



## Family Handbook

### 2026-2027

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## Welcome Back, Fiddlehead Families!

Dear Fiddlehead School Families,

It is with great excitement and gratitude that I welcome you to another wonderful year at Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences!

As we begin this new school year, there is so much to look forward to. We are excited to welcome our returning families, meet new members of our community, and continue growing together as a school. Fiddlehead is at its best when students, families, staff, and community members work together to create a place where children feel known, supported, challenged, and inspired.

We share a common goal: to help every child thrive. We want our students to be excited about learning, curious about the world around them, confident in who they are, and eager to discover their own unique strengths and passions. Through strong partnerships between school, family, and community, we can nurture not only academic achievement, but also the joy and confidence that lead to a lifelong love of learning.

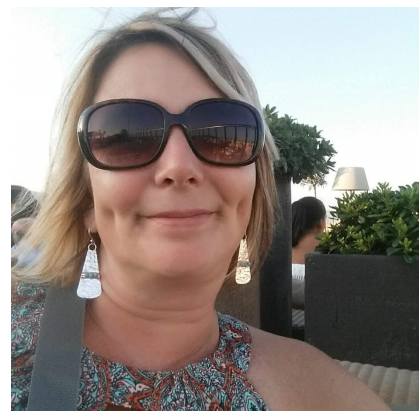
Please take some time to review our **Family Handbook**. It is an important resource that provides information about our programs, services, expectations, and the many ways we work together to support student success and well-being throughout the school year.

I am incredibly grateful for the dedicated staff, volunteers, Board members, families, and community partners who make Fiddlehead such a special place. Their commitment, creativity, and belief in our students continue to strengthen our school and move us forward. We are also proud to offer a **high-quality after-school enrichment program** that extends learning beyond the school day and gives students additional opportunities to explore their interests, build friendships, and discover new passions.

### Celebrating 25 Years of Fiddlehead!

This year is especially meaningful because **Fiddlehead is celebrating 25 years of serving children, families, and our community!** What began as the Fiddlehead Center on **January 14, 2002**, has grown into the vibrant **Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences** community we know today.

Twenty-five years represents countless students, families, educators, volunteers, and community members who have shared in the Fiddlehead journey. It is a remarkable legacy built on curiosity, creativity, connection, and a deep belief in the potential of every child.



As we celebrate where we have been, we are equally excited about where we are going. This anniversary gives us an opportunity to honor our history, celebrate the people who helped shape Fiddlehead, and imagine what the next 25 years can hold. Most importantly, we get to celebrate together—with our students at the heart of it all.

As we look ahead, I am filled with optimism about what this year will bring. There will certainly be challenges and opportunities along the way, but I know that when we come together with kindness, courage, creativity, and a shared commitment to our children, there is no limit to what we can accomplish.

**Here's to a fantastic new school year—and an incredible 25th year of Fiddlehead!**

**Let's dream BIG, learn boldly, grow together, celebrate our history, and build an extraordinary future for Fiddlehead!**

With excitement and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jacinda J. Cotton-Castro". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with large, elegant loops.

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 200 students stretching to Grade 8. 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 & Vision

### What do 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 life of learning. We aim to empower learners to seek answers to their own questions and to develop the means necessary for this endeavor.

### What do we believe?

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

- \*We believe children are capable, competent, innately curious, and the co-constructors of their own learning. Our school maintains a deep respect for children and childhood.

- \*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 in connecting students to the larger world outside the walls of the school building, including building relationships with community resources and the natural environment.

- \*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 does our approach look 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 a curriculum that is more teacher-directed.

In our Pre-K program the domains of math, literacy, 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, 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 does our approach look 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 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.

Simultaneously, emphasis is put on 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.

Social and emotional development are considered an important cornerstone of learning at Fiddlehead School. We utilize the opportunities that arise naturally within the classroom community to teach skills, as well as incorporating curriculum-based teaching in social and emotional education.

### **What does our approach look 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.

### **What can our graduates 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.

## Fiddlehead School Core Values



## Diversity, Equity & Belonging Statement

At Fiddlehead School of Arts & Sciences, we believe that **every child deserves to feel safe, welcomed, respected, valued, and a true sense of belonging.** We celebrate the many identities, backgrounds, cultures, family structures, abilities, experiences, perspectives, and ways of learning that make our community unique.

We are committed to creating a school community where all students and families are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, ability, family structure, socioeconomic background, or any other aspect of identity or lived experience.

We recognize that building a genuinely inclusive community is an ongoing process. It requires us to listen, learn, reflect, and continually examine our practices, policies, curriculum, materials, and language. We work to recognize and address bias, challenge stereotypes and discrimination, and ensure that students see themselves and their families represented and respected in our school community and in their learning.

We encourage students and adults alike to ask questions, appreciate differences, consider multiple perspectives, and speak up when something is unfair or unkind. We strive to give our students the knowledge, confidence, empathy, and critical-thinking skills they need to participate thoughtfully in an increasingly diverse world and to make positive contributions to their communities.

Our commitment extends beyond the classroom. We work to create an environment in which students can **be themselves, develop their individual strengths and interests, form meaningful relationships, take intellectual and**

creative risks, and grow into confident, compassionate lifelong learners.

## Our Commitment to Belonging

At Fiddlehead, we believe that belonging is something we create **together**.

We strive to:

- **Welcome every student and family** and recognize the strengths each person brings to our community.
- **Honor and celebrate differences** while recognizing the common humanity that connects us.
- **Use respectful and inclusive language** and model kindness and consideration in our daily interactions.
- **Identify and address bias, discrimination, exclusion, and stereotypes** when they arise.
- **Provide meaningful representation** of diverse people, cultures, perspectives, families, and experiences throughout our curriculum and school environment.
- **Listen to students and families** and remain open to learning, reflection, and growth.
- **Create equitable opportunities** for every student to participate, learn, contribute, and succeed.
- **Partner with families and community members** to strengthen an inclusive and connected school community.

## 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 or email to notify us. *Absences should be reported within 48 hours or they will be classified as Unexcused.* **Fiddlehead School is in session from 8:20 a.m. to 2:50 p.m., Monday thru Thursday, and 8:20 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. on Friday (No PreK sessions on Fridays)** 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 which approval has been granted *in advance* of the absence

**\*\* Children returning to school after 3 or more consecutive days absent due to physical/mental health illness are asked to have a note from their physician/mental health clinician.\*\***

**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. According to the Maine Department of Education (DOE), chronic absenteeism is defined as a student missing 10% or more of the days they are enrolled in school, which equates to roughly two days a month. This definition includes all excused, unexcused, and disciplinary absences.***

**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 8:05 a.m.** 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 CHRC 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 all students - **Safe - Respectful - Responsible**. Students participate in defining what the expectations look like in shared & classroom settings. At Fiddlehead School we use PBIS framework (Positive Behavioral Interventions Support) and this framework is a tool we use to support school appropriate behavior. PBIS focuses on prevention not punishment.

**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, the Remind 101 app, 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 for closing and/or delay information. In the event of inclement weather, we generally follow MSAD#15 closing schedule. Because families travel a distance, please use your judgment 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. The Fiddlehead dress code policy can be found on our website and attached to this document.

**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. At Fiddlehead School we aim to have a friendly, tight-knit community. At times this has meant that teachers have shared their personal cell phone numbers with families for communication purposes. Although cell phone use is pervasive in our society right now, we need to balance its convenience with the need for confidentiality and boundaries. For this reason, we are asking teachers not to give out their cell phone numbers and ask families to use staff email addresses as the best method for communication. If you happen to already have a staff member's cell number, we ask that you discontinue using it and use email instead. If you have a need that must be addressed first thing in the school day before teachers may have an opportunity to check their work email, please call the school at 207-688-3727 and leave a message.

**Early Dismissal:** We understand there will be days when you may need to dismiss your student early for appointments, etc. When this happens, please notify the school office **one day in advance**. *If you must dismiss early at the end of the school day, we require that you pick up no later than 2:20 p.m (12:00 noon on Fridays)* If you arrive after that time, **you will need to join the dismissal line and wait for normal dismissal time**. Adhering to this timeline will allow for the least disruption and impact to our students and dismissal staff. Thank you for your cooperation.

**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.

**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 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.

**Food:** Due to the number of students who are allergic to specific foods and the importance of parents deciding what food their child eats, we do not allow food sharing at Fiddlehead. This means that students are only permitted to eat food that they brought to school from home. For this reason we ask that students do not share snacks or lunches with their peers. We also ask that families do not send popsicles, cupcakes, etc. to school for birthdays or other special events. It is important to note that the front office does have snacks and lunch on hand for students who may occasionally forget to pack food, or may be a little extra hungry on a given day. The front office approves and manages the distribution of food.

**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, family member 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 school or programs at Fiddlehead 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 over 100.4 degrees, thick nasal discharge, vomiting, diarrhea, heavy coughing, chicken pox, untreated 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. **Children returning to school after 3 or more consecutive days absent due to physical/mental health illness should have a note from their physician/mental health clinician.**

**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 must remain in backpacks during the school day or may be brought to the main office. No personal devices are allowed to be used in the classroom or on the bus at any time.***

**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 and snacks. Students do not have access to microwave ovens. Students **DO** eat lunch at school on **early release Fridays**. We strive to be a peanut / tree nut free school. Please make sure to address any food allergies with our school nurse and your teacher. It is important to note that the front office does have snacks and lunch on hand for students who may occasionally forget to pack food, or may be a little extra hungry on a given day. The front office approves and manages the distribution of food.

**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 **and/or** over the counter medication such as Advil, Tylenol, etc., ***we require a written permission from parent to administer medication, AND written medication order from the prescribing medical provider. Paperwork for administering medication is in your student paperwork packet.*** 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 ***strives to be peanut/tree nut free*** to protect the health of students who are allergic. Please see our "Peanut and Tree Nut Aware Policy" attached.

**Personal Laptops/Phones/Internet Devices:** All personal laptops/phones & electronic devices must 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.

**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 and can support the educational mission of the school and to enhance the curriculum and learning opportunities for students and staff. 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.

Please see Fiddlehead's technology policy on the school website.

**Teacher Qualifications - Title I Requirement:** In accordance with Title 1 regulations that help provide financial support for our school through a grant, it is important that you know that you may request teacher professional qualifications at any time.

**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 ask that items from home (stuffed animals, toys, trading cards, etc.) **stay** at home. At the younger grades items such as stuffed animals 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 5 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.

**Truancy:** A student is truant if the student :

- Has completed grade 6 and has the equivalent of 10 full days of unexcused absences or 7 consecutive school days of unexcused absences during a school year;
- Is at least 6 years of age and has not completed grade 6 and has the equivalent of 7 full days of unexcused absences or 5 consecutive school days of unexcused absences during a school year; or
- Is enrolled in a public day school, is at least 5 years of age and has not completed grade 6 and has the equivalent of 7 full days of unexcused absences or 5 consecutive school days of unexcused absences during a school year. Fiddlehead is required to report all truancy to the Maine Department of Education.

**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. Visitors will be limited to keep risk low for COVID concerns. **Volunteers / Interns:** ALL volunteers and interns must fill out the appropriate forms and complete a background check. Paperwork is available at the front desk.

## Our Teaching Staff:

### Lower Grades:

- Pre - K: Ashley Kerekes, Lead Teacher & India Jenkins, Teaching Assistant
- Kindergarten: Livi Coombs, Lead Teacher & Erin Bruce, Teaching Assistant
- Kindergarten: Hannah Joseph, Lead Teacher & Denise St. John, Teaching Assistant
- 1<sup>st</sup> Grade: Shelby Robinson, Lead Teacher & Doris Jordan, Teaching Assistant
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade: Sara Guiliano, Lead Teacher & Hillary Simon, Teaching Assistant

### Upper Grades:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade: Samiera McMullen, Lead Teacher & Angela Bacon, Teaching Assistant
- 4<sup>th</sup> Grade: Sal Tinkman, Lead Teacher & Aaron Ricardi, Teaching Assistant
- 5<sup>th</sup> Grade: Theresa Dufour, Lead Teacher & Ben Thibodeau, Teaching Assistant
- Middle School Team: Jonathan Doughty & Michael Turner, Lead Teachers  
Rene Dumont & Crystal Adrich, Teaching Assistants

## Administrative Team:

Jacinda Coton-Castro, Executive Director  
Jason Manjourides, Principal  
Jessica Shaw, Special Education Coordinator  
Susan Persenaire, Business Manager  
Karen Johnson, Administrative Manager

## Special Education Team:

Stephanie Whiting, Special Education Teacher  
Holly Selva, Special Education Teacher  
Kate Sterling, Special Education Teacher  
Jocelyn Harlow, Behavior Interventionist  
Hilarie Fotter-Kennedy, School Psychologist  
Katherine Uschmann, Occupational Therapist  
Tracy Buteau, Teaching Assistant  
Molly Stultz, Teaching Assistant  
Laurie Walker, Teaching Assistant  
Kelly Lancaster, School Social Worker  
Caroline Karabeinikoff, School Social Worker

## Other Essentials:

Hayley Jordan, RTI  
Tim Sandborn, Bus Driver  
Rhonda Bullock, School Violin & Private Violin Music Instructor & Music Coordinator  
Dawn Ellen Kirkland, Spanish Teacher  
Ryan McQueeney, Outdoor Learning Coordinator  
Cat LaBarre, Integrated Art Instructor  
Chris Heffernan, School Nurse  
Anne Stires, Coordinator of Teaching and Learning  
Griff Orlando, Maintenance

## **DRESS CODE POLICY**

**Approved by Fiddlehead Board May 16, 2024**

Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences believes in fostering a positive and inclusive learning environment where all students feel welcomed and respected. Fiddlehead School also values the creative expression and individuality of our students and appreciates that how students dress and present themselves to the world is an important mode of individual expression. We recognize that the responsibility and choice for student dress rests with individual students and their caregivers. Our dress code is designed to promote a sense of community, while ensuring a safe and distraction-free educational atmosphere. We embrace diversity and inclusivity, and our dress code reflects these values.

Students are encouraged to use sound judgment and demonstrate respect for themselves and others in their dress. Clothing, footwear, outerwear, and accessories are expected to be appropriate for the learning environment and activities, including outdoor learning and play in all seasons.

In order for Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences to provide a safe, healthy, and non-discriminatory environment for all students to learn and grow, the following dress code shall be enforced:

- A. Clothing shall cover a student's chest, genitals, and buttocks. Fabric covering chests, genitals, and buttocks must be opaque. Cleavage shall not have a coverage requirement.
- B. Articles of clothing that promote the use of weapons, violence, alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, or other drugs may not be worn on school grounds or at school functions. Clothing displaying offensive language, symbols, or images, including but not limited to those that promote violence, hate speech, or discrimination, is strictly prohibited.
- C. Clothing should promote a safe and healthy learning environment for all students. Articles of clothing with displays that are sexual, vulgar, lewd, or violent or include insulting words (e.g., racial/ethnic slurs) are prohibited.
- D. Students may be required to remove hats or hoods at certain times during the school day if it interferes with education, communication, or safety.
- E. Fiddlehead School supports the self-expression and identity of all students, irrespective of gender identity or expression. As such, students are free to dress in a manner consistent with their gender identity.
- F. Costumes and costume accessories are not permitted. Exceptions for class projects or celebrations may be made at the discretion of the administration.
- G. Clothing that presents a safety or maintenance concern, such as shoes with wheels or metal cleats, are not permitted. Students should be mindful that clothing must be appropriate for all scheduled classroom activities including active class games, outdoor activities, and science or art projects where unique hazards exist.
- H. Footwear must be worn at school and on the bus and must be appropriate to the educational environment or particular activity.

Any student not wearing appropriate attire will be reminded of the expectations and given the opportunity to change into clothing that meets the expectations listed in the dress code after the first instance of a violation. The school will make a good faith effort to keep on hand clean clothes in a wide variety of sizes so students who need to change clothes, for any reason, and do not have their own change of clothes can utilize this supply. As much as possible, these messages will be delivered to the student by a staff member who works closely with the student and delivered privately, respectfully, and in a way that does not further distract from the learning. Further violations will also require the student to change into clothing that meets the expectations in this policy, but may involve disciplinary action. If there is an ongoing issue with a student coming to school wearing clothing that does not meet the dress code, their parents

may be contacted to assist the student in making clothing decisions. Though primarily managed by classroom staff, final determination for appropriate dress is at the discretion of administration within the guidance of this policy.

By adhering to these guidelines, we aim to create a learning environment that celebrates diversity, promotes mutual respect, and encourages individuality within the framework of a safe and inclusive community.

## **School Peanut and Tree Nut Aware Policy**

**Purpose:** Our school is "Peanut and Tree Nut Aware." This policy is designed to protect the health and safety of students with life-threatening allergies by minimizing risk of exposure, while fostering an inclusive and informed school community.

**Scope:** This policy applies to all students, staff, parents, and visitors during school hours, on school property, and during school-sponsored events, including field trips and extracurricular activities.

### **Guidelines:**

- **Individual Health Plans:** For students with diagnosed, severe allergies, the school nurse works with parents and physicians to develop and implement a specific Individual Emergency Action Plan or a Section 504 plan, which includes clear instructions for emergency response and medication administration (e.g., epinephrine auto-injectors).
- **Classroom Snacks and Lunch:**
  - Parents sending snacks and lunch for their children are requested to send items that do not list peanuts or tree nuts as ingredients and ideally are not manufactured on shared equipment with nuts. If children bring any peanut or tree nut item, they may be moved to a separate eating space to ensure safety for other children.
- **Hygiene & Safety:**
  - All students are encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water before and after eating. Hand sanitizers do not effectively remove allergens.
  - Students are strictly prohibited from sharing food, drinks, or utensils.
- **Disclaimer:** While we take precautions to minimize exposure, the school cannot guarantee a completely peanut/nut-free environment due to items brought from home or potential manufacturing cross-contamination. The success of this policy relies on the cooperation and vigilance of the entire school community.

### **Parent/Guardian Action:**

- Please notify the school nurse if your child has a food allergy and provide updated medical documentation and an emergency action plan.
- Carefully read ingredient labels before sending food to school. The Snack Safely website offers helpful printable lists of safe snacks.

Thank you for your partnership in keeping all students safe and well-fed.