

Annual Monitoring Report SY2024-25



November 2025

Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences

Board President: Bill Doughty

Executive Director: Jacinda Cotton-Castro



NARRATIVE

Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences, located in Gray, is in its thirteenth year of operation and serves 177 students from 28 cities and towns in the surrounding area.

28.81%% of FSAS students have an IEP, higher than the state average, while 28.25% of families are economically disadvantaged – lower than the state average.

High-level takeaways from SY2024-25:

Strengths:

- Reading Growth and Proficiency
- Math Growth
- Subgroup performance
- Family satisfaction

Areas of Focus:

- Math Proficiency
- Student attendance
- School Culture and Climate (Students, Teachers, and Staff)

Student Achievement

FSAS administers the Maine Through Year Assessment to assess student proficiency in Grades 3-8 and is meeting expectations in Reading, while approaching expectations in Math - similar to results last year. Subgroup performance on the Maine Through Year Assessment is strong, with students in some grade levels outperforming their peers by over 40 percentage points.

After having received two waivers for the administration of the NWEA MAP Growth Assessments, FSAS was required to begin using it again in the Fall of 2024. The school exceeded its expectations in Reading after having not met expectations last year and has improved outcomes in math growth from approaching to meeting expectations.

Subgroup performance on the NWEA MAP assessment is strong with subgroups exceeding expectations in Reading and Language Usage, and meeting expectations in Math.



Chronic absenteeism continues to be a concern. In Cumberland County, chronic absenteeism hovers around 19%, while FSAS reports that 47.62% of its student population were considered chronically absent this past year.

School Climate and Family Engagement

The Maine Charter School Commission requires that schools administer the Panorama school climate survey annually. For the third year in a row, FSAS students, teachers, and staff responded unfavorably to the survey questions. Family results; however, remain strong. We encourage the FSAS governing board and administration to prioritize school climate and culture in the upcoming school year.

Organizational Sustainability

The FSAS governing board meets regularly, but the “timely posting” of board meeting agendas and approved meeting minutes remains a concern and should be an area of focus in the upcoming school year.

The board completed only 26% of its annual board training requirements and for the third year in a row is not meeting framework expectations.

FSAS submitted 70% of its required documents on time in SY2024-25, a decrease from 81% the year before.

Financial Management and Viability

Financial statements used to calculate 3rd Quarter outcomes were due on 5/15/25 and received on 8/20/25. Financial statements used to calculate 4th Quarter outcomes were due on 8/15/25 and received on 9/16/25.

During FY25, FSAS contracted with a financial services firm to perform a review of its financial positions and manage its accounting functions. The school expects to meet deadlines and produce accurate reports during FY26.

Based on FY25 4th quarter financials, 50% of the financial metrics on the Performance Framework were high risk. Lower enrollment for the SY24-25 resulted in a lower state subsidy for FY25 and an out of district placement drew down cash reserves. Enrollment has improved and the school has added a preschool class with 24 students which will boost the available subsidy in FY26. The school engaged the services of Runyon, Kersteen and Ouelette, Certified Public Accountants and received a clean financial audit for FY24, although the report indicated the school was not in compliance with their USDA loan reserve requirements as monthly payments into a cash reserve account were not made for six months during FY24. In addition, the report noted the school did not complete expenditure testing requirements on their Federal audit. FSAS created an updated system of compliance to rectify these deficiencies.



School Mission and Student Persistence

Student persistence remains a strength for the school with 96% of students persisting throughout the school year and 95% of students submitting an intent to re-enroll for the upcoming school year.

PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK OUTCOMES

Exceeding	Meeting	Approaching	Not Meeting
-----------	---------	-------------	-------------

Student Achievement

Proficiency	
<p>Maine Through Year Assessment (ELA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade 3 (Approaching) - 47% of FSAS students in grade 3 are “at or above state expectations” compared to 61% statewide per the Acacia platform Grade 4 (Meeting) - 67% of FSAS students in grade 4 are “at or above state expectations” compared to 64% statewide per the Acacia platform Grade 5 (Not Meeting) - 44% of FSAS students in grade 5 are “at or above state expectations” compared to 66% statewide per the Acacia platform Grade 6 (Approaching) - 58% of FSAS students in grade 6 are “at or above state expectations” compared to 70% statewide per the Acacia platform Grade 7 (Exceeding) - 78% of FSAS students in grade 7 are “at or above state expectations” compared to 68% statewide per the Acacia platform Grade 8 (Exceeding) - 85% of FSAS students in grade 8 are “at or above state expectations” compared to 60% statewide per the Acacia platform 	<p>Meeting</p> <p>Between \geq-5% and <5% of state average of schools “at or above state expectations”</p>
<p>Maine Through Year Assessment (Math)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade 3 (Not Meeting) - 34% of FSAS students in grade 3 are “at or above state expectations” compared to 63% statewide per the Acacia platform 	<p>Approaching</p> <p>Between \geq-15% and <-5% of state average of schools “at or above state expectations”</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade 4 (Meeting) - 53% of FSAS students in grade 4 are “at or above state expectations” compared to 55% statewide per the Acacia platform Grade 5 (Not Meeting) - 31% of FSAS students in grade 5 are “at or above state expectations” compared to 53% statewide per the Acacia platform Grade 6 (Approaching) - 33% of FSAS students in grade 6 are “at or above state expectations” compared to 45% statewide per the Acacia platform Grade 7 (Meeting) - 40% of FSAS students in grade 7 are “at or above state expectations” compared to 39% statewide per the Acacia platform Grade 8 (Exceeding) - 50% of FSAS students in grade 8 are “at or above state expectations” compared to 41% statewide per the Acacia platform 	
Maine Through Year Assessment – Subgroups (ELA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female (Meeting) Male (Meeting) Students with IEPs (Exceeding) Economically Disadvantaged (Meeting) 	Meeting Between ≥-5% and <5% of state average of schools “at or above state expectations”
Maine Through Year Assessment – Subgroups (Math) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female (Meeting) Male (Approaching) Students with IEPs (Meeting) Economically Disadvantaged (Meeting) 	Meeting Between ≥-5% and <5% of state average of schools “at or above state expectations”
Growth	
NWEA MAP Assessment (Reading)	Exceeding - 59%
NWEA MAP Assessment (Language Usage)	Exceeding - 56%
NWEA MAP Assessment (Math)	Meeting - 45%
NWEA MAP Assessment – Subgroups (Reading) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students with IEPs (Exceeding) Economically Disadvantaged (Meeting) Female (Exceeding) Male (Meeting) 	Exceeding Exceeds 55%
NWEA MAP Assessment – Subgroups (Language Usage) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students with IEPs (Meeting) 	Exceeding



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economically Disadvantaged (Exceeding) Female (Exceeding) Male (Exceeding) 	Exceeds 55%
NWEA MAP Assessment – Subgroups (Math) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students with IEPs (Meeting) Economically Disadvantaged (Meeting) Female (Meeting) Male (Meeting) 	Meeting Between 45%-54.9%
Other	
Reading on Grade Level – 3 rd Grade	Reported as Required
Student Attendance/Chronic Absenteeism	47.62% - NEO Reported

School Climate and Family Engagement

Panorama School Climate Survey – Family Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Climate - 99th Percentile Safety - 99th Percentile School Fit - 99th Percentile 	Exceeding 3 of the 3 required scales are 50% or higher when compared to like schools nationally
Panorama School Climate Survey – Student Results (Grades 3-5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Climate - 10th Percentile Safety - 40th Percentile Rigorous Expectations - 10th Percentile Teacher/Student Relationships - 10th Percentile 	Not Meeting Fewer than 2 of the required scales are 50% or higher when compared to like schools nationally
Panorama School Climate Survey – Student Results (Grades 6-8) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Climate - 40th Percentile Safety - 40th Percentile Rigorous Expectations - 40th Percentile Teacher/Student Relationships - 40th Percentile 	Not Meeting Fewer than 2 of the required scales are 50% or higher when compared to like schools nationally
Panorama School Climate Survey – Teacher Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Climate - 60th Percentile Leadership - 40th Percentile Professional Learning - 40th Percentile Feedback and Coaching - 10th Percentile 	Not Meeting Fewer than 2 of the required scales are 50% or higher



	when compared to like schools nationally
Panorama School Climate Survey – Staff Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Climate - 50th Percentile • Leadership - 40th Percentile • Professional Learning - 60th Percentile • Feedback and Coaching - 30th Percentile 	Approaching 2 of the 4 of the required scales are 50% or higher when compared to like schools nationally
Panorama Survey Action Plan - <i>School developed + implemented plan</i>	Meeting

Organizational Sustainability

Governing Board Effectiveness	Low Risk
Board Meetings Held in Accordance with Bylaws and FOAA	11 Meetings Held
Timely Publication of Board Meeting Agendas and Approved Minutes	2 Agendas/6 Minutes
Reporting Accuracy and Timeliness - <i>70% on time; 95% accurate</i>	Approaching
Board Training - <i>23 requirements; 6 completed (26%)</i>	Not Meeting
Facility Meets Local and State Requirements	Meeting

Financial Management and Viability*

Near Term Measures	
Current Ratio	Low Risk
Unrestricted Days Cash on Hand - <i>37 Days Cash on Hand</i>	Moderate Risk
Enrollment Variance	High Risk
Debt Default - <i>None</i>	Low Risk
Sustainability Measures	
Total 3-Year Margin	High Risk
Debt to Asset Ratio	Low Risk
2-Year Cash Flow	High Risk
Financial Obligations	High Risk
Other	
Financial Planning and Budgeting - <i>School submitted 3-Year Plan</i>	Meeting

*Based on FY25 QTR4 financials

School Mission and Student Persistence

Mission and Key Design Implementation	Meeting
---------------------------------------	----------------



Student Persistence: School Year - 171 of 177 students (96%)	Exceeding
Student Persistence: Year-to-Year - 151 of 158 students (95%)	Exceeding

School Customization

Clear classroom standards and education program.	Exceeding - 100%
Assessments used to document learning.	Exceeding - 100%

SCHOOL WRITTEN ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT

Highlights - Academic Year 2024/2025

What we have learned and how we grew this past year:

- Continued to LIFT Fiddlehead up and review programs as they existed prior to the pandemic, and what is needed now.
- Developed a NEW SPED TA program - push into classrooms.
- Awarded ONE Federal Grant: 2nd Climate Education PD Grant!
- Curriculum Framework fully developed and training in place.
- FOURTH 8th Grade Graduation held. 8th grade students also worked on Fiddlehead School's CAPSTONE project and presentations.
- HELD 95% of staff for next year!
- Developed a mentor program for staff.

It was overall a fantastic year. I certainly believe we still have held true to our Mission and in the end STRONGER than ever. Thankfully, we retained 95% of our Lead Classroom Teachers, and added new positions in our Positive Behavior Interventionist, as well as finding a 3rd Special Education Case Manager for next year!

Our student enrollment is at capacity for next year (218 students) as our school CONTINUES to offer grades Pre-K through 8th Grade, and adding an additional Pre-K classroom.

Our COTL (Coordinator of Teaching & Learning) continues with Anne Stires for the lower grades. Anne brought to our school this year the experience and a deep understanding of our approach and goals for our school. She worked closely with the staff in Grades Pre-K through 4th Grade. The Climate Ed Grant will help us with climate integration within our curriculum and adding in Seal Rossignol, as our point person for the upper grades.



And our Principal, Jason Manjourides, has gained traction from his deep experience as Principal and will continue in this position for next year.

The learning for our school continues to focus on reflecting on our curriculum model and really develop continuity and consistency from grade to grade.

Our Board is truly a working BOARD of Directors and is working hard to continue to develop its membership. We have one Board member that is terming out, and 3 more new members to join us this August. The Board fully “gets” the mission and is beginning its new onboarding process starting this summer. We added a YURT in the backyard for onsite nature based programming, art & Spanish.

We have re-built our culture and the trust within our four walls and around us after a nearly devastating pandemic.

We know there is more work to be done, but we also feel loved and supported by our families – both the children and the parents. Both the Board of Directors and the staff are ready to move forward on the re-visioning that is needed to continue to grow and flourish.

What is student success? Our School-Wide Goals for 2024-2025

We have just completed our Comprehensive Needs Assessment – and continue to work on developing our Math scores and growth, particularly in the upper grades. The math teacher we hired for grades 6th-8th has shown us that with this instruction, our overall math scores have climbed once again. We are also committed to work on staff issues such as evaluation, recruitment, and retention. This year we were able to retain 95% of employees! We would also like to focus on sub recruitment, a mentoring program, and a resource room/learning lab.

Are we an Academic Success?

Population Served - Fiddlehead serves Pre-K through 8th Grade. We held our fourth 8th Grade Graduation at our offsite location in New Gloucester, at Norumbega YURTS! continue to be taught in all of our classrooms as it has proven very valuable in weaving a connection between all of the students in our building.

Educational Philosophy - Based on the recommendation of the Executive Director and the Board of Directors, our Coordinator of Teaching & Learning, in concert with our staff, the Education Committee & the Board of Directors have finished our MODEL framework grade by grade that we will use for probably future expansion. This year we strengthened our focus seasonally documenting our model based on Emergent Curriculum Approach for grades Pre-K through 2nd; Inquiry Based Approach for



grades 3rd through 5th; and Project Based Approach for Grades 6th-8th – with an 8th Grade Capstone. The Capstone was one again a BIG success this past spring.

Fiddlehead School Philosophy Statement

What We Strive For

Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences is committed to the growth and development of the whole child – socially, emotionally, physically, academically, intellectually, and artistically. The goal of a Fiddlehead education is for students to build a toolbox of habits, skills, and wonderings to drive a lifelong love of learning. We aim to empower learners to seek answers to their own questions and to develop the means necessary for this endeavor.

What We Believe

At Fiddlehead, seven core educational beliefs drive our practices throughout the grades:

- 1. We believe children are capable, competent, and innately curious. They are the co-constructors of their own learning. Our school maintains a deep respect for children and childhood.*
- 2. We believe the foundation of learning lies in habits of mind such as asking questions, looking closely, making reasonable predictions, and engaging in dialogue. Students are encouraged to express their thought processes orally and in writing. In addition, students are taught executive functioning skills such as planning, organization, and self-control.*
- 3. We believe in teachers as facilitators of learning, closely observing children, assessing understanding through a variety of approaches, and using this knowledge to help students extend their thinking. We offer students numerous materials and methods with which to express themselves and their understandings, guiding learning through diverse pathways.*
- 4. We believe in learning as a social endeavor, taking place in the cultural context of the child, family, school, and broader community. To this end, we see school and family as partners in a child's education.*
- 5. We believe that social and emotional development are important cornerstones of education. Our students learn to respect diversity in all its forms, problem solve social conflicts, and be advocates for themselves and others.*
- 6. We believe in connecting students to the larger world outside the school walls through relationships with community resources and the natural environment. We help students cultivate a sense of place and understanding of, and appreciate for, the interconnectedness of the world in which they live.*
- 7. We believe in the importance of documenting student work and experiences in order to make learning visible to students, families, and our school community.*



What Our Approach Looks Like in the Early Childhood Grades

Our early childhood program (Pre-K and K) is play-based, allowing for student exploration. Teachers facilitate social learning, helping our youngest students gain the skills necessary to work and play with others and navigate a group learning environment.

In the early years we balance emergent curriculum, in which projects and topics arise from the interests and questions of children, with curriculum that is more teacher-directed.

In our 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.

What Our Approach Looks Like in the Lower Grades 1st & 2nd

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, etcetera 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.

What Our Approach Looks Like in Grades 3rd, 4th & 5th

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.

What Our Approach (will) Look Like in Grades 6th, 7th & 8th

Students in grades 6 through 8 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 study 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 and understanding.



What Our Graduates Can Do

Fiddlehead students leave our school with the skills necessary to think critically, collaborate with others, communicate effectively, and problem solve creatively. Because Fiddlehead education focuses on the whole child, our students develop not only broad academic proficiency, but also skills such as confidence, compassion, and resilience that are vital for constructive & impactful citizenship. Our students are encouraged to engage with the world around them as they continue to learn and grow.

Enrollment

- *218 Letters of Intent to Enroll were received for September 2025, an all-time high. We saw this in particular with Pre-K which prompted us to add an additional classroom.*
- *FRL - 36%*
- *Sixteen school districts (28 towns) represented.*

Mission, Core Values & Academic Program

Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences is inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach to teaching and learning. As described in our educational philosophy statement, we hold some fundamentals of the Reggio Approach as core to our program throughout the grade span:

- ***The image of the child*** - children are viewed as capable, curious and competent, active in the construction of knowledge and the pursuit of relationships. Students are the protagonists of their own learning.
- ***Children's relationships and interactions within a system*** - children are seen in relation to their family, school, community and the larger society.
- ***The role of families*** - families are vital to their children's learning and to the learning community. Family participation is invited and encouraged.
- ***The role of space*** - space encourages interaction, relationship and communication. The environment is considered "the third teachers".
- ***Teachers and children as partners in learning*** - teachers are considered researchers and co-constructors of knowledge with the children. Collaboration is fostered between the children, teachers, parents and the community. Children assist each other in learning taking on the role of teacher, and teachers take on the role of facilitator and learner.

Fiddlehead Practices

Curriculum - After carefully planning a rich and thoughtful environment, teachers observe children and document their learning. They then reflect, plan and take action. This dynamic curriculum process includes assessment, goal setting, and reflection on the part of both teachers and students.



Interdisciplinary, project-based learning is central. Children engage in investigations both in the classroom and outdoors. Students explore their community, identify and solve problems, and express their ideas and understandings through a variety of forms and media, from observational drawings and mathematical explanations to stories and songs.

Basic skills are taught and practiced not just in isolation, but as a means to a greater end. The building blocks of learning form the foundation upon which students can argue their opinions, express their thinking in a variety of ways, analyze new information, and synthesize new knowledge with prior understandings.

Documentation - Teachers document children's learning through notes, photographs and examples of children's work. This makes learning visible to children, parents and teachers, and informs next steps in curriculum. Older children participate in documentation of learning. We have seen great strides in our documentation process, which includes student self-reflection. This year we instituted a new school wide documentation format that is used for classroom communication and also monthly whole school newsletters. This format focuses the communication on WHAT, SO WHAT, and NOW WHAT: WHAT (what the students or class did), SO WHAT (why that experience was important; what students learned); and NOW WHAT (how we might facilitate the learning further, go deeper, or extend). Framing documentation in this way brings us beyond what children did to what they learned and begins to reveal for families and the larger community the deeper meaning behind students' activities and experiences.

Assessment - Fiddlehead uses a broad and evolving portfolio of assessment to monitor and report student growth. This includes classroom work, projects, documentation of conversations and experiences; curriculum-based assessments and rubrics; and normed assessments and standardized tests. We implement a balance of formative and summative assessment systems that can help plan instruction; identify students in need of additional support, intervention or challenge; reveal trends within classes and across grade levels; track student growth; and supply necessary data for reporting out to families, the Charter Commission, and the DOE. Documented below are some cornerstones of our holistic assessment system:

- **Portfolios and Documentation.** Teachers identify children's thinking and learning through observation and documentation. Documentation is an ongoing and critical component of the assessment process and integral to the Reggio Emilia Approach. Students are engaged in assessing their own work and their involvement in this assessment process increases with age and maturity, fosters independent thinking, creativity, goal setting, organizational skills, and use of technology. Documentation methods include audio, video, photography, and work samples. Student work is displayed in and around the school and in individual portfolios.



- **Work Sampling System (WSS) from Pearson.** *The WSS is a framework for portfolio-based assessment of each student, grades PK through 8th. Teachers use developmental checklists to document, and then to summarize children's growth in each domain, and prepare summary reports to share with families three times per year. Teachers, children and parents view, discuss and reflect on these records of learning as a dynamic process and tailor instruction to the needs of individual students. This method of assessment replaces a traditional student grading system. The WSS includes developmental guidelines and checklists in seven major curriculum areas, with a recent revision including performance indicators tied to state and national standards, including the Common Core. Summary and disaggregated reports are prepared to inform student learning and the curriculum, and display effectiveness in the teaching and learning process. Ongoing professional development has ensured understanding of the WSS performance indicators and increased inter-rater reliability among teachers. Assessment results are provided to the Maine Charter School Commission, as required for program accountability purposes, shared with parents to show progress, and used by teachers to inform instruction. The school's administration and board review results and use the information to inform strategic planning and ensure performance measures are met.*
- **Standardized Assessments.**
 - **Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA).** *Assessments were conducted for grades 2 through 8 and students took the test three times this year – fall, winter, and spring. 2nd grades take the MAP Growth Assessment in both reading and math. 3rd-8th graders take MAP Growth in reading, math, and language, as well as the Through Year Assessment in both reading and math.*
 - **Maine Science Assessments.** *Were conducted for 5th and 8th graders in the spring.*

We have a data analysis protocol to examine the results of the NWEA. This analysis focuses on making the data usable – for planning classroom curriculum and areas of focus, for identifying student learning gaps or areas in need of intervention, and for matching instruction to meet student growth goals. We use NWEA as one of the measures by which we identify students in need of RTI services. As always, we continue to analyze and refine our practices. We continue to debrief our use of the NWEA and work toward its efficiency and efficacy within our program and assessment portfolio.

Special Student Populations

We are starting to see our percentage of special education students decrease, nearing close to 26% anticipated for next year, from an all-time high of 32%. Each student has different needs, and the team continues to work to meet those needs.



Over the past few weeks, we have worked on projecting what our special education needs may be for next year. This year we had fifty-seven identified Special Education students, and we are anticipating 52 students next year based on the knowledge we have to date of our incoming students. **We continue to see a rise in Autism Spectrum children at our school and we will continue to build our skills around Autism spectrum experience for our students.**

Are Students Academically Successful?

We continue to hone our program to ensure academic success for all students. This past year was about holding tightly to what we have established and reflecting on areas of improvement.

This was our seventh year implementing a more extensive RTI (Response to Intervention) program. This system provided a framework for identifying students in need of support and supplying the proper interventions to aid in their academic success. We also began to develop more depth and clarity within each tier of the structure. The RTI program continues to provide direct intervention to individuals and small groups of students and will act as a resource to classroom teachers implementing Tier I interventions in their classrooms. And even though it has been successful, we added a Special Education Teacher Assistant in each classroom to support the Lead Teacher and the students. More Eureka Math training will continue this year as we onboard new staff members. We have learned that Eureka Math is better suited in the upper grades to see math gains.

In alignment with our philosophy of looking at the whole child/whole student, we continue to define academic success broadly and by numerous measures. We consider a student's performance on standardized tests as one data point in the whole of a child's portfolio of work. This body of work includes success with classroom curricula and projects, success on classroom-based assessments, and success gauged through observations of children at work and play. In addition to those aspects that are more easily measured, we look for student success in the realm of approach to learning. This includes attributes such as curiosity, persistence, resilience, and more.

What do test scores say about the school's academic success?

Academic Growth - NWEA Scores Fall 2024 - Spring 2025

Proficiency

- 63% of 3rd-8th grade students are at or above the state expectation in reading.
- 40% of 3rd-8th grade students are at or above the state expectation in math.
- 47% of 3rd grade students are at or above the state expectation in reading.

Growth

- 59% of 2nd-8th graders met their fall-spring reading growth goal as set by NWEA.
- 56% of 2nd-8th graders met their fall-spring language growth goal as set by NWEA.



- 45% of 2nd-8th graders met their fall-spring math goal as set by NWEA.

Are we implementing our academic program as we envisioned?

We are implementing our program even better than we envisioned, ESPECIALLY in the lower grades! Our main concern is to be responsible to the students we serve in our building. We have found over those past TWELVE years that the students who are attracted to our school might need something slightly different than we had anticipated. To address the needs of our population, we must be able to adapt and be flexible while also keeping core values intact.

We continue to hold our philosophy tightly, staying true to core values about children, teachers, and the teaching and learning process. At the same time, we have found over these past TWELVE years an increasing number of students who require greater scaffolding in order to be successful at structures requiring self-regulation. This is a place where we can be responsive – teaching the necessary skills and building more external structure in our program while also retaining the choice, exploration, wonder, and creativity. We find many of our Special Education population actually do better when outside and connecting with nature.

Climate and Discipline

Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences (FSAS) strives to provide a peaceful, enriching and safe environment for all students to grow and learn. We have worked tirelessly over the past SIX years to implement PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports), a research-based approach that encompasses: identifying and teaching school-wide expectations; building a positive school climate and culture; positively acknowledging students for following expectations; creating consistent responses to problem behavior; tracking and using student behavioral data for decision making; applying a team approach and problem-solving protocol; and merging the multi-tiered system of supports for both academic and behavioral needs. We look forward to continuing our work with PBIS, growing to include advanced tiers of supports next year.

Parent & Student Survey

We had a higher participation rate than the past year for Staff and Students. Annually, we take this information from the survey and use it to set goals for the next year. The primary take away from our survey is that our culture has been damaged by the pandemic, the separation that was necessary during the pandemic, still needs to be rebuilt. We will continue to work on rebuilding our community connection for families and for the staff. Our response rates were:

- Staff/Teacher - 60%
- Families - 101 respondents out of approximately 125 families, or 80%



- *Students - 90% response rate for grades 3rd-8th. We still need time to analyze this data and to incorporate it into our goals.*

Are you an organizational success? Yes!

Management and Operations

- ***Staffing.*** *We continue to build an amazing team here at Fiddlehead. I dare say the best yet. They lean in, step up and care deeply for each other and the students. We thankfully moved beyond the movement of staff from the pandemic burnout that all schools saw these past few years. We are back and Fiddlehead is poised for another amazing year. One of our key administrators this year needed to move to Canada in January and thankfully we were able to work through it together remotely. It was not easy on the team on the floor, but we made it. We mutually decided to let go of that relationship and reflected once again on our schools' needs. We changed our Special Education Director position and are moving towards a Special Education Coordinator. Thankfully, a top candidate was in the house! Jessica Shaw will be our new Special Education Coordinator.*
- ***New Staff Additions.*** *We did some excellent work this past spring in analyzing our educational model's needs. We are adding a Positive Behavior Interventionist position as well as a new Learning Lab for next year. We continue to use our Performance Evaluation and Professional Growth (PEPG) process that all faculty members follow in terms of assessment and evaluation. Training for next year will go back to some basics, CLASSROOM management, and an Instructional Support Person in every classroom! Each Instructional Support Person will also train this spring and over the summer to receive their BHP (Behavioral Health Professional) Certificate. These additional skills will help us add more tools to our staff tool box.*
- ***Calendars & Schedules.*** *Our calendar remains the same as it has in the past few years. Overall, Early Release days and Anytime-Anywhere days have been very successful for reflection, documentation and learning. The school will continue with 175 student days in our School Calendar year. The time will be from 8:20a.m.-2:50p.m. We will continue to tighten our daily schedule so that students can continue to access individualized instruction at their appropriate readiness level for the academics.*
- ***Student recruitment, enrollment and retention.*** *Our student recruitment efforts are still very strong. At our last lottery we had 175 Intent to Enroll submissions.*
- ***Parent and Community Involvement.*** *This aspect of our school continues to be one of our strengths, though we can never take it for granted. We have wonderfully involved parent and community groups and the community is eager to reconnect. We brought back several opportunities for families to participate in from field trips (Libby Hill, Thompson's, Frahlich's, etc.), as well as inviting families to these off-site locations for presentations and celebrations.*



We have a newly branded PTO, of which is called the NEST! We are excited to continue to work with them in the coming year!

Are we a governance success?

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. We are happy to report that the Board of Directors is nearly full, once again. William Doughty continues to be the chair to the Board of Directors this coming year.

As part of our reflection and planning process, the Executive Director, Principal, and Board will continue to strengthen and refine internal communication and roles and responsibilities. The Executive Director, who has now established two non-profits during the past twenty-three years, continues to work hand in hand with the Chair of this Board of Directors.

Transparency

We all recognize that transparency is important in so many ways. From the beginning the Board & Staff identified transparency as a focus. We continue conversation of transparency in all Board aspects from budgeting to staffing and will remain cognizant of this best practice approach.

Are we a financial success?

Finance Committee members:

- *Roger Preston - Board Treasurer/Committee Chair*
- *Bill Doughty - Committee Member*
- *Alison Moser - Committee Member*
- *Jacinda Cotton-Castro - Executive Director*

The committee mostly meets once a month, occasionally more often, to review the income statements and ensure spending is in line with the budget. This year was particularly hard in finding the right people to do this work. Thankfully, we have a contract with Flaherty Financial and they have extensive nonprofit work. We also have a new Business Administrator that has strong Quickbooks experience.

Finance Committee

We had a very good audit report this year as we continue to improve systems and within the proposed framework for next year.

Fundraising/Development Committee

We have fundraising as a below the line objective that way we do not count on fundraising, however, it helps to supplement our needs. Our plan is to continue to work on Development and enlist former



Board Members to help with a soon to be created Advisory Committee. The singular purpose will be in supporting the Executive Director and their efforts to increase annual donations, and long-term giving programs.

Additional Programming

We have grown and continue to expand our Afterschool Enrichment Program that was successful in meeting our bottom line. In addition, we have added in Private Music Lessons, as well as a third year of SUMMER Camp Programs to our community offerings this summer. This funding will eventually be able to help greatly in sustaining our organization as these programs continue to expand.

Facilities

SPACE is not as much of a concern as it has been in the past few years. We are looking at both long-and-short-term plan needs. Our Facility Committee is led by our Chair, William Doughty. We have explored heat pumps and other efficient energy options – as well as partial funding through Efficiency Maine. We decided to stick with replacing our current HVAC units with similar units, due to cost. This fall we plan to replace our second HVAC unit and have a schedule to replace more units as the year progresses.

Transportation

Our relatively new bus continues to operate, and we paid off our loan a few years back and hope it lasts a couple more without too much maintenance. We use our bus extensively for field trips to the orchard and the farm with our newly developed outdoor classroom expansions.

Insurance

We work with Kyes Insurance out of Farmington who is one of Maine's largest school insurance providers. We have had from the beginning vehicle, liability and D&O insurance. We have a good working relationship with Kyes.

Food Service

Children bring their own healthy lunches to our school. We continue to work with our PTO to develop a weekend backpack program as needs present themselves.

Relationship with the Maine Charter School Commission

We have an outstanding, mutually respectful relationship with the Maine Charter School Commission. We do not hesitate to ask them questions and they are quick to provide the answers they can find. We feel very supported and confident that they want us to be as successful as we want to be, and also hold



us accountable for our Performance Framework and to the standards that we eagerly aim to meet and exceed. We also received two grants from the Commission this past year – THANK YOU!

