



Beyond the Ordinary

Established 1998

March 5, 2009

Headmaster's Challenge Celebration

On Thursday, February 26 The Mountain School established its first endowment. A check for \$10,000 from Daren and Suzanne Houck and an additional check of \$15,000 from the Board of Trustees—from fundraising—were contributed to the fund. Thank you to all who have supported the Headmaster's Challenge!

OPUS Event Change Notice

Please note that *The OPUS Project* Presentation has been changed from a Wednesday night to Thursday, March 26th. The event starts at 6:30 p.m. Due to Wednesday evening conflicts, evening events will be held on Thursdays all next year. Please note, **Wednesday, March 25 is not a half day—it will be a full regular day of school.**

7/8 Teacher Hiring Update

The Interview committee has already had two finalists visit the school for a teaching lesson in February, and looks forward to a third coming this March. The committee has reviewed over 100 resumes and has been fortunate to find so many qualified applicants to join our school family. We will keep you up-to-date as soon as a decision is made!

Student Newspaper

We are still looking for a volunteer to help with the Student Newspaper during lunch/recess (12:15-1:00). If you are willing to help, please contact the office ASAP.

Upcoming Events

3/6	All School Visitation Day
3/10	JISP
3/11	PAB 8:45 am
3/12	5-8 Mayhem Poet field trip
3/17	JISP
3/18	End of 2 nd Trimester
3/26	OPUS Event/Dessert Raffle
3/31	Last JISP Day

JISP News

We are down to the last 4 weeks of JISP! Please remember to bring home your child's equipment and gear at the end of the day. Attention volunteers: The remaining **free JISP days**, beginning at 12:00, at Stratton are Sun. 3/22, and Sun, 4/5.

Dessert Raffle at OPUS

A dessert raffle will be held at the Opus Event on the evening of Thursday, March 26th. The raffle will benefit the elementary grades PK-4. Families of those students are asked to donate baked items to raffle. Thank you for your support!

21st Reading Challenge

Windham County Reads is once again challenging us all to read, students and parents. Please see the attached flyer for more information regarding the reading challenge. The deadline to turn in contracts to be eligible for prizes is Monday, April 6th. If you have any questions, please call Ms. Tutsch.

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

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A Word from the Headmaster

Fulfilling a Dream

By Daren M. Houck, M.Ed.

Over five years ago on a warm and sunny Florida Sunday afternoon, I was researching for a graduate course, lying on my living room couch. While reading, I received a call from a member of the Board of Trustees at The Mountain School at Winhall, interested in interviewing me for the Head of School position. Over the coming weeks, several phone and in-person interviews ensued, and as fate would have it, a partnership was born.

As I learned more about the school that spring and summer, I created five goals that I believed the school most needed—five goals to fulfill in five years. As an educator, I read the research and experienced the benefits of setting goals. You know the old adage, “If you aim for nothing, you will hit it.” So I set these goals and set to work.

I am ecstatic to say that these five goals will all be met by the end of this year—my fifth year. Coming in September of 2004, my first goal was stability. There had been several changes in leadership, and many wanted—needed—consistency in the Head position. My second goal was people, or personnel. A staff is a school’s greatest resource. The Mountain School needed to find quality and committed teachers and support staff, and we have done that. Third was program. Independent schools must separate themselves from “the crowd” in all areas—and one of those areas is the program. Our creative curriculum, *The OPUS Project*, integration initiatives and more have done just that.

The fourth goal—a Development Director—was approved by the Board this past February. This individual will begin working here at the school on July 1, 2009—the fifth anniversary of my hire date. Goal five was initially, in my mind, a pipe dream...but even pipe dreams, I have found, can come true. After a deep conversation with my wife Suzanne last spring, we decided to do something for the school that would have a lasting impact. The “Headmaster’s Challenge” was born, and a \$10,000 gift was on its way to the school.

Then, on Thursday, February 26, 2009, a handful of Mountain School faithful observed what may be the most important thing to happen to MSW since its founding: we created our endowment. With a \$10,000 check from Suzanne and I and an additional \$15,000 from fundraising and the Board of Trustees, The Mountain School at Winhall established its first endowment.

Today, together, we have the opportunity to continue to make our own history. I look forward to my next five years and next five goals (already in my mind, by the way!). I hope that each of you will join me and commit to not only our present, but also our future. Over the coming months we will be working through the accreditation process, strategic planning, new fundraising initiatives, and much, much more. I hope that you’ll all set a goal to be a part of The Mountain School for that future success.

PK/K News

P.K. Kids were thrilled to have Ms. Susan return this year for more exciting, action-packed “missions”, as computer

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detectives. Susan Levitin, Director of Keyboard Kids, in Rye, New York, has taught two lessons and will be returning each month until June. The students are mesmerized by the technology and have all learned their way around the keyboard like pros. We are very grateful to Susan for volunteering her time, materials and expertise in bringing this program to us.



In March the theme study is Transportation and our author is Dr. Seuss. We celebrated Dr. Seuss's birthday with our friends in fifth and sixth grade by hosting a party in his honor. Our extravaganza included stories, fun and games, and of course, snacks!

Sadly, we say good-bye to Hugh on Friday. He has been an awesome addition to our class and we will miss him, but we know he will find much excitement in Tokyo, Japan!! All of us in the P.K. Classroom wish Hugh and his family much happiness!

1/2 News

Save the date! Join us on Friday, April 3rd at 9:15 a.m. for an Author's Tea. The children have been writing some very impressive pieces that they would love to share with an audience. We will take turns sharing our writing while you enjoy some tea and treats. If you cannot attend or cannot send a representative to attend for your

child(ren), please let me know so that I can find an adult to be present for your child.

OPUS:

Our next OPUS event is on Thursday, March 26th at 6:30 p.m. All the children will need to wear black clothing on top and bottom (we will be penguins). Hopefully you have these items at home or you can borrow them. If you have any problems, please let me know.

Also, the elementary classes will be running the dessert raffle that night. All proceeds will be divided between the three classes. We would like to ask each family to send in a baked good for the raffle. More information will come. If you are able to volunteer to run the table, please let me or Mrs. Burnett or Ms. Levine know. Thank you!

We are very busy learning about three of the five states of matter; solid, liquid and gas. We have completed a number of experiments and hand-on discoveries; ice cream was our favorite so far! We are tying this study into our study of Antarctica by looking at specific examples of matter from Antarctica. Winter in Vermont also offers many chances to observe states of matter.

I will be sending home a letter about times that I will be available for informal conferences with parents. Since so much growth and development happens during the second half of the school year for first and second graders, I am happy to meet with you to go over your child's progress if you'd like.

3/4 News

Our little community is growing! A hearty welcome to Rory and Macadian and their families! We feel it is the more

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the merrier here and hope that in our school they can be their best selves! That being said, we are throwing them in right in the midst of things! Students are working in small groups to create their own fun and educational OPUS pieces on the Human Body. We have covered our needs for food, air and water (Respiratory, Circulatory and Digestive Systems) and are moving on to shelter (skin and bones) and reproduction (basic heredity)! The students are full of great ideas and energy which they are channeling into this project! Look forward to the performance on Thursday, March 26 at 6:30 pm. Students will be asked to arrive at 6:15 pm.

The OPUS performance is also the elementary school's (grades PK-4) opportunity to raise some funds for classroom supplies and activities. Our fundraiser will be a dessert raffle on the night of the performance. We ask that each family make and bring one dessert to be raffled off. I am also hoping to make some desserts as a class during school before the event so if you feel more comfortable donating cooking supplies, that is another great way to help us out! If you are interested in helping out with the raffle (sell tickets that night) or wonder what to donate, please contact me at school!

We are looking forward to a great spring! We will finish up the human body with OPUS and then jump right into a study of Canada, Lake Champlain and Vermont's own French-Canadian connection! I am hoping for some guests to share French-Canadian culture (food, music, clogging, fiddling, etc), so if you have names, send them my way! The funds we make at the dessert raffle will also help us fund our big end of the

year field trip- something having to do with a lake... details to follow! The end of the year is going to fly and should be quite exciting! I look forward to sharing it all with you!

5/6 News

Fifth and sixth is wrapping up their unit on light and sound. Their worlds expanded as they began to notice light and sound around them in a new way, whether it is noticing a shadow, reflection, refraction, rainbows, or just seeing color! This has been a fun and engaging unit. We will continue to work with our artistic extensions of our learning about light and sound for our Opus piece. Students are using the instruments they made, learning about recording, creating "Stomp" pieces, and using light in their performances to invoke particular emotions.

Within the next week or so, we will be adopting some salmon eggs! The US Forest Service has lent us a tank and chiller to develop and care for the eggs. Eventually, we will be releasing them in the Winhall River and hope for their survival. Our hope is to help restore Atlantic salmon to a healthy population.

Our next thematic unit will be studying the Pre-Columbian cultures of Mesoamerica: the Mayans, Incas and Aztecs. These are fascinating civilizations that capture our imaginations while also providing important lessons for the present and future. We will be exploring many big ideas, such as what is a civilization and how they are developed? Is violence a necessary part of that growth? What is your identity and is it fluid or rooted? How do we learn about the past? How did the Pre-Columbian civilizations of

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Mesoamerica evolve, blend, layer and change? As always, please let me know if you would like to contribute or be involved with any of our learning experiences.

7/8 News

There are so many amazing things going on in 7/8 that it is a challenge to fit them all into this newsletter! I can't possibly do them all justice in this little blurb! The following is a brief update, however, please feel free to stop by our classroom to check things out or chat with Mrs. Houck about our work in more detail.

Our integrated theme study of the "Silk Road" is moving along. Students are in the middle of writing about their own virtual journeys across Eurasia in a self-created blog. This project provides an opportunity for students to explore the genre of magical realism, put their artistic Photoshop skills into practice, and to explore new skills/technology in publishing. The blog, in conjunction with writing our spring Opus performance piece, is proving to be an excellent avenue for students to practice research skills and explore individual areas of interest in history and science—not to mention giving them lots of writing practice!

In science, we are exploring the periodic table of elements with a focus on iron. In addition to its chemical properties, we are also discovering and exploring the impact that the discovery and use of iron has had on the development of civilization—particularly in the development of the Silk Road.

5/6 Reading Workshop News

Students continue to make great progress in reading workshop. I am inspired by the level of enthusiasm shown by students for reading during reading workshop. I have seen tremendous growth in critical thinking skill and making inferences in our 5/6 students.

Reminders: February/March book responses due by Friday, March 13. Extra copies of rubrics and project ideas are always available in our classroom.

Mrs. Houck sends a word document to Ms. Tutsch listing the reading workshop tasks due each week. Ms. Tutsch kindly posts this document on the 5/6 webpage so that students only have to go to one page to find their assignments.

After the February/March book responses are completed we are looking forward to a "Coming of Age" book study. Stay tuned to hear more about this fun project coming up.

General Middle School News

Field trip update

Thanks to all parents that promptly turned in new release forms for our rescheduled broomball and Mayhem Poets field trips. Unfortunately, last Monday was our last opportunity to participate in broomball due to the local arenas' schedules. We look forward to planning another fun team building field in the near future. If you turned in \$3 for broomball we will be in touch to either return the \$3 or apply it towards our next team-building trip.

We are looking forward to the Mayhem Poets trip next Thursday. We will need to leave school by 7:45. We plan to stop for lunch in Keene on the way home.

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Each student will need to bring lunch money on Thursday (around \$10 should be sufficient). Please contact Mrs. Houck if you have any questions.

Visual Arts and Art Integration

Buckle your seatbelts and get ready for a wild ride in the month of March! There are a lot of things happening this month, so here's the rundown: First, we are all working towards our all-school culminating event to be held Thursday, March 26. The theme is *The World in Motion* and everyone is working on exciting projects. Ms. Clark, Chris Uchida and I have been working with homeroom teachers and their students, incorporating music, movement and the visual arts to bring to life, their thematic unit studies for this trimester. Second, we have been busy making, firing and will soon be glazing bowls for the *Empty Bowls Project*. We have a little clay left, so I am inviting all MSW staff to participate. I also hope to involve any parents who want to join in, but clay is limited, so if you're interested in participating contact me ASAP. Our goal is to have between 50 -100 completed bowls –currently we have about 60, and we need to get everything finished by 3/20! Third, we are participating in the Art in the School Exhibition at the Southern Vermont Arts Center – also in March. With the help of Laura Gianotti, I have been looking through the work and making the difficult choices of what to show. Since there is very limited space, we will not be able to show the work of every child, but are trying to be as balanced and inclusive as possible. Since the Pk-K class always brings their work home as soon as they finish it, I may be contacting parents of some PK-K students and asking to “borrow” back some work for the length of the show.

Additionally, Mrs. Thompson made an excellent suggestion: How about having an all school/all kid art show, sometime towards the end of the year? I will be working in that – so stay tuned!

In addition to all that stuff we have been busy in visual art classes as well. PK-K has been building amazing cardboard and wood sculptures and creating mixed media collages to explore line shape and texture., Grades 1-2 have been drawing, making collage and paintings about Antarctica. They have also been introduced to the sculptural work of American artist Alexander Calder, learning about visual and physical balance, and are just completing mobiles that we will show at our Opus event – art in motion! Grades 3-4 have been studying the human body and its systems, they learned and practiced figure drawing using the gesture drawing technique and the explored the sculpture of Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti. They then created their own gesture sculptures using wire, foil and plaster. They look great! As a part of their unit on Light and Sound, grade 5-6 have been learning to look at photographs and writing about them with Ms. Tutsch. Students also built and are now beginning to take pictures with, their own pinhole cameras. They are learning about the film development process and some of the aesthetic issues relative to photography. Students in 5-6 have also been working in photoshop and creating graphic work that uses geometric shape and color to express different human emotions. Grades 7-8 have embarked on a journey along the Ancient Silk Road through China, central asia and the middle east. They are designing their own personal nomadic dwelling units in which they are traveling (making

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drawings and scale models). Along the way they are meeting several interesting historical figures and blogging about their experiences on line under Mrs. Houck's guidance. Finally we have just begun a unit on cartooning (art in motion –yet again!) and learning about creating a visual narrative, incorporating images and text and, of course, all about emanata (what is that? – ask a 7-8 grader!). We will be focusing on a small portion of their journey and rendering it in graphic form.

As most of you know, Mrs. Burnett and I will be traveling to China 4/8-4/24. Although part of that time MSW will be on Spring break, I am hoping to be in touch with the kids and sharing some of my experiences. Thanks for all your support and remember to stop in and say hi!

Music News

Dear Families,

Thank you for your response to the offer of instrumental lessons. I will speak with the homeroom teachers to make sure that they feel it's a good use of individual students' "study hall" time. If they are in agreement, we will proceed with organizing a schedule. Lessons will commence the week after our OPUS presentation (March 25). More information to come soon!

Special thanks to Peter Smith (Linda Smith's husband) for re-stringing and repairing some of the student guitars available for our guitar lessons!

- Laura Clark/Music

Box Tops For Education

Did you know you can earn box tops points for our school while shopping on-line? Go to www.btfec.com and register.

Make sure you select our school! Click on the Marketplace tab to see all the stores that your already buy from.

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.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Summer Pottery Classes

Turning Wheel, located in East Dorset, is offering pottery classes this summer. See the attached flyer for more information.

VT State Scholastic Chess

The state chess championships for grades K-12 will be held on Saturday, April 11th. Please see the attached flyer 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:

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