

SNOW POND Arts Academy Pre-opening Visit

August 12, 2016

SNOW POND Arts Academy has substantively met all the pre-opening requirements for a charter school. This was confirmed in the Review Team's on-site evaluation, conducted August 12, 2016 at their school site, 8 Goldenrod Lane, Sidney, Maine.

Governance

The school's Board of Directors, led by its chair, Anne Hammond, has taken a leadership role in ensuring the school is staffed, enrollment targets are being met, training has been provided for staff by K12 for the blended learning, and assuring the school will be ready to open. The board has a wide range of skills that should serve the school well.

Enrollment

The school did not need to hold a lottery by April 1, 2016, as enrollments did not require one. The school engaged in an aggressive recruitment campaign to acquaint the catchment area and beyond with the Academy and the opportunity to enroll. These efforts included television appearances, direct mailings, open houses with tours and pizza, newspaper articles, and appearances at public events. This resulted in the school enrollment increasing from an initial 35 students in June to a present (9-1-2016) enrollment of 109 students, with 6 more offered the opportunity to enroll. This places their enrollment within the contracted range. The enrollment is:

- Grade 9: 54 students
- Grade 10: 37 students
- Grade 11: 18 students

The review team complimented the school for its very positive recruitment program and enrollment results. Students are coming to the school mostly from the catchment and central Maine area and there are seven students who will be residing on the campus. Additional preparations are being made to be able to accommodate some students needing a residential venue with area host families.

After acceptance of enrollment to the school, students are given an arts interest area survey that is used for program and staffing planning purposes.

Staffing

The board has hired Rich Abramson to serve as Head of School and as Special Education Director. Mike Guarino will serve as Executive Director, J. Jurdak as Business Advisor and H. Neal as Accountant. All are experienced for their position and the Special Education Director is certified for the position. Academic, special education, and arts staff have been hired. The academic staff has been trained by K12 trainers in the use of the curriculum and in blended learning techniques. All staff has completed fingerprinting and background checks.

Facilities and Safety

The review team was impressed with the condition of the buildings and the renovations that have been made. The campus is very beautiful, serves a summer music camp, has the needed facilities, and is well equipped for the purposes of the Snow Pond Arts Academy. There were a few details that were being completed to be able to receive the certificate of occupancy. The leadership is confident that these details will be completed in time for the opening of school.

Budget

The review team had previously discussed a budget for an enrollment of 75 students, an amount anticipated prior to the time of the pre-opening review. Since that time, actual enrollment has increased to a level that is addressed by the approved original budget. The positive results of their fundraising efforts to support the school were reviewed.

Pre-Opening Checklist

The review team and the school representatives reviewed the pre-opening checklist and the following items were requested from the school:

- Membership of shared services oversight committee (received)
- Certificate of occupancy (received)
- Membership of Board teams (received)
- Staff resumes
- Student handbook
- Emergency contact list (received)
- Transportation contract and routes
- School Nurse and health advisor (received)
- Health and wellness plan
- Staff information grid as to certification and assignment

Commendations

The review team was impressed with the commitment of the board, the preparation for this pre-opening visit, the work of the administrative team, the quality of the preparation of the campus for the Snow Pond Arts Academy, the results of their recruitment and enrollment efforts, and the cooperation of the Snow Pond Center for the Arts. The board and administration of the Snow Pond Arts Academy appear to have a strong understanding of their mission and responsibilities they have in creating a quality charter school for their students and families.

Review Team Members

John Bird, Chair, Jana Lapoint, and Shelley Reed