

# Fiddlehead

School of Arts & Sciences



## Family Handbook

2017 – 2018

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The Fiddlehead School Handbook is intended for use as a resource for parents and students. The information included in the handbook does not supersede school policy and should be considered as guidelines. If there is a conflict between the handbook and board policy, the policy takes precedent.



# Fiddlehead

## School of Arts & Sciences

Dear Fiddlehead School Families ~

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences! We are looking forward to partnering with you as we collaborate, support, encourage and share in the responsibility of helping your child achieve in academic excellence. We know that you want what is best for your child. It is our goal that your child will be excited to learn and grow with partnerships from school, families and community members that will lead to supporting the joy of lifelong learning!

We will include you in every facet of your child's education. We promise to maintain communication between home and school. We encourage you to volunteer and participate in school activities as often as possible. With your support we can share the responsibility for decision making about your child's education and well-being. Please take the time to review our Family Handbook to guide us to success for all students.

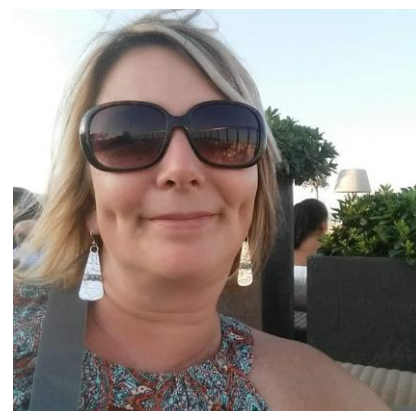
It has taken hard work from a truly dedicated staff and volunteers like you to make this a reality in such a short period of time. I am so grateful to be surrounded by such amazing people and on behalf of our Board of Directors - we thank you!

We hope that this handbook will be helpful to provide information for the most frequently asked questions about our programs, services and school requirements for our students.

Here's to another amazing year! Let's dream BIG together!



Jacinda J. Cotton-Castro, Executive Director



## About Fiddlehead School

Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences was approved February 5, 2013, by the Maine Charter School Commission to become one of Maine's first Public Charter Schools. The non-profit 501-c-3 organization will be governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. Guided by core values and inspired by the Reggio Emilia child-centered and placed based approach to learning, the regional School opened in Fall 2013, with 45 students and now we are operating at full capacity with approximately 135 students stretching to Grade 5. Though children may come from anywhere in the State, the catchment area includes: Auburn, Casco, Cumberland, Gray, New Gloucester, Lewiston, North Yarmouth, Minot, Poland, Portland, Pownal, Raymond, and Windham.

## Purpose

The purpose of Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences (FSAS) is to facilitate learning through an interdisciplinary approach to the arts and sciences in a safe, creative, fun and loving environment.

Fiddlehead School supports happy and vibrant learners who create and shape their own lives and contribute to the quality of life around them.

Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences provides for the foundational needs of growing children in a community where children, teachers, and families learn together in a nurturing environment. We are a school that honors children's curiosities, interests and uniqueness, and facilitates progressive learning at the highest level. At Fiddlehead, children will demonstrate competency in literacy, mathematics, science, visual and performing arts, and a foreign language. Using an inquiry-based model, children will also develop vital skills and habits of mind for 21<sup>st</sup> century life, work and citizenship:

- critical thinking
- communication
- collaboration
- creativity
- compassion

Fiddlehead is accessible to all children and offers an opportunity for a unique approach to education; a place where children of diverse backgrounds can explore freely; where their interests and insights will be valued and encouraged. Fiddlehead achieves a school without walls by continuing to foster relationships through expanded partnerships with organizations, individuals and businesses. We embrace these community connections in an exchange of knowledge and learning, supporting the development of a sense of place.

## Philosophy

We are inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy which supports the idea that children communicate their thinking and problem solving through interactions and relationships with each other and materials.

Our thoughtful, interactive classrooms are abundant with accessible art supplies, as well as recycled and open-ended materials – all tools that support development and expression.

We believe that open play, rich in imagination, is at the heart of learning and is essential to a child's healthy development and growth. We strive to support and extend open imaginative play, through environment, materials, dialogue and collaboration.

We establish a foundation in environmental awareness through observation, nature exploration, outdoor class time and recycling. Our outdoor space is simple, allowing room to run and imaginations to be active.

Unique to our programs is access to dance room, art studio, and music room, allowing us to work with small groups of children in each area. We can also view the variety of art exhibited in the courtyard.

## Fiddlehead School Core Values

- **Integrity:** We support an environment that is ethical and authentic to the people we serve, the work we do, and the community as a whole.
- **Creativity:** We support an environment that promotes imagination and inspires one's work and ideas.
- **Inspiration:** We support an environment that encourages enjoyment in work, in learning, and in meaningful play.
- **Compassion:** We embrace compassion which is not just an emotional response but a firm commitment founded on reason.
- **Respect:** We support an environment that is inclusive of one another and is open to a free-flow of self-expression.

## Diversity Statement

Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences strives to be a safe community for all students and their families regardless of gender, race, ability, or sexual orientation. We understand that creating a diverse and accepting community also means working to educate ourselves and one another, address bias, and apply critical analysis to our curriculum and materials. Members of our community will learn how and work to use inclusive language, challenge discrimination and stereotypes, and advocate for positive change. Our goal is to create a community of learners of all ages who feel safe to express themselves, explore the world around them, and develop and grow.

In Spring of 2017, Fiddlehead School established a Diversity Committee to consider our first steps in carrying out this work. The Committee immediately identified and undertook the following tasks:

- Language on student school forms & records updated with an eye to diversity and sensitivity for both students and parents/guardians
- Visible signs of welcome for ALL students posted around the school
- All families invited to bring family photos to Back to School Night; photos will be displayed in a large wall-collage format in a common area of the school, so everyone can see what diversity comprises our community
- Teacher & staff professional development scheduled in October with a trainer from Welcoming Schools, a branch of the Human Rights Campaign; focus will be on creating an inclusive climate for students of different gender identities and family structures, as well as identifying quality resources for helping to build a community that embraces diversity
- Began drafting, considering, and discussing policies to protect and support vulnerable student populations
- Page built into new website to ensure our diversity work is visible to our school families and the community at large

#### **Rules of Respect & Responsibilities**

- We are kind to one another.
- We listen to one another.
- We take care of our personal things and Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences materials.
- We help keep Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences clean and safe.

*We are a community where children, teachers, and families learn together in a nurturing environment. We honor children's curiosities, interests and unique capabilities to encourage and open the door to life- long learning.*

## General Information

*The Fiddlehead School Handbook is intended for use as a resource for parents and students. The information included in the handbook does not supersede school policy and should be considered as guidelines. If there is a conflict between the handbook and board policy, the policy takes precedence.*

**Absences/Attendance:** School attendance is required and regulated by Maine State Law and is the responsibility of parents. If your child will not be able to attend classes for the day, and/or will not use Fiddlehead transportation, please call to notify us. (You must also call if your child is enrolled in before or after school care and music lessons.) **Fiddlehead School is in session from 8:20 a.m. to 2:50 p.m.** All students are expected to be in their assigned classes by the start of the day.

Excusable absences as defined by Maine State Law are:

- Personal illness.
- Appointments with health professionals that cannot be made outside the regular school day.
- Observances of recognized religious holidays when the observance is required during the regular school day.
- Emergency family situation.
- Planned absences for personal or educational purposes for which approval has been granted in advance of the absence

Encouraging regular school attendance is one of the most powerful ways you can prepare your child for success—both in school and in life. When you make school attendance a priority, you help your child get better grades, develop healthy life habits, avoid dangerous behavior and have a better chance of graduating from high school.

**Allergies and Special Needs:** Fiddlehead School recognizes the increase in the number of individuals who may have life threatening allergies to foods and other substances, such as latex. It is acknowledged that Fiddlehead School cannot be considered peanut or latex “free”. However, Fiddlehead School strives to minimize the risk of exposure to life threatening allergens. Fiddlehead School asks the parents of students with allergies to be ultimately responsible for the management of their child’s allergies and to collaborate closely with the school. Parents are responsible for providing the School with appropriate emergency medication and an Individual Health Action Plan reviewed and signed by the Primary Care Provider. If you have any questions please speak with an administrator.

**Appropriate Language:** While at Fiddlehead, it is expected that students and adults use polite, acceptable language. Swearing, put downs, and disrespectful statements will not be tolerated.

**Arrival/Departure Times:** Students are to arrive on time for the school day, no earlier than 8:10 a.m. Students must be signed in by an adult for late arrival. All children must be picked up by an adult. The adult must be pre-identified at our office. In the case of someone other than an identified parent/ guardian picking up the child, the office must be notified by the parent/guardian in advance of pick up. School begins at 8:20 a.m. School ends at 2:50 p.m. Students utilizing school transportation board the bus. Students being picked up by parents/guardians are released to parents/guardians.

**Background Checks:** All instructors, staff and volunteers (over 18) working with children must have a criminal background check and a Child and Family Services background check completed. Youth volunteers are the only exception to this policy due to their age. They will, however, have a general background check completed from previous employers and others who can vouch for their integrity. Parents or guardians occasionally assisting in classes will not have a background check done due to the infrequency of their involvement. Youth and parent or guardian volunteers will never be left alone with children without an instructor present.

**Behaviors:** Fiddlehead recognizes children with varying developmental levels attend our classes. Therefore, we have age-appropriate expectations for students. We do expect developmentally appropriate behavior of students.

**Bullying:** All students have the right to attend public schools that are safe and secure learning environments. It is the intent of Fiddlehead School to provide all students with an equitable opportunity to learn. To that end, the school has a significant interest in providing a safe, orderly, and respectful school environment that is conducive to teaching and learning.

Bullying is detrimental to the school environment and student learning, achievement and well-being. It interferes with the mission of the School to educate students and disrupts the operations of the School. Bullying affects not only students who are targets but also those who participate and witness such behavior. These behaviors must be addressed to ensure student safety and an inclusive learning environment.

It is not the school's intent to prohibit students from expressing their ideas, including ideas that may offend the sensibilities of others, or from engaging in civil debate. However, the school does not condone and will take action in response to conduct that interferes with students' opportunity to learn, the educational mission of the Fiddlehead School, and the operation of the school.

**Prohibited Behavior:** The following behaviors are prohibited:

1. Bullying;
2. Cyber-bullying;
3. Harassment and Sexual Harassment (as defined in board policy);
4. Retaliation against those reporting such defined behaviors; and
5. Knowingly false accusations of bullying behavior.

Any person who engages in any of these prohibited behaviors that constitutes bullying shall be subject to consequences.

**Class Lists:** To protect confidentiality, Fiddlehead School will not distribute class lists, students' addresses, phone numbers, email addresses or parent/guardian information without the permission of the family.

**Closings/Inclement Weather Policy:** At times, emergencies such as severe weather, fire, power failures, or other natural occurrences can disrupt Fiddlehead School's operations. In some cases, these circumstances may require the closing of the school. In the event that such an emergency occurs, social media platforms (Remind 101) and/or television stations will be asked to broadcast notification of the closing or delay. Please tune into your local TV channels 6/8/13 or check out our website for closing and/or delay information. We will make every effort to update our website by 7:00 a.m. on days Fiddlehead School will be closed. In the event of inclement weather, we follow MSAD#15 closing schedule. Because families travel a distance, please use your judgement pertaining to the weather in your local area and always stay safe.

**Clothing:** Students are expected to wear appropriate clothing for the environment they will be exposed to according to the season, both indoors and outdoors. Please bring your own sunscreen to apply (and we may assist). In the winter months an additional set of labeled winter clothes may be left at the school. For safety reasons, students must wear shoes at all times while at Fiddlehead School. Parents will be called to deliver appropriate clothing if needed.

**Communication:** Teachers communicate with the families of their students regularly, but the means will vary from classroom to classroom. Parents/guardians are encouraged to communicate with their child's teacher.

**Conferences:** From time to time Fiddlehead School's teachers & staff will attend conferences. So as not to miss a day of school, background checked substitutes may fill in from time to time.

**Early Release:** On Friday's, Fiddlehead School holds an early release day so that teachers have time to do the reflection and documentation that a Reggio Emilia inspired philosophy requires. Early release hours will run from

8:20 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Morning programming will look slightly different on these Friday's, but will be filled with enrichment opportunities. Additionally, if you need Early Release programming from 12:30 p.m. – onward, Fiddlehead Center has developed a great program (fee based) for Fiddlehead School kids.

**Emergency Evacuation:** In the case of an emergency evacuation of the building, students and staff will remain together in a safe location until the "all clear" signal has been given to enter the building. If the evacuation occurs during inclement weather or we are unable to enter the building for the remainder of the day, students will be guided with supervision to an alternate location nearby. Parents or guardians will be immediately notified.

**Enrichment Programs:** Fiddlehead School's sister organization, Fiddlehead Art & Science Center, offers birthday parties, early release programs, private music, and ½ day private pre-school.

**Field Trips:** Fiddlehead School may enhance the classroom learning experience with off-site trips to various locations. Teachers will notify students & parents in advance of the date, time and arrangements for the field trip. Permission slips signed by a parent/guardian will be required.

**Fire Drills:** Fiddlehead holds fire drills monthly in order for students to be familiar with the quickest and safest route out of the building in case of an emergency. Students should note the fire escape plan posted in each room.

**First Aid:** Fiddlehead School is responsible for administering first aid only. In the event of a serious injury, the family will be immediately notified. In all cases, the school shall take action deemed necessary to ensure safety of the student.

**Harassment:** Fiddlehead recognizes the right of each employee and student to carry out his/her respective work and responsibilities in an environment free of intimidation, ridicule, hostility, or offensiveness. In order to ensure that this environment exists, no student or employee shall harass another.

#### **Health:**

*Emergency Information Forms* ~ It is very important that parents promptly return and update the Emergency Information forms so that school staff are aware of your child's medical information and know how to reach you during the school day. *Please let us know whenever you have a change in address, telephone number, and place of employment or emergency contact person.*

*Immunizations:* Each student shall present his/her immunization record certifying that he/she has received all required immunizations currently due, or shall present an exemption as allowable by law before he/she is admitted to the school.

*Illnesses:* Students with the following conditions *may not attend programs at Fiddlehead School until 24 hours* after the symptoms have subsided and should return to school on the next full school day which may require an absence longer than 24 hours: fever, thick nasal discharge, vomiting, diarrhea, heavy coughing, chicken pox, head lice, conjunctivitis, and any other contagious condition or disease. If your child becomes ill while at Fiddlehead School, we will call you to pick them up immediately. **Any student who has the following symptoms within a 24-hour period may not attend school:** temperature over 100 degrees, vomiting and/or diarrhea, eye irritation/pink eye, sore throat, or rash. Children returning to school after an extended leave due to illness must have a note from their physician.

**Holiday Philosophy:** At Fiddlehead School, we believe in providing educational experiences for children that respect and honor the range of religious, cultural, and philosophical diversity that comprises our school community. We believe in the importance of celebrations that encompass the whole of our community without exclusion. We encourage celebrations that are seasonal and/or recognize children's accomplishments, minimize commercialism and invite families to share traditions that are special and meaningful to them.

**Invitations:** Unless all students in the class are invited, we prohibit distribution of invitations at school.



**Internet and Computer Use:** Fiddlehead provides computers, networks, and Internet access to support the educational mission and enhance the curriculum and learning opportunities. Fiddlehead prohibits the use of computers in ways that are disruptive, harmful or offensive to others. Data composed, transmitted, accessed, or received via the Internet must not contain content that could be considered discriminatory, offensive, obscene, threatening, harassing, intimidating, or disruptive to any employee or other person. *Student's personal devices should remain in the backpacks during the school day.*

**Lost and Found:** Unclaimed property is placed in the lost and found box located at the front office. All personal items (including lunch boxes, backpacks, coats, and shoes) should be labeled. Unclaimed property is donated to a local charity.

**Lunch:** Students bring their own cold lunch. From time to time, Fiddlehead School may offer Pizza or a prepared lunch for a fee.

**Mandatory Reports of Child Abuse or Neglect:** Fiddlehead is required by state law to immediately report, or cause a report to be made, when we have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been, or is likely to be abused or neglected. Parental or guardian notification is not a prerequisite.

**Media Consent:** Upon registering for classes, parents/guardians will be asked to sign a release for media consent which will allow Fiddlehead to use photos, video, or student interviews to promote Fiddlehead's mission and programs through print and electronic (Internet) means. Should a parent or guardian be uncomfortable with media consent he/she may decline to sign the release. Fiddlehead reserves the right to use student artwork for promotional purposes upon request without names attached.

**Medication:** It is the policy of Fiddlehead School to discourage the administration of medication to students during the school day when other options exist. However, we recognize that in some instances a student's chronic or short-term illness or injury may require the administration of medication during the day. In the instance of prescription medication we require a written note from both the parent and the prescribing medical provider. In the case of non-prescription drugs (including aspirin, cough drops and cough syrup) we require a note from the parent with dosing information. To the extent possible, medicine doses should be scheduled for times outside of school hours. All medication to be dispensed at school, prescription or non-prescription, must be in the original container. Do not send medications to school with your child on the bus; all medication must be brought to the school by a parent. All medications must be kept in the office and administered by the nurse or his/her designee. If children must take medication at school, contact Fiddlehead School for the proper guidelines and release forms.

**Peanuts and all Nut Products:** Fiddlehead School has a no peanut, no nuts policy, to protect the health of students who are allergic. We will confiscate any snacks or lunch items with nuts or peanuts. An alternative to peanut butter is Sun Butter, which is made from sunflower seeds.

**Personal Laptops/Phones/Internet Devices:** All personal laptops/phones & electronic devices should remain in student backpacks during the school day.

**Parent Teacher Organization:** The purpose of the PTO is to enhance and support the educational experience at Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences to develop a closer connection between school and home by encouraging parent involvement, and to improve the environment at Fiddlehead School through volunteer and financial support. We encourage you to participate in our *Parent Teacher Organization*. Information will be emailed to you regularly.

**Pledge of Allegiance:** The pledge will be said at 8:20 a.m. in the Performing Arts Room. If you do not want your child to participate please speak with your child's classroom teacher or the Front Desk Administrator.

**Safety:** In addition to monthly fire drills, staff practices lock down procedures and keep the doors locked during school hours. We ask that you please sign in if you are coming in during these hours so that we can properly track all visitors in the event of

an emergency. Background checks are also required of all volunteers & staff.

**Special Learning Needs:** A free and appropriate education is guaranteed by law for all children. Fiddlehead School is committed to working with families to support all children’s learning. Some children may require special support. Families are encouraged to talk with their child’s teacher about any concerns and to the Executive Director about policy and procedures.

**Technology:** At Fiddlehead School, we believe that technology can be a powerful tool for learning, creativity and expression. Along with the power that technology can bring, comes a responsibility to use it thoughtfully to extend the learning within the classroom.

To this end, we believe:

- Students’ interactions with technology will be age appropriate and strongly limited in early childhood and gradually increasing so that students develop the skill and proficiency they need for when they graduate Fiddlehead;
- Technology at school will be used as a learning tool to enhance the educational program, or provide accommodation or enrichment when not available through other means;
- Students will be taught proper use of technology including how to use the internet responsibly, age appropriate computer skills, and the use of other technological tools.

**Toys:** At Fiddlehead School, we work to provide an environment rich in materials and free from distractions so that students can learn to their greatest potential. We encourage items from home (stuffies, toys, trading cards, etc.) to **stay** at home. At the younger grades items such as stuffies may be allowed during certain times of the day to aid in transitions and enhance the home-school connection. Your child’s classroom teacher will communicate with you about their class’s specific rules around items from home coming to school.

**Transportation:** Transportation stops have been designated within our catchment area. If you wish to utilize our bus services, please contact our administrative assistant. Because our timing is essential, we need all parents to be at the stop 10 minutes prior to scheduled arrival. Bus transportation is a privilege and Fiddlehead School has the right to deny transportation if behaviors that may be dangerous to others, exist.

**Visitors:** All visitors & parents must check in with the registrar at the front desk upon entering the building. This is for the safety of all and to ensure that learning in each classroom is not interrupted.

**Volunteers / Interns:** ALL volunteers and interns must fill out the appropriate forms and complete a background check. Paperwork is available at the front desk.

## **BUS SCHEDULE 2017-2018**

### **Morning Schedule:**

7:35 Perry Truck Stop - Poland, Corner of Route 26 and Route 122

7:50 Fireside Inn – Auburn, Route 100

8:00 AmVets - New Gloucester, Route 100

8:15 Arrival - Fiddlehead School

### **Afternoon Schedule:**

2:50 Dismissal from Fiddlehead School

3:05 AmVets - New Gloucester

3:15 Fireside Inn - Auburn

3:30 Perry Truck Stop - Poland

### **Our Teaching Staff:**

#### **Lower Grades:**

- Pre – K: Judy Kann, Lead Teacher & Rhonda Bullock, Teaching Assistant
- Kindergarten: Marie Reimensnyder, Lead Teacher & Nancy Durham, Teaching Assistant
- 1<sup>st</sup> Grade: Katie Pecor, Lead Teacher & Christa Erde, Teaching Assistant
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade: Liz Harrington, Lead Teacher & Jennifer Merrill, Teaching Assistant
- Katy Dawson, Special Education Teacher

#### **Upper Grades:**

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade: Penny Prior, Lead Teacher & Lillian Allen, Teaching Assistant
- 4<sup>th</sup> Grade: Jennifer Damon, Lead Teacher & Val Buteau, Teaching Assistant
- 5<sup>th</sup> Grade: Kerry Loupe, Lead Teacher & Stacie Reichel, Teaching Assistant
- Megan Dubois, Special Education Teacher

If you have a concern about your child, please always see your child's teacher first. If the concern does not get addressed or you feel the need to talk with someone in administration, please see the following Administration team member when:

## **Our Administrative Team:**

### **Karen Johnson, Community Coordinator**

See Karen when you have:

- questions about field trips, attendance or any other day to day questions you may have.
- items that you want to donate.
- questions about volunteering &/or chaperoning.

### **Barbara Landry, Business Manager**

See Barbara when you have:

- questions about billing for the Hero Program or would like to join our monthly giving program to support our school.

### **Del Peavy, Special Education Services Leader**

See Del when you have:

- questions about your child and any concerns you may have about their learning style or any Special Education needs for your child.
- questions about your child's Special Education current IEP.

### **Joanna Frankel, Coordinator of Teaching & Learning**

See Joanna when you have:

- questions about curriculum, instruction, or school philosophy
- questions about assessment or standardized testing

### **Jacinda Cotton-Castro, Executive Director**

See Jacinda when you have:

- questions about the Big Picture of the School, school philosophy, Mission or Vision.
- questions about your child's teacher, after having spoken directly with them.
- questions about or opportunities for grant writing & other fundraising ideas.
- questions about donating to our school either through our monthly donor program - Hero Program, a contact you have that may want to donate to our school (cash or items), and/or grants that you see might be a good fit for us!

## **Our Board of Directors:**

### **Executive Committee**

- Alison Moser, Chair – Poland
- Kathleen (Kassy) Clements, Vice Chair – New Gloucester
- Melanie Prinz, Treasurer – Gray
- Alyson Spencer-Reed – Secretary, New Gloucester

### **Board Members**

- Adam Gilman, New Gloucester
- William Doughty, Portland
- Penny Collins, New Gloucester

### **Executive Director (Ex-Officio – non-voting member):**

- Jacinda J. Cotton – Castro, New Gloucester

## Our School:

