

WAITSFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT

March 2010 Report

Waitsfield Elementary School Mission

- It is the mission of the Waitsfield Elementary School to support students in the achievement of high academic standards; we believe that all students can master challenging academic material and we expect them to do so.
- It is our mission to foster a safe, comfortable and challenging learning environment. It is our mission to help teach children respect for themselves and others, and teach them to accept responsibility for their actions.
- It is our mission to enhance global awareness and acceptance of diversity.
- It is our mission to make a positive difference in the lives of each of our students.

Principal's Report

Many Waitsfield residents have some familiarity with the Waitsfield Elementary School – from those who have come to the famous Ski & Skate Sale or some other special event in this building to those who attended and/or sent children to the school. Our distinctive school-bell entry has welcomed an array of children and adults over the past forty-nine years.

Sitting within the town center, the Waitsfield School provides a gathering place in the community. The playground is used by children from around the Valley and beyond; my children and I have encountered many visiting families on weekend afternoons. Groups from the Cub Scouts to the Democratic Caucus (and many more) use the building for public events. While the first function of the building is to support the education of Waitsfield youth, we are happy to have the facility serve as a resource and public meeting space for the community at large.

As a Valley resident, I've daily driven by the school for many years and attended some of those special events within the building. In the past 7 months of working at the school, it has been a pleasure to come to better understand just what an asset the Waitsfield Elementary School is to our whole community.

What Makes Waitsfield Elementary School Unique?

Strong Student Achievement

Waitsfield Elementary School students are high achieving. More information on student achievement on standardized assessments is provided under “Report on Student Achievement” in this report. While we continue to work towards improving success for all students, nationally normed assessments such as the NECAP (New England Comprehensive Assessment Program) show that our children are often performing well above state averages. Success of students can and should be measured in a variety of ways, but these standardized assessments assure us that our programs prepare students for expectations held beyond our own school walls. While these strong scores are not unique to Waitsfield Elementary School, our ability to insure rigorous and effective instruction is an important aspect of who we are.

Focus Upon the Whole Child

While high academic standards are central to our school mission, we recognize the importance of caring for the whole child. Evidence of attentiveness to multiple intelligences and balanced development of the physical, emotional and intellectual needs can be found throughout the school.

- Our “Winter Outdoor Program,” where students ski/board or otherwise adventure outdoors on Wednesday afternoons, focuses upon building lifelong wellness skills and habits.
- Physical Education instruction occurs 3x/week, but most teachers build additional movement activities into each day. From the “Van Dine fire drill” (where students take a lap or two around the playground,) to daily TaeBo in Mr. Hubbard’s room, to preschool teacher Betsy Eckfeldt’s leadership in integrating yoga instruction throughout the school day, children are explicitly taught how to use physical activity to help them regulate their emotions and energy, and given frequent opportunities to practice these skills.
- An active school-based Wellness Committee has worked on addressing topics from school lunches to the use of green cleaning products throughout the school. A school health index assessment, completed a few years ago, helps guide this group in

using data to thoughtfully consider the health and wellness needs of the school as a whole.

- The drama program in the school supports theater extracurricular activities for children in 2nd – 6th grade. Throughout the year, three plays are performed by 2nd – 4th grade students, as well as a musical by the 5th/6th grade students. This year's 5th/6th grade musical has a participation rate of 30 out of 39 students to whom this opportunity is available. (We invite you to *Guys & Dolls* on March 19th and 20th!)
- The WES Band and Instrumental program currently serves 54 of the 67 students in 4th through 6th grade, an 80% involvement rate. While all students participate in weekly music instruction, involvement in band/instrument lessons is voluntary and available to all students. With a full-time music teacher, WES has a strong commitment to supporting development of musical intelligence.

Hats off to the Waitsfield School and community for supporting development of multiple intelligences and valuing the whole child.

Community Engagement

With more than 160 volunteers, the Waitsfield PTA's annual Ski & Skate Sale is an amazing example of community support for the school. There are a few remarkable individuals who dedicate enormous amounts of time and energy to make this fund-raising event a reality, but it could not be done without the involvement of many volunteers.

While the Ski & Skate Sale is a significant event, the daily contributions of volunteers in the school are equally as important. A school day has not passed without me encountering a parent volunteer in a classroom. Whether its leading small groups, or giving emerging readers and writers additional support, buckling on ski boots, or helping kids practice writing, or raking mulch on the playground to keep the surface forgiving, the contributions of our many volunteers are a tremendous asset to the school. In addition to the improved learning environment, great relationships are formed and students have an opportunity to feel that there are those beyond their families or teachers who really care about how they are doing in school. Thanks to you all.

2009-2010 and Beyond: Where is W.E.S. Going?

Education has been in the newspapers much over the past few months as various proposals have been put forth about how to manage the state budget and, as a subset within that budget, education spending. The Waitsfield School Board has been committed to building a budget that is sustainable for the town while also maintaining the integrity of our educational programs. The budget presented in this report, with a 2.2% decrease over the previous year's spending, represents their strong efforts to be responsive to these two goals.

Throughout the state, school enrollment is dropping. However, at Waitsfield Elementary, our enrollment has remained fairly steady. Given what we know about young people in our town, we are planning for smaller class sizes in the coming years, such as the anticipated class of 13 students in next year's kindergarten. The Waitsfield School Board and I have been thoughtful about these potentially diminishing student numbers; the decision to reduce to only one kindergarten class next year is in response to these anticipated changes in population. While my experience is that students numbers can change significantly over a few years, we are looking at a three-year plan of staffing that will allow us to flexibly accommodate a potentially changing population.

Elementary Enrollment as of October 2009

Grade	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Enrollment	15	19	27	25	14	28	17	24	169

Enrollment Trends PK-6 (1999-2009)

'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09
166	156	159	160	170	145	154	171	160	155	169

In addition to planning for potential changes in enrollment, the School Board has worked to consider the long-range needs of our aging facility as well. In the coming year, our school building will celebrate its 50th birthday. Through an energy audit and review of our mechanical and building envelope systems, we've put together a capital improvement plan that should allow us to keep our building functioning in good health

despite its age. We anticipate long-range savings as we replace items such as ventilation units that were installed when the building was first erected; many of the planned improvements will bring much greater energy efficiency to the building. In addition, we're being creative about looking for funding, applying for energy efficiency grants and rebates from Efficiency Vermont to help offset these planned costs. The full Capital Improvement Plan, which can be found at the school website (www.WaitsfieldElementary.org) is designed to keep the building healthy and address potential issues before items fail.

It being my first year in the school, I spent the first few months familiarizing myself with what is going on. I was amazed at how much was going on—from the Safe Routes to Schools initiative to the School Book Fair to a Harvest Lunch celebrating the bountiful crop from our vibrant school garden, there was at least a special event a week! These activities contribute to a rich experience within the school, but we must also insure there is a rigor of academics beneath these special events. Throughout this year, school staff and I have been looking at the curricula and its alignment with Vermont Grade Level expectations. From examining our class configurations to looking closely at our math program, we've looked at how to best organize ourselves to insure that a dynamic curriculum, which contributes to the success of students in a preschool-12th grade system, will occur. A goal has been to support greater continuity of learning between classrooms, such that the skills students learn in one class segue into maximized learning in the following year. While we value the individuality of our many terrific teachers, we need to be able to insure a level of continuity of curriculum and instruction as well. Several times each month, through staff and unit meetings, faculty is engaged in organized conversations around these topics of consistency curricular depth. In addition, the early release Wednesdays are used to support consistency and professional work across our supervisory union. As we work towards this greater consistency, we will be expecting student performance to further improve as we better build upon prior learning and maximizing student time. Look for reports on evidence of this success in future town reports!

In the next year, we will be implementing the “Investigations in Time, Data and Space” as our math program, coordinating the instruction that we provide with that given throughout our Supervisory Union. As we work to insure that our curricula align with Vermont Grade Level Expectations, we are committed to maintaining the rich integration with the arts, as well as thematic studies across content areas, that has become

an essential part of the Waitsfield way. Integration of technology skills from kindergarten on continues: from five and six year olds publishing their writing electronically to 5th and 6th graders using flip cameras to document their ability to solve math problems, our students have multiple opportunities to gain skills in using technology to solve real life problems.

In addition to supporting academic needs of our students, the Waitsfield Elementary School remains committed to supporting families and the broader community. We currently serve as host to Open Hearth at Waitsfield, an afterschool program that allows families to access enriching, dependable childcare beyond the school day. Exploration is occurring of how this program might expand to support childcare for preschool and kindergarten families as well.

Through Safe Routes to Schools funding, we are working to maximize funding to improve sidewalks, crosswalks and infrastructure that will benefit the town as a whole. As evidenced throughout this year's town report, we look to weave serving the community into our daily business as a school. From working with local farmers to assist in harvesting of crops to continuing a connection to our town's senior center, a connection to the community is part of our curriculum, the work of the school board, and the focus of the school. If the school is more of a landmark in town than a part of your daily life, I encourage you to stop by—we look forward to the opportunity to deepen that connection.

Respectfully,
Kaiya Korb, Principal

Waitsfield Elementary Student Data

Support Services		Food Service Program	
Students receiving Special Education Services	13%	Students eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch	13%
Students with 504 Plans	2%	Average students served breakfast each day	65%
Students receiving support from our Educational Support Team	13%	Average students served lunch each day	29%



Students' food drive of non-perishable items for Food Shelf
(Photo courtesy of WES)