

WAITSFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT
March 2012 Report



A theme uniting the staff and students of the Waitsfield School this year is moving our fine school from good to great.

Waitsfield Elementary School Mission

- Support students in achievement of high academic standards; we believe that all students can master challenging academic material and we expect them to do so.
- Foster a safe, comfortable and challenging learning environment; help teach children respect for themselves and others, and teach them to accept responsibility for their actions.
- Enhance global awareness and acceptance of diversity.

Jim Collins, author of the book Good To Great, observed that organizations that are highly effective generally don't have a miracle cure or quick-fix ideas, but rather gain their achievements through steadfast focus upon excellence. Greatness is not carried upon the back of one individual, but achieved through collaboration, a willingness to admit errors and adjust what one is doing, and a commitment to doing one's best. As our school addresses the challenges of newly adopted and increasingly rigorous standards, the tumultuous economy that faces the families of our students and the greater community, and the continuing complexity of guiding students in becoming thoughtful, responsible, and

capable individuals, we have numerous opportunities to demonstrate our long-range vision and commitment to greatness.

Waitsfield Elementary is a very good school in many respects:

- Our students are successful on standardized assessments, not only performing above state averages but showing greater than typical growth in their skills over the time that they are at our school.
- We have an experienced, respected staff who are committed both to continuous learning for themselves and their students. All of our staff meet the federally defined expectations of a “highly qualified educator.” Almost half of our classroom teachers have earned masters degrees in math with a focus upon education, and several staff members are working towards degrees in educational leadership. Many of our staff have committed much of their careers to the youth of Waitsfield and continue their own higher education towards serving that population.
- We appreciate that a coordinated, rich literacy and math



curriculum is critical, but by no means is enough to support the whole development of a child. Our students participate in diverse activities that nurture an array of skills and interests:

- Classrooms incorporate, on a daily basis, activities that build self-awareness and self-control, from team-building work to self-reflective writing to yoga and meditation.
- Our winter ski and ride program brings all 1st – 6th grade students to the local mountains on winter Wednesday afternoons.
- Our music program supports over 90% of our 4th- 6th graders learning an instrument and provides all students with the



opportunity to not just learn about, but also to regularly compose and perform music.

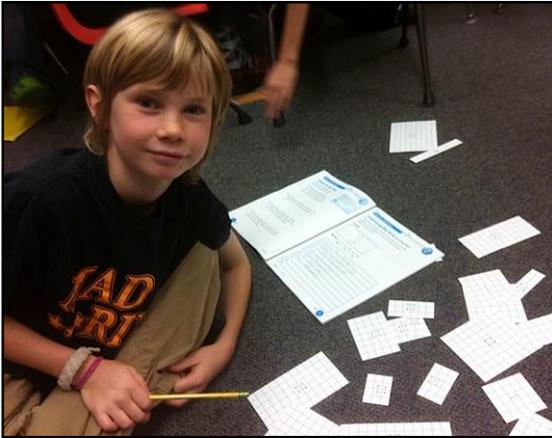
- Our foreign language program builds entry level skills in a second language along with appreciation and knowledge of world cultures and languages.
- Our health/guidance program addresses physical, social, and emotional growth and is delivered by our guidance and nurse educators in each classroom weekly.
- Our school garden program engages in all students in understanding what it takes to produce healthy, local food, as well as provides an opportunity to practice the skills necessary to do so. Through PTA funding, students are employed throughout the summer, providing many kids with their first “job” experience, in caring for the gardens that produce food used in our school lunch/breakfast program, our classrooms, and at the local food shelf.
- With mobile laptop carts, a computer lab, digital whiteboards, document cameras, and ipads, along with a technology integrationist educator supporting students and teachers in higher level use of this equipment, we are able to use technology to enhance student learning as well as support students in developing the skills needed to use technology effectively to create, communicate and collaborate.
- In addition to rich classroom instruction, we have a student support system that provides additional instruction to children as needed. For some children, these support services come through special education, but we provide short-term intervention instruction for students who do not qualify for special education as well.



Continuing Towards Greatness. With such a strong foundation, we are well poised to help all of our students move towards the goals spelled out by our school mission statements and the new Common Core Standards (internationally aligned standards that have been adopted by Vermont

and 44 other states): to provide all students the robust and relevant knowledge and skills they each will need for success globally and locally.

Staff Training First and foremost in our focus is attention to the quality of our daily interactions and work with students, as well as the connectedness of the curricula that we deliver. Staff are engaged in constant professional development; for example, last summer a team of our teachers took a “Best Practices in Science Instruction” graduate



course, working collaboratively to bring writing and science instruction to a higher level of effectiveness across all grade levels. This fall, almost half of the teachers participated in a course exploring mindfulness practices and how to help students use them to improve calm, focus, and attention amidst the

busy world around us. This learning feels particularly relevant as diagnoses of ADHD abound and families struggle with the busy-ness and stress of their lives. Our school action plan, which outlines much of the specific professional work we are engaged in, can be found at www.waitsfieldschool.org under the “Administration” tab. Each week, staff meet during and outside school time to insure the connectedness of our curricula and share ideas regarding how to improve student learning. In addition to the NECAP (New England Comprehensive Assessment Program), staff use a variety of common assessments that allow us to talk about student learning and growth over time and regardless of the classroom. With a school of our size, we have the luxury of being able to reflect upon data, but also think about each student individually. Children, and adults, are known for their strengths and challenged to push themselves in those areas that come less easily.

Enrollment./Staffing

In addition to attending to daily practices, we are engaging in long-range planning to meet the dynamic needs of our community. This includes

planning to meet the slightly declining enrollment that our school, along with most others in Vermont, is experiencing.

Enrollment Trends PK-6 (2001-2011)

'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11
159	160	170	145	154	171	160	155	169	155	147

Over the past few years, we have reduced paraprofessional support, eliminated one kindergarten classroom and reduced our preschool program all in response to declining enrollment. To this same end, elimination of one classroom teaching position is planned for 2012-2013. As we look for ways to insure that our school programming is sustainable, we are also looking “outside the box”, exploring collaborations with other schools (such as we have in our afterschool program which also serves Fayston School students) to guarantee that our students receive a robust educational that is also financially viable.

Physical Plant

As the Waitsfield School passes the half-century mark, our School Board has focused on insuring that our physical plant is adequately equipped to meet learning needs and function efficiently, reducing long range costs and our use of resources. Through research and prioritization, we have been able to take advantage of a variety of grant opportunities and incentives to update the heating and ventilation systems, refit and replace lighting fixtures, improve insulation, and install more energy efficient windows and doors. Energy and site assessments demonstrate that we are operating below state norms for our use of fuel and electricity. Our long-range capital improvement plan demonstrates a commitment to continuing to keep our building operating in a healthy and efficient manner. This year we created an early education focused playground, again taking advantage of federal funds along with generous



contributions from the Waitsfield PTA and the Mad River Recreation District. We look forward to the next phase of this project slated to occur with the thaw of this spring.

The Bigger Picture

It is much easier to learn if one feels safe, cared for, and assured that one's basic needs can be met. With a growing population living below the poverty line, our school has partnered with the Valley Rotary, the Mad River Community Fund and the Interfaith Council to provide the "Backpack Program", which provides a backpack of food every Friday to families struggling with food security. We continue our relationship with the "Everybody Wins" reading mentoring program, a nationally established mentoring program that matches students with adults in the community for a weekly power lunch focused upon sharing a love of reading and building literacy skills. Over 25 adults join us each week to further foster a love of reading and positive adult relationships with the children in our school. We continue to look for opportunities, like these, to help support the broader health and development of the children of our community.



Following our own Lessons. With our students, we talk about a few traits that are critical to growing and learning: willingness to take on the challenge of things that are hard, acceptance of making mistakes and growing from them, and perseverance. Whether as a staff or a school board, these lessons also guide the adults as we renew our commitment to continue to move the Waitsfield Elementary School from good to great.

Respectfully,
Kaiya Korb, Principal



W.E.S. students perform at “The Big Picture,” sharing a Harry Belafonte song during a tribute to that artist, who joined the performance via Skype.

Waitsfield Elementary Student Data

Support Services		Food Service Program	
Students receiving Special Education Services	19%	Students eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch	27%
Students with 504 Plans	4%	Average students served breakfast each day	22%
Students receiving support from our Educational Support Team	5%	Average students served lunch each day	58%