

**Word from the Headmaster**  
A Strong End for an Even Stronger Beginning  
*By Daren M. Houck*

As the 2010-11 school year comes to a close, one word comes to mind...awesome. Our 13<sup>th</sup> year was quite a lucky one for The Mountain School at Winhall. I thoroughly enjoyed the time the year; I was proud of the many accomplishments of the students, the staff, and the school as a whole. While there is so much good to reflect upon, I'd like to focus on those things that not only added to this past school year, but add to school years yet to come. They include:

- Increased student performance. Our students continue to perform at high levels—not just academically, but socially as well. Over 80% of our students are at or above level in math, and almost 90% are at or above level in reading. Our students also continue to be a positive part of the Mountain School community by being respectful and responsible members.
- Increased school programs. While we offer more programs to our students than most schools our size, our offerings continue to increase in both number and creativity. Not only did MSW receive state approval to serve all categories of Special Education, we also started our new international program—with our first international summer program beginning in late July and our first full-time student beginning in September. Our Collaborative Problem-Based Learning (CPBL) initiative increased our focus on teaching standards and skills through a focus on critical thinking and problem solving, allowing our students learn through real-world applications. Other opportunities include the GNAT-TV project with the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade students and the woodshop classes with the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade students.
- Increased school personnel. A key part of our mission is to individualize each child's education to the best of our ability, and this takes resources. We continue to commit ourselves to this mission by spending our resources on people to care for your children. We are fortunate to have a 5:1 ratio of students to teachers and teacher assistants, and will continue to support our children as best we can.
- Increased fundraising. This year saw our highest event income in my seven years as Head of School, and our highest Annual Giving in the history of our school. Annual fund support this year came in at over \$32,000. We have also received pledges of over \$50,000 for next year to help us reach our goal of \$125,000 in Annual Giving funds...an exciting tribute to our children and those that believe in their future.
- Increased participation. In addition to the growth of our Board of Trustees—which has increased to 14 committed members—MSW has also increased the number of towns it serves to 10, and next year will have two countries represented. This supports the value that families place on the quality of education their children receive at The Mountain School at Winhall.
- Increased planning. For the first time in its history, MSW has published a strategic plan to help guide it through its next five years. We will not let the future of our children or our school be left to happenstance...we will continue our journey

down the path of excellence to make every year the best it can be, even better than the one before.

I want to thank of all you that added something to this past school year. I look forward to making next year than ever!