle, Coord of Teaching & Learning

John Wensman, 7th Grade Teacher

Lee Ann Arnold, Special Education Director

**Enrollment**

The 7th grade currently has 14 students enrolled. The plan was based on 16 students. The school did have 15 enrolled, but a new student decided to go elsewhere (due to COVID circumstances).

**Facility**

FSAS got the official letter from USDA for purchasing the building which the school had previously shared with Fiddlehead Center. Fiddlehead Center owned it and sold it to FSAS. FSAS now has 15,000 square feet, which it is finding helpful for social distancing. The building has had some minor work done this summer (painting, floor polishing, etc.) and is ready for students.

FSAS reports the building is going to cost more in the first half of this school year, but in the second half of this year the cost of ownership will decrease greatly. The rate is 2.25% - locked in for 30 years.

**Budget**

FSAS reported that the budgetary impact of having 14 students in 7th grade instead of the anticipated 16 students is minimal. It was reported that when the school is fully enrolled with 20-21 students in each grade level PreK-8, the school’s financial situation will improve. In the meantime, the school reports it has reserved funds to be prepared.

It was stated by FSAS that next year, school year ‘21-’22, will be a tough year financially because of the increase in staff this year (addition of teacher for the 5/6/7 team, school nurse, and Remote Learning Coordinator), which will add to the budget to fund next year. Adding 8th grade students next year will help to balance, but the anticipation of a reduction in state funding causes concern.

The MCSC team and FSAS team had a conversation about budgeting accordingly for the use of CARESF.

**Educational Program**

The previous Coordinator of Teaching & Learning has left FSAS and a new hire has taken the position. She has met with each of the grade 5-7 teachers and has been getting to know what their goals are how she can support them.

Last year the 5th and 6th grade teachers worked together as a multi-age group. The teachers are trying to increase the connectedness across grades, with a vision of grades 5-6 and grades 7-8 using a two-year looping curriculum. The teachers think this year they can continue some of that; however, each class is separated now by grade level for social distancing purposes. They hope to continue developing units and figure out how they best fit in a four-year sequence of literacy, math, science and history.

The new hire for the grades 5-7 team will be teaching math for grades 5, 6 and 7. FSAS wanted someone for this new classroom who would come in and be able to support students as they advance through the grade levels. This person has participated in the math program (Eureka) training this summer and he’ll be starting off the school year establishing a growth mindset in math. The plan for next year, when 8th grade is added, is to hire another person with a math or science background and have two teams that are balanced.

The school is adapting the Work Sampling System (WSS) for its older students. FSAS likes the WSS because it reflects the accomplishments of the whole child and including the social emotional element.

FSAS has hired a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW). The skills of the new LCSW are going to add great value to the team in supporting students through reentry during COVID-19 and throughout the year.

Speech and Occupational Therapist is in place (contracted services) and can accommodate the additional grade level. A teaching assistant will be shared at the upper grade levels, as compared to the lower grades where there is a TA for each class. An additional special education teacher is being hired. There will now be two special educators; one to serve the lower grades and one to serve the upper grades.

The school also has a ½ time Response to Intervention (RTI) Coordinator and has created, and hired for, the position of Remote Learning Coordinator (which will assist mostly upper grades).