



Fitch Academy Pilot

Fall, 2017 Update

Lynda Sorensen, English Teacher
Eileen Whalen, School Psychologist
Ellen Dunn, Principal

Purpose of the Pilot

- Identify strengths/challenges in the 2017-2018 school year
- Better understand the student population being served
- Gain perspective of the possible long-term financial implications for space/staffing

The Past Month

- Reception in July

Getting to know students, parents, colleagues and the space!

- Meet and Greet with students and faculty

- Open House with parents and the Fitch Academy staff
- Consistent communication with parents
- Weekly newsletter to parents
- Weekly staff meeting with colleagues

- Reflection on each week's activities emailed to the staff

- Weekly meeting with the Darien Library staff

Field trip to Chelsea Piers, Google Headquarters, the High Line, Darien Police Station

- Outdoor science class along stream near library
- Sports activities on the Town Hall fields
- One-on-one daily conversations with students
- Utilizing seminar room, Teen Lounge, Frosty Cafe, and library resources

Students

Eleven students are enrolled with a prospective candidate considering Fitch Academy to bring us to twelve, the maximum number of students agreed upon by the Darien Library and the BOE.

Presently we have
5 seniors
2 juniors
4 first-year students.

The targeted population was accurate.

Staff

Lynda Sorensen: *English/Language Arts*

Eileen Whalen, *School Psychologist*

Katie Gacek, *School Counselor*

*Keith Keeler, *Social Studies*

*Christina Mauricio, *World Language*

*Felicia Bellows, *Mathematics*

*Kristen O'Reilly, *Special Education*

*Christian Dockum, *Science*

* = one class

Academics

Students are taking five courses (English, History, Math, Science, Spanish) in addition to a Community class that meets 3x weekly, an Independent Study, and Contemporary Issues.

A few students are working on art projects with DHS faculty as mentors. Some are involved in the instrumental ensembles in the DHS music program.

A Day in the Life at Fitch

Sample Schedule

Monday

8:30-9:45 History

9:45-10:00 Break

10:00-10:45 Community

10:45-12:00 Science

12:00-12:45 Lunch

12:45-1:30 Spanish

1:30-2:15 Independent Study

Current Events

Electives (Art)

Friday

8:30-10:00 Tutorials with teachers

10:00-2:15

Wellness/Speakers/Field
trips/Enrichment Activities

***Joy**
***Availability to
Learn**
***Connectedness**
***Content**



Highlights so far...

- Students who were school avoidant are coming to classes
- Students are staying current with their work
- Students are engaged in their learning
- Students have created a community
- Parents are supportive and enthusiastic
- Students are attending school in their community

Challenges...

- The limited space
- Providing the staff to address the therapeutic needs of students during the school day
- Finding time for the Fitch Academy staff to meet regularly and design interdisciplinary work
- Teaching a wide range of students
- Difficulty for some students to arrive on time

Current Budget:

Total Staff: 2.09

Facility (Library)

Usage:

24K rental fee

Unexpected Cost Savings:

Outplacement Costs:

*Between 150-175K

*Transportation

Homebound Tutoring:

*100 hours

Looking Ahead:

- Future Space
- Growth
 - Increased staff
- Budget Implications



Testimonials

"I have my child back."

"We are grateful for this very needed program; the benefit these children are receiving will be life-altering as they navigate their high school journey."

"My child has a community now; he feels valued and safe."

"I am not sure why, but my child has read a book for the first time."



Questions?