



Beyond the Ordinary

Established 1998

February 5, 2009

Annual Giving and Headmaster's Challenge Update

Thank you to all who have supported the Annual Fund and Headmaster's Challenge, even during difficult financial times. To date, 46% of our families have given to the Annual Giving Campaign and we have raised over \$7,000—37% of our goal! We hope that all families will support the Campaign. Remember, every dollar counts!

Please see the attached Thermometers that show our progress. Thank you for your gifts!

New School Email

Please remember that we have new email addresses for the school. All staff members can now be reached by using their first initial and last name with the suffix "@themountainschool.org." For example, Mr. Houck can be reached at "dhouck@themountainschool.org."

Please be sure to update our information in your contact folders. We apologize for any inconvenience!

JISP News

Tuesday, Feb. 10th is a JISP day! Please remember to bring home your child's equipment and gear at the end of the day. Attention volunteers: There are **free JISP days** available beginning at 12:00 unless noted otherwise: **At Stratton:** Sun. 2/8, Mon. 3/2 (All Day), Tues. 3/3 (All Day), Sun. 3/22, and Sun, 4/5. **At Bromley:** Sun. 3/1 (All Day).

Upcoming Events

2/11	PAB 8:45 am Library
2/12	All School Lunch
2/13	1/2 Day-11:55 Dismissal
2/16-2/20	No School Winter Break
2/26	Headmaster's Challenge Presentation 8:45 am
2/27	Re-Enrollment Contracts Due

All School Luncheon

There will be an all-school lunch for staff and students on Thursday, February 12. We will be serving Mac-n-Cheese, so no need to pack a lunch that day!

Headmaster's Challenge Celebration

On Thursday, February 26 at 8:45 a.m., The Mountain School family is invited to attend a special event here at the school. Join us in celebration as The Mountain School establishes its first endowment, hosted by The Vermont Community Foundation, by making an initial contribution of \$25,000. Mr. and Mrs. Houck will present a check for \$10,000 and the Board an additional \$15,000—from fundraising—to VCF. Mr. Chuck Scranton, former BBA Headmaster and Mr. Houck will both speak before the check presentation takes place. The celebration should last from 9:00-9:45.

We do ask that each family send in light breakfast items (fruit, pastries, muffins, etc.) or juice the afternoon before or the morning of the celebration. Guests will eat from 8:45-9:00. Thank you!

Daren M. Houck, Headmaster
Carol A. Stachelek, Office Manager

The Mountain School at Winhall

Beyond The Ordinary

Re-Enrollment Contracts

Families received (or will receive today) 2009-2010 Re-Enrollment Contracts. Please read the attached forms and policies carefully. All forms are due back February 27 for students to remain enrolled for next year. Families wishing to seek an extension to this deadline must request so in writing by February 12. Requests need to be submitted to Mr. Houck by 4:00 p.m. on 2/12. Please remember that MSW uses these student numbers to make hiring and program decisions for the following year.

Commonly asked questions include:

1. What if I do not get the contract turned in in time? Students not re-enrolled by the deadline are considered withdrawn from the school. Families wishing to return to The Mountain School must go through the application process again and are no longer guaranteed admission to MSW.

2. What if I sign a Stratton/Winhall contract and move out of town? The contract is valid only if you live in town. If you move out of town, the contract is void. It makes sense to sign and return the contract if you are not sure about the move.

3. What if I sign a contract and my child is placed elsewhere due to special needs? Special education placements are a team decision. If the team decides another placement is appropriate, the contract is void.

Please let us know if you have any questions. We look forward to serving you and your children again next year!

7/8 Teacher Hiring Update

The interview team has been hard at work. Reviewing over 100 resumes from all over the world, the committee has found many qualified and experienced middle school teachers.

The Mountain School's reputation and creative program is attracting quality candidates from literally all over the world.

After completing an exhaustive phase one of the first 25 resumes and initial interviews, we have found four excellent candidates to begin the second round process. These candidates hail from Reno, NV, Scottsdale, AZ, New York, NY and Jordan (yes, the country!). Over the next few weeks, applicants will be coming to do a teaching interview with the 7/8 classroom.

Please remember that tomorrow, February 6, the committee (Mr. Houck, Ms. Spence, Mrs. Houck, Paul, Ms. Tutsch and Laura Gianotti) will be traveling to the Carney, Sandoe & Associates Boston Forum to interview another 15-20 candidates from all over the world. *Be sure to tell the committee thanks and let them know how much you appreciate their time and commitment!*

A Word from the Headmaster

The Merging of Core Values

By Daren M. Houck, M.Ed.

Each year The Mountain School requires families to complete a Re-Enrollment Contract and Tuition Authorization Form (for Stratton and Winhall families) for the next school year. The purpose of this contract is so the school may reasonably estimate how many students will be attending, allowing us in turn to

The Mountain School at Winhall

Beyond The Ordinary

determine the number of staff and programs we can financially commit to for the following year. While MSW has a high retention rate of families and understand—as I have said in the past—“MSW is not for every child, but it is for most of them”—we know that this is a big decision for families. To help you in your decision, I encourage each family to examine their core values and compare them to The Mountain School’s core values. When these values mesh, I believe you can then be sure that it is a right fit.

So what are the school’s values? While they can be easily found in our mission and guiding principles, they are, more importantly, witnessed in our classrooms every day. Here are some of our core values at The Mountain School:

- *Community School.* MSW is a community school that has agreements with Stratton and Winhall to accept and serve all residents of these towns, just like a “local public school” would. However, we believe that community is more than a town; it is a decision. We are committed to making this a great learning community to all of our children and families, whether they are from Dover, Jamaica, or Winhall. You can see it not only in the classrooms, but also at school events and weekend parties—all of us are a welcomed part of The Mountain School community and have become a part of the family.
- *Serves Every Child.* Unlike some independent/private schools, MSW accepts ALL children. We have a unique make-up, with many students qualifying for Special Education or Title I services, both almost non-existent populations in traditional private schools. We are proud that we have—and will always have—an open door policy for all families interested in The Mountain School.
- *Student-Centered.* Have you ever swung by the school at 5:00 p.m. or on weekends? Many days you will see a teacher’s car parked here, working hard. At The Mountain School we do not have a union or contracts that are our focus. Rather, we have children that are our focus. Because of them, we work hard, stay late, produce creative lessons, and differentiate instruction to meet each child’s needs. The Mountain School exists for the children.
- *Creativity.* MSW values creativity, a core component of higher level thinking and problem solving. Examining situations and solving problems in unique, creative ways—be it a science experiment, math project, community service activity or art presentation—teaches students valuable, life-long skills. Many of these problems are solved cooperatively and then explained in presentation form to a larger audience—both skills that 88% of employers in the United States agree are the top two most-needed professional skills for workers.
- *Integration.* The hallmark of our school, we firmly believe in integration of the arts and technology with all other

The Mountain School at Winhall

Beyond The Ordinary

disciplines. Nowhere else in the world other than K-12 school is “Reading” or “Technology” separated into mini-clusters. As adults, we integrate technology and writing and math—or many other disciplines—into our jobs on a daily basis. So, too, we believe it should be at The Mountain School. Our students learn in an integrated fashion.

- *Multi-Age Classrooms.* Our decision to teach in multi-age classrooms is not just an “available space” decision. Research supports multi-age classrooms as a better instructional model for students both academically and socially. As stated above, nowhere else other than K-12 schools is there such an unnatural separation. At home, in the community, and in our jobs we are all a part of a multi-aged community. Learning how to be a valuable member of this community—both as a giver and receiver—enables us to be better life-long citizens.
- *Excellence.* Our unique model—a “private school with a public mission”—enables us to fund programs important to our families, not mandates demanded by legislators in Washington. This includes building upon community, creativity, and integration. This enables us, amidst such economic and social diversity of students, to expect the best and, I might add, receive it from our students. The Mountain School is again fortunate to be above the state and national averages in math, reading, and writing this year,

another testament to our core values.

In retrospect, do these core values resonate with your own? If they do, we hope you sign your re-enrollment contract for 2009-2010. If they do not, I would love to sit down with you and discuss a better option for your family that will better suit your needs. We hope to serve your family again next year!

Time for the Lights to Come Down

Are you free one afternoon to help take the Holiday lights down? We need your help. Anyone available, please call the office. Thank you!

Student Newspaper

The Student Senate will soon be creating a student-run newspaper. This paper will be published the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month, opposite of the school paper. The articles, artwork, and publishing will all be done by students. If you are a parent that would like to volunteer during recess one or two days a week to help, please let Mr. Houck know. We hope to have our first issue out on February 12.

3rd and 4th Grade News

The ¾ class has jumped into its unit on the human body! We are exploring how the body provides for our survival (5 basic needs- can you name them?) and having fun along the way! We kicked off the unit with a great trip to the Montshire and our first life-size model of the human body and its major organs! Now we are revisiting it to get to the details and build more models. So far, we have been focusing on the respiratory and circulatory systems and how our body gets the AIR it needs to survive!

The Mountain School at Winhall

Beyond The Ordinary

Next, we will tackle FOOD and WATER and the digestive system. Then we will see how the body SHELTERS itself from harm and finally look at genetics and heredity as a study of REPRODUCTION. We made a model of the respiratory system and shared it and the whole process of breathing and getting that oxygen to our blood with the 1/2 class on Wednesday!

We are opening the doors to our classroom lately! We are also sharing our stories with the 5/6 class, illustrating the stories with the PK/K and having a local yoga instructor, Kate Logan, come in once a week to work with us! We are focusing on the human form in art and focusing on our bodies in PE. It is great to share our learning and studies with others! And the human body is fascinating! We hope to share that with YOU next!

5th & 6th Grade News

Fifth and sixth graders are fully engaged in their learning about light and sound. On Tuesday, Ryan McBride, a local composer who has also done sound effects for movies such as *Iron Man* or the upcoming *Angels and Demons*, came to speak to the middle school about how sound effects and music are added to music. We learned a lot about a real life application of the science of sound!

Students have been learning about photography, as they make camera obscuras and pinhole cameras. They have been observing photographs and using the photographs to write creative short stories. It's amazing how many ways one photograph can be interpreted. I have been very impressed with their ability to look at art and think about

composition and meaning; they have wonderful observations!

The students have also had their reality challenged as they begin to wrap their brains around how we perceive the world and what role light has to play. The idea that light acts as both a wave and a particle stretches our minds. Also, the understanding that light is made up of many different frequencies and wavelength is incredible, especially when we realize that a red apple is only red because it absorbs every other color and it is only red that reaches our eye! They have been showing excellent critical thinking as they explore both scientific and philosophic ideas.

5-8 Middle School Field Trip

Info:

Our scheduled field trip "Mayhem Poets" in Keene, NH was canceled last Wednesday due to the snow day. Colonial Theatre in Keene also cancelled the performance that day due to the weather. We have been in touch with Colonial Theatre to work on rescheduling. As soon as Colonial Theatre has booked an alternate date with the "Mayhem Poets" they will contact our school via email to reschedule.

Unfortunately, the theatre events coordinator said that she could not give us a ballpark date as to when the event will be held due to the fact that the "Mayhem Poets" are on the road and establishing contact with them is difficult. As soon as we hear from Colonial Theatre we will send a notice and new field trip release form home.

Thanks to all that turned in the \$10 fee for this trip in advance. Tickets have already been purchased. We look

The Mountain School at Winhall

Beyond The Ordinary

forward to rescheduling this fun event. If you have any questions contact Mrs. Houck.

Music News

Laura Clark is offering music lessons. Please read the attached flyer for more information and to sign up!

Local 7/8 Semi-Formal Dance at BBA

Attached is a permission slip for 7/8 students to the BBA semi-formal dance. This dance is being held for all 7/8 students in the area. Students planning to attend should let the office know. All students must bring their permission slip, \$5, and a canned good for the food pantry to get in. Chris Uchida has volunteered to be the Mountain School chaperone. Thanks, Chris!

Box Tops For Education

Did you know you can earn box tops points for our school while shopping online? Go to www.btfe.com and register. Make sure you select our school! Click on the Marketplace tab to see all the stores that your already buy from.

Price Chopper Points

Do you shop at Price Chopper? Please help MSW earn points for educational equipment. See the attached Shopper Sign-Up sheet for information and to register your AdvantEdge Card. Thank you for your support!

Winter Clothing

Please remember to send in your children with appropriate winter clothing to wear for outside recess: boots, gloves, hats, etc. These things are also needed for outside PE! Thank you.

Horseback Riding

Poly Schmid is getting ready for summer riding with her Camp Unicorn and Jamaica Riders. Also offered are adult riding clinics. Please read the attached flyers for more information.



Thank you to the Cyr family for their donation of a 10X10 storage space for our School!

Procedures for public participation at Board meetings:

Individuals wishing to address the Board must contact the Board Chair at least 3 days in advance of the Board meeting. The contact should include the subject of the presentation and the approximate time needed to speak. Board meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month.

The Mountain School Board of Trustees:

Debbie Peretz, Chair * Betsy Wadsworth, Vice Chair * Thom McMahon, Treasurer * Robin Apps, Secretary * C.J. King * Virginia Morgan * Chuck Scranton* Norm Stachelek * Ric Swenson *