

## Word from the Head of School

The New Year is a time when many people around the world resolve to make a positive change in their lives. In fact, half of all Americans do so annually. These resolutions are often meant to improve a person's physical, emotional, financial, psychological and/or relational health. Sadly, only eight percent of Americans keep their resolution for one full year, and 80% of resolutions fail by January 20. Why do so many people fail?

Any psychology or mental health magazine can give you many examples of research and studies that can answer that question. In reviewing the many "why's," it seems that there are very clear patterns in those that succeed or, unfortunately, fail. Some of the patterns found in success include: fewer, focused goals (i.e. choosing two or three goals, not 10); goals that are specific (i.e. ones that include percentages, amounts, and dates to measure your success); taking baby steps (i.e. planning smaller, monthly successes towards realizing your "big" goal); a change of mindset (i.e. focusing your thinking on new, necessary behaviors); accountability (i.e. finding individuals to hold you accountable to your time lines); and allowing for the necessary time to be successful (i.e. change is an ongoing practice, not a once-a-year event!).

Looking especially at the last point, I am reminded of Aristotle, who said, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act, but a habit." Commitment to change to improve oneself - the essence of education - is a wonderful thing, and the ringing in of the New Year can be a good time to move towards that change. However, this growth needs to follow patterns of success, like those mentioned above.

This winter finds The Mountain School at Winhall one year into its Strategic Plan, a five-year journey based on specific, measurable goals with accountability and check-ins along the way. As reported in the Fall *Catamount*, I am proud to say that we have achieved many of our goals for this school year. From reaching our enrollment goal to outstanding student achievement, and from our highest-ever annual giving campaign to our upcoming accreditation, we continue to achieve excellence. However, as a school, we never rest on our laurels, believe we "have arrived," or stop learning and growing. We continue to commit ourselves to goals, growth, and accountability to achieve success for our children's sake.

We hope that you, too, will commit yourself to such positive practices. As we teach our students, to goal-set using the aforementioned criteria, our desire is that you also reinforce these behaviors at home to help every child be successful at whatever task they do - be it academics, arts, or athletics.

The Mountain School at Winhall looks forward to not only a healthy and successful 2012, but also to a prosperous four years as we complete our current long-range plan. I hope that each of you also finds success, growth, and joy in the upcoming year. Happy New Year!

Sincerely,  
Daren M. Houck  
Head of School