

# Maine Charter School Commission

September, 2015

On June 2, 2015, an announced on-site visit was made to Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences public charter school. The Maine Charter School Commission (MCSC) review team of 3 members was accompanied by the MCSC Executive Director, MCSC Director of Program Management, and Department of Education Special Education representative. The visiting team held interviews with school leadership, staff, students, parents, and the school's Governing Board. They also reviewed data provided by the school. Documents provided by the school are available from the MCSC office. Information gathered from documents, interviews, and on-site observation was used to determine the extent to which the school has met its contracted performance targets.

Commission Member, Review Team Chair	Shelley Reed
Commission	Jana Lapoint
Commission	Nichi Farnham
MCSC Executive Director	Bob Kautz
MCSC Director of Program Management	Gina Post
DOE Special Education Representative	Peg Armstrong

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

# Maine Charter School Commission

## ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

September 2015

### Section 1: School Overview

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

Executive Director	Jacinda Cotton-Castro
Special Education Director	Ellen DeLuca
Board Chair	Julie Fralich

Year Opened	Schoolyear 2013-2014
Years in Operation	2
Number of Sending Districts	12
Grades Served	Pre K-3
Number of Students	79
Number of Students on Waiting List	111
Average Class Size	16
Teacher – Student Ratio	1:8

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

## Section 2: Indicator Summary Table

Indicator	Meets Contract Agreement	Partially meets	Does not meet
Student Academic Proficiency <sup>1</sup>			
Student Academic Growth		X	
Achievement Gaps in proficiency and growth between major student subgroups <sup>2</sup>			
Student Attendance		X <sup>3</sup>	
Recurrent Enrollment from Year to Year	X		
Financial Performance and Sustainability	X		
Governance Board Performance and Stewardship	X		
Adequacy of Facilities Maintenance in Support of Program	X		
Transportation	X		
School Social and Academic Climate	X		
Parent and Community Engagement	X		

<sup>1</sup> Baseline year

<sup>2</sup> Baseline year

<sup>3</sup> The target for Average Daily Attendance of 94% was just missed, with ADA at 93%. See section 4 for details.

### Section 3: Academics

Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences met its Academic Targets for the 2014-15 school year.

#### Targets

- Student Academic Proficiency: State Assessments**  
 Percentage of (age 8/gr 3 and above) at proficiency level will increase by 3% on NECAP (on Smarter Balanced in the future).
- Student Academic Proficiency: School Developed Assessments**  
 Local assessment Pearson Work Sampling system
- Student Academic Growth: Value added nationally normed individual and group assessment or equivalent for English and Math**  
 Literacy, math and science -80% of students will meet or exceed, 10% will achieve 75%, 10 % will achieve 50%
- Achievement gaps in proficiency and growth between major student subgroups using ESEA-based systems**  
 Goal of 4-5 % growth in identified Students

#### Performance:

14 Fiddlehead third grade students participated in Smarter Balanced state testing in 2015. Third grade was added in school year 2014-15, and this was to serve as baseline data. In order to protect student privacy, Fiddlehead’s Smarter Balanced test scores cannot be publicly reported due to small cell sizes.

*Work Sampling System (WSS), a Pearson Product (5th Edition) -A framework for portfolio-based assessment*  
 The framework assists in identifying and recording what children are learning, what they are beginning to master, and what they still need to work on. The tables below show the Average of Proficient/Above Grade Level by grade (PRO/AGL). These figures include math, literacy, and science.

The School Average of 82.78% meets the target of 80% of students will meet or exceed Work Sampling System Literacy, Math and Science performance indicators typical of their age/grade by the end of each year. During the 2014-15 schoolyear Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences began using Fountas & Pinnell for measuring reading levels and student progress, as well as Curriculum Based Measurement in math for benchmarks 3 times per year.

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade – 15 students

Overall Average of PRO/AGL	86.67%
Overall Reg Ed Average of PRO/AGL	88.09%
Overall Special Ed Average of PRO/AGL	66.67%

#### 2nd Grade – 15 students

Overall Average of PRO/AGL	68.89%
Overall Reg Ed Average of PRO/AGL	80.56%
Overall Special Ed Average of PRO/AGL	22.22%
2013-14 Overall Average of PRO/AGL	49.96%

1<sup>st</sup> Grade – 16 students

Overall Average of PRO/AGL	75.00%
Overall Reg Ed Average of PRO/AGL	80.56%
Overall Special Ed Average of PRO/AGL	58.33%
2013-14 Overall Average of PRO/AGL	88.90%

Kindergarten – 16 students

Overall Average of PRO/AGL	95.83%
Overall Reg Ed Average of PRO/AGL	100.00%
Overall Special Ed Average of PRO/AGL	75.00%
2013-14 Overall Average of PRO/AGL	84.60%

Pre – K – 16 students

Overall Average of PRO/AGL	87.50%
2013-14 Overall Average of PRO/AGL	97.63%

**TOTALS**

<b>SCHOOL Average of PRO/AGL</b>	<b>82.78%</b>
SCHOOL Reg Ed Average of PRO/AGL	87.34%
SCHOOL Special Ed Average of PRO/AGL	55.56%
2013-14 SCHOOL Average of PRO/AGL	80.27%

**Section 4: Enrollment & Attendance**

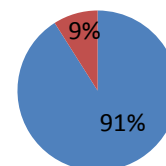
The Enrollment and Attendance target was partially met. Average Daily Attendance of 93% fell short of the 94% target. Other targets in this area were met.

Targets:

- **Student re-enrollment from one year to the next**  
90% target
- **Continuous enrollment of students for multiple years**
- **Average Daily Attendance Rate**  
94% attendance target
- **Individual Student Attendance Rate**
- **Unexcused Absences**

**2014-15 Re-Enrollment**

■ returning ■ not returning



**Performance:**

Of 79 students enrolled at Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences, 72 are returning for the 2015-16 schoolyear for a re-enroll rate of 91%, exceeding the target of 90%. This is a 2% increase from the 2013-2014 schoolyear.

During the 2014-15 schoolyear Fiddlehead’s Average Daily Attendance Rate was 93%, putting them one percent below their target of 94%. This is 1% below last year’s rate, which met the goal of 94%. Individual attendance was within limits and no truancies were reported.

Disaggregation		Rate
Gender		
	Male	92%
	Female	93%
Race/Ethnicity		
	African American Black	98%
	Hispanic	92%
	Caucasian-White	93%
	Two or More Races	97%
Economically Disadvantaged		92%
Special Education		94%
<b>2014-2015 ATTENDANCE RATE</b>		<b>93%</b>
2013-2014 Attendance Rate		94%

## Section 5: Governance

Fiddlehead School met its targets in the area of Governance.

### Targets:

- Governance Board Performance and Stewardship**  
 Monthly meetings  
 Review of bylaws and policies,  
 Increase of Governing Board membership

Chair of the Board	Julie Fralich
Board Member	Julie Ricardi
Board Member	Sarah Keep
Board Member	Sarah Hall
Board Member	Alison Moser
Board Member	Debra Smith
Board Member	Jim Peabbles

### Performance:

The Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences Governing Board created several sub-committees during the 2014-15 schoolyear and established goals and objectives. The Board reports that these committees worked diligently and have successfully accomplished many tasks including developing a budget, writing the handbooks, reworking the salary and benefits structure, writing job descriptions, evaluating the Director, planning Family Night, addressing tension around curriculum and assessment, offering professional development for teachers, proposing the Coordinator of Learning and Teaching position, and more.

During the 2014-2015 schoolyear there were discussions between the Education sub-committee and teachers regarding the best way to assess student performance in a manner consistent with the school's philosophy.

Board members report that fundraising wasn't at its best during the 2014-2015 schoolyear. The Governing Board has enlisted the help of the PTO and they are working together to create a more robust list of fundraising events for the coming year.

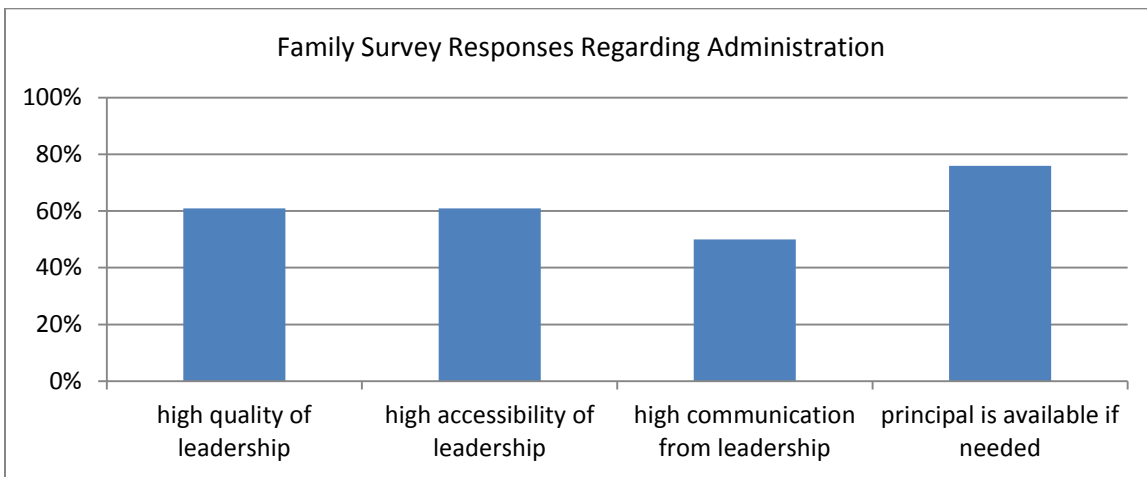
Governing Board meeting notices, agendas and minutes are posted to the Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences website.

**Section 6: Administration**

Executive Director	Jacinda Cotton-Castro
Special Education Director	Ellen DeLuca

Fiddlehead School's Executive Director informally evaluated the teachers at Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences during the 2014-15 schoolyear. This procedure included an informal check within the first 30 days, then again at 6 months and at the end of the year. After the final check-in the results are written up. Fiddlehead's Executive Director is exploring the Danielson evaluation method, and would like to review the procedure that Harpswell Coastal Academy is using.

The Executive Director reports having somewhat moderated between the education sub-committee and the staff, particularly around the student performance and data collection discussions.



**Section 7: School Climate**

Fiddlehead School met its targets in the area of School Climate.

**Targets:**

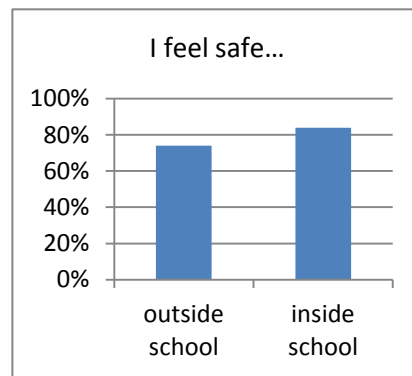
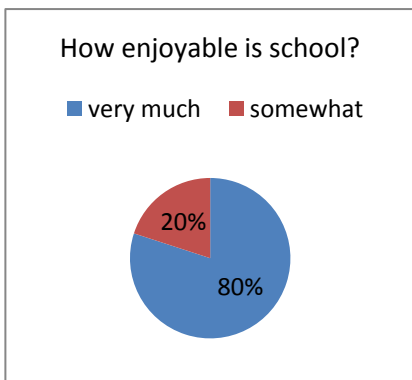
- **Instances of bullying, harassment or other abusive behavior**  
Reports of actual or suspected bullying, harassment or other abusive practices
- **Confidential surveys of parents, staff, and students regarding social and academic climate**  
School survey and  
State survey Participation
- **Emotional and social growth of students**  
Survey

**Performance:**

During the 2014-15 schoolyear, a Fiddlehead 3<sup>rd</sup> grader wrote a pass-it-on note saying, “bombs are evreware.” The authorities were contacted immediately and the school evacuation procedure was followed. During the investigation the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade student was identified. A family conference with the authorities followed, and the school chose not to press charges. The incident was followed with counseling for the student.

At the Maine Charter School Commission’s Year-End visit Fiddlehead School students report that any bullying is addressed immediately. Students are aware of the consequences for bullying behavior at school. The student who found the bomb note spoke up about having found it and said the situation had been handled.

Recently, when asked “how enjoyable is school,” 80% of survey participants answered “very much.” On the same student survey, 74% of participants report feeling safe around the outside of school, and 84% of participants feel safe inside the school.

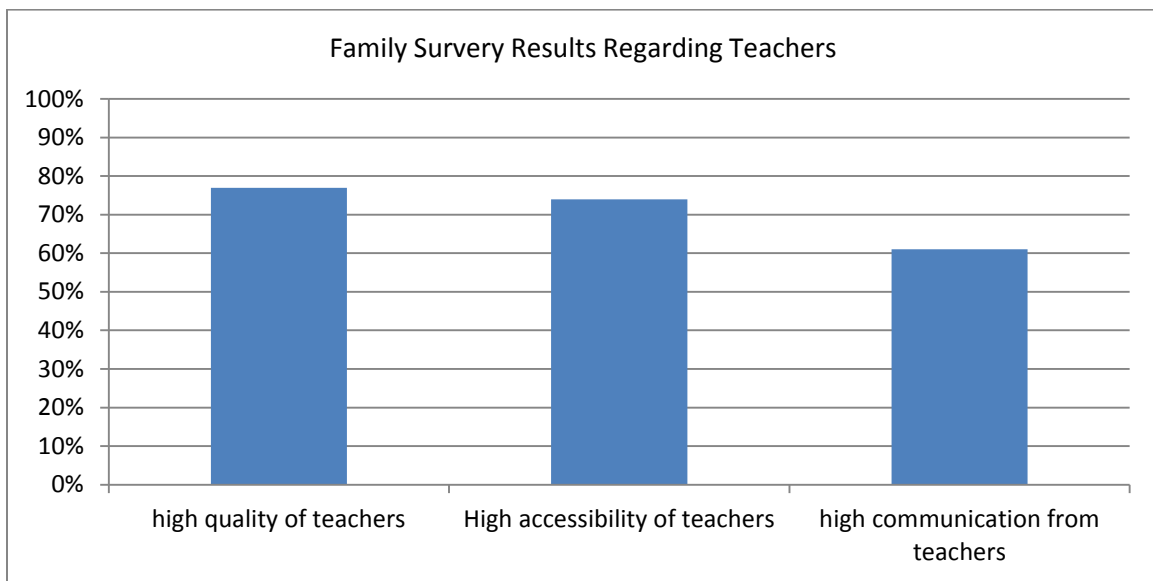


Teachers at Fiddlehead School for Arts & Sciences report feeling very appreciated. During Teacher Appreciation Week families prepared a meal for the teachers and covered the classrooms so the teachers could eat together.

Teachers report a challenge in staying true to the Reggio Emilia philosophy of emergent learning, while finding an appropriate measurement of academic proficiency that fits with the style of the learning environment. Some teachers are exploring the “Emergent Investigation preK” and the “Cycle of Inquiry.”

Teachers would like to see more family education on Fiddlehead’s Philosophy, Mission and Vision.





### **Section 8: Parent and Community Engagement**

Fiddlehead School met its targets in the area of Parent and Community Engagement.

#### **Targets:**

- **Parent Communication Systems**  
Regular and clear communication
- **Parent participation in their child's education and operation of the school**  
80% parent participation of meaningful involvement  
Plan for parent conferences established  
List of engagement opportunities available to parents and community  
Record kept of volunteer and parent participation
- **Educational Partnerships in the Community**  
Partner with community organizations

#### **Performance:**

In addition to weekly communication, Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences Executive Director sends home a monthly update. In-person communication includes 3 conferences per year, monthly coffee with the Executive Director, Math Night, and a Family Workshop explaining the school's philosophy and methods of measuring student performance.

During the 2014-2015 schoolyear Fiddlehead School celebrated a 96% Parent-Teacher Conference participation rate, maintaining the same level of participation from the previous schoolyear. Conferences were student-led, and were supplemented with teacher-written narratives.

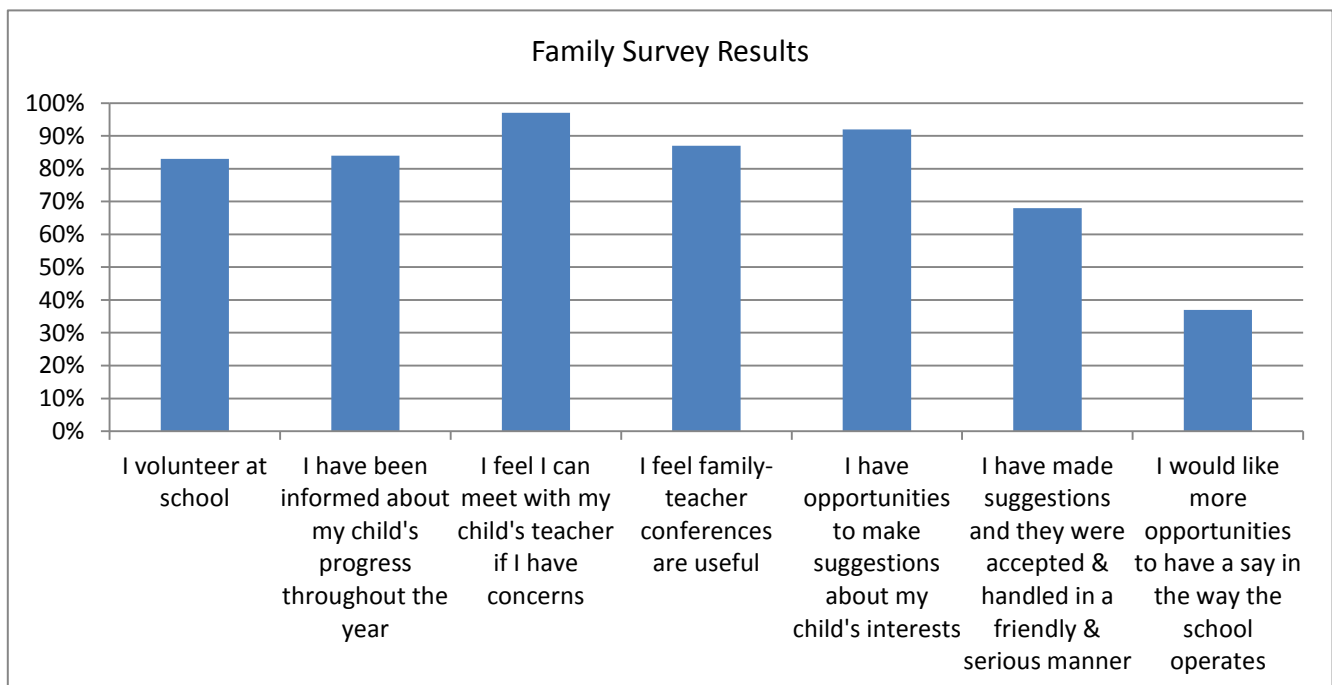
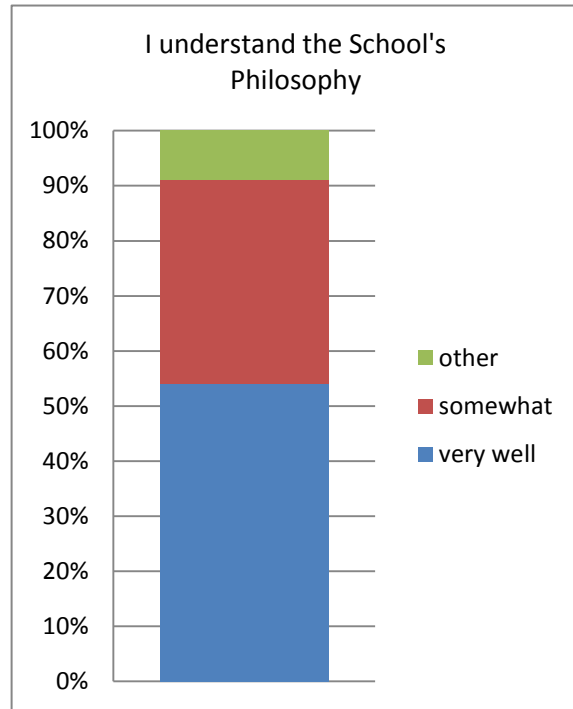
A recent survey revealed that:

54% of parents feel they understand the school's philosophy very well

37% of parents feel they somewhat understand the school's philosophy.

In addition to traditional classroom volunteering opportunities and the PTO, families of Fiddlehead School students are included in writing school policies, school philosophy and direction, and interviewing applicants for staff positions. Volunteers also started an after school club to engage students in the world around them; to explore, create, and connect.

Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences has formal connections with community organizations including Libby Hill, The Shaker Village, Pineland Farms, The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), Mayo Street Arts, and Portland Ovations. Students take many field trips to these locations.



## Section 9: Finances

Fiddlehead school met its targets in the area of Finances.

### Targets:

- **Financial Performance and Sustainability**  
Monthly financial reports  
Item flagged when 5% variance for board

### Performance:

Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences hired a new accountant during the 2014-15 schoolyear and has submitted all currently due reports to the state. An outside audit was performed last year and a current audit has begun for this year.

Fundraising was identified by the Governing Board as an area of weakness. There will be a joint effort on the part of the Board and the PTO to boost fundraising efforts in the coming 2015-16 schoolyear.

Fiddlehead School ended the 2014-15 year with a small cash reserve of \$688.

## Section 10: Facilities & Maintenance, Transportation, and Food Service

Fiddlehead School met its targets in the area of Facilities, Transportation and Food Service.

### Targets:

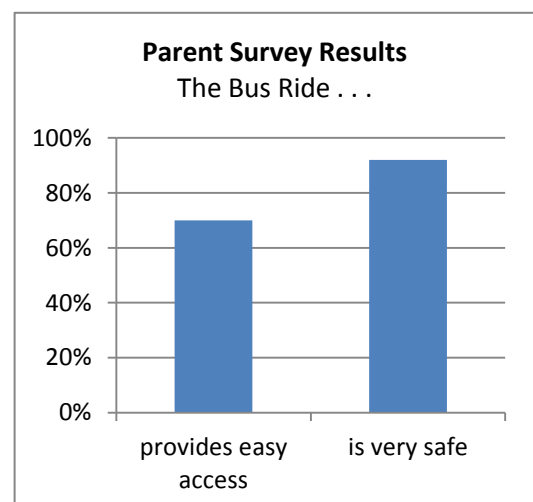
- **Adequacy of Facilities Maintenance in Support of the Program**  
Quarterly Building Committee meetings  
Cleaning log
- **Adequacy of Transportation in Support of the Program**  
Cost and Utilization

The school is cleaned regularly and daily cleaning logs are kept for review.

Currently, the Fiddlehead facility is at 100% capacity. An architectural design for school renovation is in process. This renovation would expand the area where 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is currently located and divide that space into 2 classrooms. Proposals from contractors will be reviewed by the Facility/Building Committee.

The Governing Board will be looking at both short and long term Capital Improvement Plans in their annual review.

The bus route remained the same during the duration of the 2014-15 schoolyear. One new pick-up/drop-off site was added during the schoolyear and an additional stop closer to Lewiston/Auburn is being explored.



37% of eligible students use the bus in the morning and 37% of eligible students use it in the afternoon.

The Governing Board will be looking at bus replacement in the next few years.

## Section 11: Evidence of Mission and Vision Implementation

Mission	Vision
To create a safe, respectful, nurturing and active learning community where every child is given the opportunity to thrive academically, to be accepted, to celebrate accomplishments and to develop a lifetime love of learning.	To create a school where learning is built around each student so that they become engaged learners with relevant and challenging work.

There is evidence of Fiddlehead’s Mission in the way students are treated and respected, and in the ongoing learning of the teachers and administration. The Vision is evidenced in the school’s curriculum; particularly Fountas and Pinnell for measuring reading levels and student progress, as well as Curriculum Based Measurements in math for individual student benchmarks.

## Section 12: Summary, Commendations and Recommendations

The Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences is staying true to its mission and vision. It has taken the opportunity to identify its strengths and challenges and formulates strategy to work on challenge areas. Students as early as Kindergarten express what they are doing as “free exploration” and all students love the hands on approach and the field work, and can identify the steps from early drafts to finished products recognizing what they are learning and how it relates to the real world. Staff set a nurturing tone and students appreciate the immediacy of issues being handled. Parents are genuinely pleased with the school and find the administration readily approachable.

### Commendations

- The Governing Board has grown and matured during the 2014-15 schoolyear.
- The Board, Administration, and teachers are all working on how to assess and show student growth and data while maintaining the school’s Mission and Vision.
- The Administration is dealing with issues immediately as they arise.
- There is a school culture being established.
- Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences has responded to recommendations made in the 2014 Monitoring report by taking their strategic planning findings, establishing priority goals and following through establishing subcommittees of their Governing Board in education, personnel, finance, development, and policy.
- The Governing Board work has led to the creation of the position of Coordinator of Learning and Teaching, which will ease the Administrative workload and contribute to the implementation of the Reggio Emilio-inspired instruction.
- The Finance Committee is analyzing projected income and creating recommendations for sustaining a healthy budget including increased fundraising.

## Recommendations

- Continue to monitor the year to year budget and develop long range financial plans.
- Continue to pursue grants and other methods of fundraising.
- The Governing Board should continue to move from implementation to oversight and work to understand its role and responsibilities.
- The Governing Board should seek a member with financial expertise.
- Continue clarification of roles and responsibilities in addressing issues.
- Select and implement a teacher/administrator evaluation process.
- Continue the process for establishing parent-teacher-student conferences with clear expectations.
- Continue to establish mechanisms to ensure that Governing Board members and families understand the philosophy/mission/vision of the school and its implementation.
- As stated in the Monitoring Plan, the school shall develop an improvement plan to address academic weaknesses, particularly in the area of math, by further analyzing state and local assessment data, and other means of assessment that have been used by the school.