

Educational 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:

*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.

*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.

*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 a variety of materials and methods to express themselves and their understandings, guiding learning through diverse pathways.

*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.

*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.

*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 an understanding of, and appreciation for, the interconnectedness of the world in which they live.

*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 focus on an emergent curriculum in which projects and topics arise from the interests and questions of children. This is balanced with a curriculum that aligns with our grade level learning continuum.

In our 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. This philosophy embraces a student-centered, constructivist approach to self-directed, experiential learning through a connection to the natural environment.

As students transition to 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

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, etc., are accessed. Exploration continues to be nurtured, while basic skills are taught as a means for a larger purpose. The shift from a fully 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 the Upper Grades

Students enter the upper grades of 3-8 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.

Middle School

Middle School learning is designed to guide students in a successful transition from elementary to high school levels. The development of the adolescent is embraced through a comprehensive, integrated, purposeful curriculum that intentionally transfers agency from the teacher to the scholar. This framework incorporates academics, wellness, and character development that guides scholars in the development of skills to positively contribute to society. Respect, responsibility, and an appreciation of differences provide a framework for critical thinking,

strengthened relationships, and global citizenship: moving toward being, belonging, and becoming.

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 a 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 citizenship. Our students are encouraged to engage with the world around them as they continue to learn and grow.

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