



Beyond the Ordinary

Established 1998

May 7, 2009

Pre-Kindergarteners Wanted!

Have a pre-kindergarten student, or know someone who does? We are accepting applications! Students must be 4-years old by October 31. See the office for an application or more information, or visit our website.

New Curriculum Coordinator

We are pleased to announce that Ms. Tutsch has been named the new Curriculum Coordinator of The Mountain School. Ms. Tutsch will be the chair of the Quality of Education committee and help coordinate many of our professional development and curriculum initiatives. Congratulations, Ms. Tutsch!

Welcome, Ms. Muir!

Ms. Muir, the new 7/8 teacher, arrived in Vermont this week and will be joining us on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays starting May 12 until the end of the year. We are fortunate to have this opportunity of a transition period with Mrs. Houck. Stop in and say "Hello" if you are able to any of those days.

MSW Spirit Week

The Student Senate would like to invite all staff and students to participate in "Spirit Week" next week, May 11-15. Spirit Week activities are:

Monday: Twin day, Tuesday: Pajama Day,
Wednesday: Hippie Day, Thursday: Gender Bender Day, Friday: Celebrity Day

We hope that everyone has loads of fun and shows that famous MSW spirit!

Upcoming Events

5/11-5/15	Spirit Week
5/13	PAB 8:45 am
5/22	1/2 Day -11:55 Dismissal
5/25	Memorial Day- No School
5/27	MS Field Trip-Long Trail
5/27-5/29	8 th Grade Trip
5/28	5/6 Field Trip -Turner's Falls

New Schedule

Parents, please remember that we now have a new schedule. All **PE CLASSES** will be held on *Tuesdays* and *Fridays* for all students for the rest of the year. Thank you!

Mid-Terms

Mid-terms for the 3rd and final trimester will be going home next Thursday, May 14.

Taylor Farm Benefit a Success

The Community Potluck/Contra Dance raised over \$1,000 for the building of a new barn at Taylor Farm. Thanks to all that helped, including parent volunteers and local businesses. It was a great time of fun for all involved. There will be another benefit held at the farm (organized by Taylor Farm) on May 23. See the attached flyer if interested.

Spring Testing

Students in grade 4 and 8 will be taking the Science NECAP on May 12 and 14. Eighth graders will take the test at 11:00 and 4th graders at 1:00. All students will also be taking other math and reading diagnostics Tuesday, May 19-Thursday, May 21. Please be sure to send your child(ren) well rested and well fed on those days! Thank you.

Daren M. Houck, Headmaster
Karli Spence, Assistant Head
Carol A. Stachelek, Office Manager

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A Word from the Headmaster

When I Look into the Future...

By Daren M. Houck, M.Ed.

I'll admit it; I'm a geek. I love research and data (ask my staff!). My favorite fiction series is *The Lord of the Rings* novels, and my favorite non-fiction is...you guessed it: *Freakonomics*. I love trivia and could bore you with, well, lots of things. But even we nerds like to dream (after all...isn't that why we love sci-fi?). And when I think about The Mountain School's plans and goals for the future, sometimes I like to just dream.

Coming to the same place to work all year round can cause you to bypass certain things after awhile. The cracked brick by the door or broken vent at the roof peak can go unnoticed. However, monotony can also cause you to create visions about what may come. After five years at the school, I feel that I know it well enough to begin seeing what it may look like five years from now. And while my goal for The Mountain School is to remain a tight-knit family, regardless of student numbers, I believe that we can still grow and keep that closeness. So, I'd like to take you on my "dream journey!"

As we enter into the building, we pass through an expanded entranceway. The entrance has a nice side room with enough space for a sofa and chairs and a small workspace for the PAB Chair—a nice spot for parents to gather and chat before dismissal. Looking into the old MPR, we see a new cafeteria and Performing Arts space. As we walk down the hallway, the enlarged Library sits across from the Pre-Kindergarten room. The Kindergarten room was moved to the old 1st/2nd room. As we turn the corner at the stairwell (once the Atrium!), the Learning Lab is the first room we see, followed by the 1/2 room, the Language Lab, and the Math Lab. The Art Studio still lies at the end of the hall. The stairs outside of the Studio take us to the second floor of the Wing.

Overtop of the Art Studio, we find ourselves peeking into the Music and Recording Studio. Coming up the hall, we pass the Language Arts and Social Studies rooms, the Community Center, and the Math and Science classrooms. Restrooms can be found at either end. The Community Center is equipped with both Science and Technology centers at the exterior, and the interior is covered with seating and tables for the entire middle school. This space is used for Middle School meetings, presentations, and more.

Outside, we see two new structures on the original campus, and one new building on the expanded campus. A new Gymnasium lies on the hill at the wing end of the school. The soccer field was bumped down towards the baseball field and is lined with natural bleachers—split logs—built into the hillside. The ball diamond has an expanded fence and bleachers as well. An outdoor Amphitheatre rests on the hillside coming down from the Skate Park towards the school. A wooden stage rests at the bottom, and the same split-log seating lines up the hill.

Next door lies the Expanded Campus, which consists of a house. The building is used as a dorm for the International Boarding Students attending middle school. Demand for American education continues to increase and families look to send their high school—and now even middle school—children to the States. These 10 international students live with a husband and wife team of Dorm Parents. What hasn't changed all these years, however, is that The Mountain School is still a *family*....

I'd love for all of you to share your dreams with me. Send me an email or stop by with your coffee and tell me your thoughts. I am committed to excellence AND community. I look forward to another five years serving you and your children and achieving many more things together. And remember, every achievement started with a dream. Let's dream together, then work to make it all a reality!

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PK/K News

Seventy-two degrees below zero outside, 32,000 feet above Iceland, blasting through the air at 590 miles per hour (land speed!) with breathtaking views of razor sharp peaks encrusted in ice below, I had to pinch myself to make sure I wasn't dreaming. So began the most amazing travel experience of my life! The nervousness I had felt leading up the trip disappeared and the weeks that followed were a myriad of new experiences that continued to take my breath away.

Our first stop was Beijing. We arrived in time for our first Chinese meal, served family style around a large round table with an enormous lazy susan in the center, which was quickly filled with many traditional Chinese dishes. Though we travelled in a variety of regions, and the level of heat and seasonings changed, this eating style became the norm. Oh, and I had to eat with chopsticks, breakfast, lunch and dinner! Somehow I *managed* (and stuffed myself), but I cannot say the people who had to sit next to me don't have black and blues from being poked by MY chopsticks!

Besides food, our trip focused on visiting schools and interacting with teachers and students, touring iconic places of interest, and traveling through varied and distinctive regions of China. In the short time we were there, we visited The Great Wall, The Forbidden City, The Temple of Heaven, a Buddhist Temple, The Museum of Inner Mongolia, The Genghis Kahn Mausoleum, Dazu Stone Carvings and Tiananmen Square. We rode camels in the Gobi desert, a boat on the Yangtze River, and the Monorail in Chongching. We observed a fifth grade English class, a Mongolian Music class, a fourth grade Science class, a Kindergarten Math class and walked through art classes in a small country school. We visited a farmer in his home and toured a cow farm and a town office building.

After all that, I have to admit it was utterly delightful to return to see the smiling faces of the Pre-K/Kindergarten Kids as they filed into school Monday morning!! It is my hope that sharing my experience will help give them a sense of the vastness of the world, the diverseness of cultures and customs, and an

inquisitive nature, so they too, will someday want to explore the world.



Kindergarten students performing for the "Vermont Delegation of Teachers"



Students in Inner Mongolia between classes.

1st & 2nd Grade News

Please remember to send in permission slips for the Cinderella Ballet on May 27th. At this point, we are all set with drivers. Thank you to everyone who expressed a wish to help us.

We are also in the planning stages for a field trip to The Montshire Museum on June 5th. We will use monies raised this school year to pay for admission and possibly buy a small souvenir. More details to follow as the date gets closer.

Next Friday, May 15th, we will welcome the kindergarteners into our classroom. Our class will buddy up with the new incoming "first graders" and show them the ropes. They will be with us from 9:00-11:00. We look forward to welcoming our new classmates!

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I'm sure you have all heard about the marble run I purchased. We have been building it for the past two weeks. Happily, today we finished it and we had a maiden run! While this project was challenging and at times frustrating, I am very impressed with the students' abilities to read a manual (47 pages long), delegate tasks and work as a team to put the 330 pieces together. This activity will surely help us when it is time to build our individual marble runs.

3rd & 4th News

Hello! We are in the race to the finish! With 7 weeks left of school, we will be going on 2 field trips, studying how different points of view changes a story for better or worse and experiencing what it was like to be an early settler of Canada and Vermont. So far, we started planning our trips- the Queen of France, Queen Miss Levine gave each group a boat and \$10,000 for supplies! We quickly learned that when planning a month long journey for at least 20 people, \$10,000 goes FAST! We have simulated one week of sailing and look forward to creating the settlement and its life. We have been working on poems in the view of a tree for a contest for the Department of Forestry and they are fantastic! We'll look forward to the results in June!

As for the field trips, we are still waiting for permission slips from several students. Please send them in ASAP! For the surprise trip on June 10, we are all set for drivers! However, **we need drivers for the May 27th trip to SVAC in Manchester!** Please let me know if you can help out ASAP!

Also in other news, we welcome Mr. Curry to our classroom! He has experience in our school and is a great addition to our class. With his help, we will be even more successful learners! He will be in our class all day. With his addition, Linda Smith has left our class for PK/K. We appreciate all she has done for us and say a big THANK YOU! (and we will see you on Fridays for PK/K buddies!)

5th & 6th News

5/6 has many exciting projects going on! If you would like to become involved in any of them, please let us know. We love to share our learning!

1. We are working with two architecture students from Bennington College to enter a design for the 2009 Open Architecture Classroom Design Challenge. This is a competition sponsored by Architecture for Humanity whose mission is to make architecture and design accessible for people all over the world. Our project is to make a design for the future of learning that is sustainable and helps students learn best. Mountain School students are learning about the role of light in design, how to use Sketch-up and what other factors to consider while making a design. We will be submitting our final design by June 1st, 2009. The winner receives \$50,000 to implement their design!

2. We are raising salmon in our classroom. The eggs have hatched and the salmon are now in the alevin stage; they are small and still have their egg sac attached to their body providing nutrition. Every day they grow and we will be releasing them in the Winhall River on May 18th. Students have learned a great deal about salmon life cycle, ecosystems and adaptations. They have also learned about what type of salmon is sustainable to eat.

3. We are learning about Pre-Columbian civilizations and cultures. This week students are completing a fictional archeological dig to find which artifacts demonstrate certain characteristics of different cultures. At the same time, we are talking about artifacts in our own lives and writing metaphor poems about them. Students have written about themselves as shoes, all-terrain vehicles, rocks, rings, snowboards and more! We will be having a celebration of Pre-Columbian learning on May 20th.

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7/8 News

Hard to believe that the class of '09 has only 19 days of school left! Those 19 days will be action packed. 7/8 families, please take note of the "upcoming events" page attached to your copy of the newsletter.

Our concluding theme study for the year is focused on the exploration of the Middle Ages from a philosophical perspective. Reason or rational thought, sought within the context of the faith-based beliefs prominent during the Middle Ages, is the framework for our exploration. In science, we will exam the Black Plague and each student will also complete an independent project about a human disease.

Moch Trial:

7/8 students will participate in a moch trial on Thursday, May 21st at 1:30. The prosecution and defense are busy preparing their cases. Each student will participate in the trial and the 5/6 class has been invited to serve as the jury. Peter Greenberg, retired attorney, and father of 5th grade student, Cat, will serve as the judge. Mr. Greenberg led the 7/8 class through a series of law classes earlier this year. Many thanks to Mr. Greenberg for all of his time and support in providing this valuable learning experience for our students.

Community Service Challenge:

7/8 announced the last community service challenge, for this year, "Pennies for Peace" during morning meeting on Wednesday. Each MSW student, staff, and community member was challenged to collect "pennies" that will support the education of needy children in central Asia. Each homeroom and the office has a designated collection jar. We will update the progress of the fund raiser each week during all-school Wednesday morning meetings. MSW has a proud history of giving generously to worthy causes. We look forward to continuing this tradition during this challenge.

"Pennies for Peace educates children about the world beyond their experience and shows them that they can make a positive impact on a global scale, one penny at a time.

Our best hope for a peaceful and prosperous world lies in the education of all the world's children. Through cross-cultural understanding and a solution-oriented approach, Pennies for Peace encourages children, ultimately our future leaders, to be active participants in the creation of global peace"

Please check out www.penniesforpeace.org for a thorough explanation of the fundraiser.

Donations in all monetary denominations are welcome!

2008-2009 Yearbook:

The 7/8 class with advisors, Paul and Mrs. Houck, have taken on the responsibility of creating the '08-'09 yearbook. I am happy to report that work is well under way! We have established a hierarchy of responsibilities, with students, based on a publishing company model.

If you are interested in ordering a yearbook, please return the attached form and payment to the office no later than Friday, May 22nd. See Mrs. Houck or Paul if you have any questions.

MSW Garden Project:

The 7/8 class has prepared our raised garden beds for spring planting. Each homeroom class will plant one, 4' x 8' bed over the next few weeks, as weather allows. We are looking for families to "adopt" our garden for a week over the course of the summer. During that week families would need to come to school (one day, however, you could come more than once if you want!) to weed, water, and harvest as necessary. The "tending family" is welcome to harvest and use whatever mother nature is offering that week. If you are interested in adopting our school garden for a week over the summer, please see Mrs. Houck to sign up.

5/6 Reading Workshop with Mrs. Houck:

Collectively, the 5/6 class has read nearly 200 independently chosen books over the course of this school year! Great job 5/6!!

We have had a fun and engaging year in reading workshop covering diverse material ranging

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from magical realist author Ray Bradbury's, *The Veldt*, to Edgar Allan Poe's, *Tell-Tale Heart*. and most recently, best-selling author John Krakauer's (editor at large for Outside Magazine) abbreviated version of *Into the Wild*.

We have also explored and analyzed many New York Times articles that dealt with topics of particular interest to middle school students.

The last independent book response for the year is due the week of May 18th. Students will also conclude the year with a "coming of age" book study. After exploring several titles we have ordered 6 diverse selections. We are anxiously awaiting our order to arrive any day. Over the next few weeks be sure to ask your child which book he or she selected and spend some time discussing the various class activities/discussions based on the "coming of age" theme.

Library News

We have had parents coming in to get library cards. This has been very exciting. I am being given donations of **TIME** magazine, **COUNTRY LIVING**, **SPORTS ILLUSTRATED**, as well as some cooking magazines. We also have some of the new bestsellers in educational books. We have **THE OUTLIERS**, by Malcolm Gladwell, which has been on the New York Times list for several weeks. This writing deals with how certain people thrive and become successful, as opposed to those who do not. The author offers some great ideas and plans for achieving success. There are also books which you may pick to read to your children at home. I can also get books on the inter-library loan plan. We also have been enjoying the lending library. Many books have been circulated by your children's generosity. Thanks so much. Please stop in and get your own library card and see all there is to offer.

Spanish News

Fifth graders have been making piñatas. To make this type of piñatas all you need is: newspaper, balloons, tissue paper, masking tape, flour, glue, and string. Most people think piñatas were originated in Mexico. Well if you read this

article about the history of the piñatas, you will know where the piñatas came from. The history of the piñatas may be somewhat surprising to most people. Most historians agree that the piñatas originated in Asia, not in Spanish speaking countries. It is commonly believed that when Marco Polo visited China in the late 1200s, he was so intrigued by piñatas that he brought them back to Italy. The first European holiday that started to use piñatas during the festivities was Lent. About a hundred years after Marco Polo brought piñatas back to Italy, Europeans started calling the first Sunday of Lent "Piñatas Sunday". "Piñatas Sunday" is the Sunday after Ash Wednesday. "Piñatas Sunday" is still some of the most common of Mexican traditions. It was the Spanish conquistadors that were credited for bringing the piñatas to Mexico. The Spanish missionaries used the piñatas as a tool to help them get the attention of the indigenous people and convert them to Christianity. In Spain, the piñatas was brightly colored so that it would grab the attention of a innocent person. The candies and fruit inside were seen as the temptations of the Devil. The blindfolded person hitting the piñatas represented the "blind faith", and the stick he/she was using represented "goodness". After the piñatas was finally broken, the candies gathered were seen as a "just reward".

Memorial Day Celebration

On Friday, May 22, The Mountain School will again host a Memorial Day and Veterans Celebration at the school. Area veterans, active duty personnel, and their families are asked to join us for a breakfast and ceremony at 9:00. If you or a family member is a veteran or active duty military personnel, please invite them to the ceremony. Please RSVP by 4:00 p.m. Tuesday, May 19.

MSW Adopts the Long Trail

The Mountain School has adopted a portion of The Long Trail and will be working that portion of the Trail each spring and fall. Middle School students and parent volunteers will be doing trail work next Wednesday, May 27th. We will be leaving the school at 8:45 **SHARP**. Students

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must dress appropriately and have field trip permission forms signed. Interested parents are welcome. Please let the office or Greg Hasaj know if you will be attending. Also, we are in need of hoe's for the day; if you have one, please bring it with you or send it with your child. Be sure it is clearly marked. Thank you!

Foreign Language Feedback

Last week, Mr. Houck sent home a letter outlining several new plans for next year. One of the areas discussed was foreign language. The school would like for parents to provide feedback as to what language they would most like to see at the school. Examples were Spanish (fastest growing world language, second-most spoken in U.S.) or Chinese (most spoken in the world), etc. If you have a preference, please stop by, call, or email Mr. Houck your thoughts by May 15. Thank you!

Cinderella Ballet

The New York Theatre Ballet will be coming to the Southern Vermont Art Center on Wednesday, May 27. All performances (two daytime and one evening performance) are free of charge. Please see the attached press release or the poster in school for more information.

Middle School Dance

The Student Senate will be hosting a dance on Friday, June 5 from 7:00-10:00 p.m. All students are encouraged to attend, and to invite one non-MSW friend (permission slip required—to follow) and to suggest 2 songs including artist and title to offer to our D.J. Adult chaperones and decorators needed—please see Mr. Houck if interested!

Needed: An Old “New” TV

Do you have a used TV that you don't need anymore? The MSW Library is in need of a new television that is modern enough to be compatible with the digital cable connection and does not need a converter box. Please let us know if you have a TV to spare!

Box Tops For Education

Thank you to those families who have sent in their Box Tops. We just received a check for \$130.03! Please keep sending in your neatly clipped box tops! Thank you for your support!

Lunch Stuff

Please help us keep MSW Green by packing everything your child needs to eat his/her lunch: napkins, utensils, etc. Also, please make sure that your child has his/her lunch with them when they leave for school.

Upcoming Events:

End-of-Year Cookout

Please note that the end-of-year cookout (May 27) will be rescheduled for Saturday, June 6 at the Bromley Thrill Zone. More information to follow.

Field Day: Tuesday, June 16 @ 1:00-3:00n p.m.

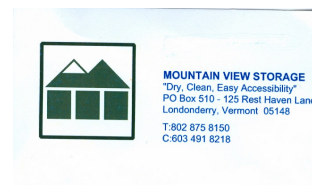
Awards Ceremony: Wednesday, June 17 @ 9:00 a.m.

Early Dismissal: Wednesday, June 17 @ 11:55 a.m.

Community News

Swine Flu Travel and Prevention Information

Please read the attached information on prevention and travel tips regarding the Swine Flu outbreak.



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

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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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