



HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH
THE WHITE MOUNTAIN SCHOOL
Bethlehem, New Hampshire
July 2019

APPLICATION PROCESS

Inquiries can be made to Tom Olverson at the email address below. Candidates should submit a letter of interest, a resume, one confidential reference (additional references will be required at the finalist stage), and a statement of educational or leadership philosophy by **May 1, 2018** to:

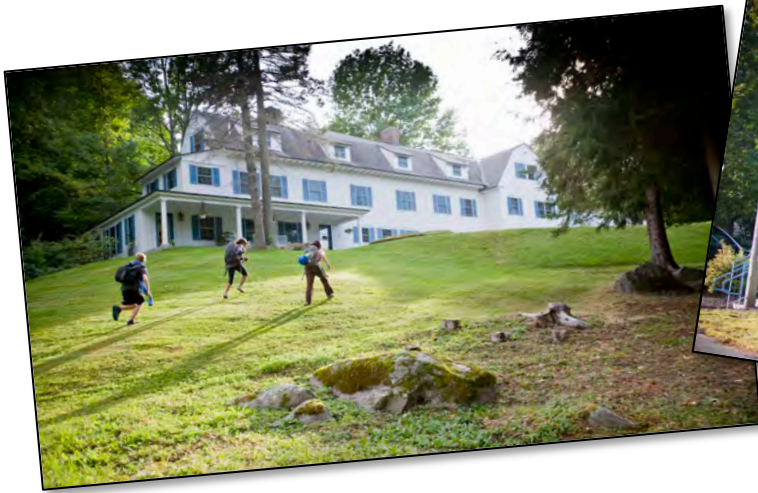
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HISTORY AND MISSION

In 1886, Bishop William Niles founded St. Mary's School, an Episcopal School for girls. The school opened its doors to eight boarders and fourteen day students in a large mansion in Concord, New Hampshire. The property was purchased with money donated by Mrs. A. B. B. Tilton and other generous residents in the Concord community. In 1936, under the leadership of Headmistress Dorothy McLane (Aunt Dot), the school moved to the White Mountains of northern New Hampshire on the Seven Springs Estate. The estate was destroyed by a fire in 1964, but there was determination to rebuild and a main building and two dormitories were constructed. The school admitted boys in the 1970's and changed its name to The White Mountain School. Though the school has gone through many iterations, "The constant is this belief: capable young people deserve to be challenged in a small school that develops the body, the mind and the soul in an uplifting environment..." (*The First Hundred Years*).



To learn more about
The White Mountain School:
www.whitemountain.org



Today, The White Mountain School (WMS) is a thriving, co-ed, diocesan school and has an enrollment of 125 students. Its mission is succinct and lived:

We are a school of inquiry and engagement. Grounded in our Episcopal Heritage, we prepare and inspire students to lead lives of curiosity, courage, and compassion.

These words are not mere platitudes or vague notions; they are rich with meaning and intentionality. White Mountain gives definition to "curiosity, courage, and compassion," and in doing so, makes public the standards by which it measures itself:

Curiosity

We start with questions.
We seek truth and beauty.
We venture beyond.

Courage

We speak our truths.
We fail forward.
We stand up to be counted.

Compassion

We are fully present.
We honor our stories.
We give of ourselves.

By translating these values into specific behaviors, the White Mountain mission is alive and vibrant, fully on display every school day, referenced in meetings as guiding principles, and not only inspirational but also aspirational. Behind this lived mission is the belief that the flourishing of an individual is intimately linked to the health of a community. In 2015, the NEASC Visiting Accreditation Committee commended the school "for the faculty, administration, and Board commitment to the mission and the many manifestations of it in the lives of the students."

LOCATION AND CAMPUS

The White Mountain School's setting is stunning. Every vista has its own breathtaking beauty. The area is an outdoor lover's paradise. Hiking, swimming, golfing, kayaking, skiing, mountain biking, and rock climbing provide recreational experiences. The school's intentional use of large windows invites the outdoors inside and indeed, reflects the importance of the natural world in the school's program and ethos. Littleton is a five-minute drive from campus and is the quintessential New England town. With excellent restaurants, an opera house, a movie theater, and quaint Main Street stores for shopping, Littleton provides enough city entertainment to complement the outdoor activities. Boston is a two and a half hour drive while Montreal is only a three-hour drive. Hanover, the home of Dartmouth College and a center for cultural and intellectual events, is an hour away from the school.

The White Mountain School campus has 310 acres, not all contiguous. The buildings and fields are on fewer than fifty acres. The campus has fourteen buildings and two fields. The mostly white buildings blend well with the surrounding beauty of the landscape. The hub of the campus is the McLane Building named after Dorothy McLane who led the move of the school to its present location from Concord in 1936. The McLane Building houses the Head of School office, other administrative offices, the Lovejoy Chapel where the community gathers four times each week for Morning Meeting, the dining hall, the McGoldrick Library and Research Center, numerous departmental offices, classrooms, and more. Its recent renovation has made it more attractive and inviting, and throughout the day it hosts a whirlwind of activity - meetings, discussion groups, dance rehearsals, study, meals, and more.

The Steele Science Center houses two large science labs as well as math classrooms and the most recent new building, the Catherine Houghton Arts Center, provides ample space for a superb fine arts program. A black box theater, a gym mainly used for climbing and fitness, faculty houses, four dormitories, The White Mountain School Farm and a network of perimeter trails round out the picturesque campus. A pond on campus is used for swimming as well as research for some of the science classes. Also on campus is a spacious Head of School House, which houses student gatherings, faculty get-togethers, alumnae/i and trustee functions. Plans call for the construction of an additional dormitory, which will also provide a necessary upgrade to faculty housing. The timing of construction is uncertain, but funds are being raised and this project remains the Board's top priority.





SCHOOL COMMUNITY

From the moment a visitor sets foot in the McLane Building, she feels the warmth that defines this school. With 125 students and 26 full-time faculty, the school is intentionally small, and it is evident that it wants to remain so despite the clear challenges that this size presents. In the minds of students and adults, “small” is what makes White Mountain work. It creates a close student-teacher relationship and a palpable sense of community that is rarely seen in independent schools. Students, teachers and administrators all call each other by first names.

Within the student body, 104 are boarding students and 21 are day students—a ratio that helps to maintain the school’s commitment to boarding. The school has a remarkably diverse student body, which is a real asset, especially considering the school’s location in northern New Hampshire—not a racially or ethnically diverse area of the country. International students

come from seven different countries and represent about a fifth of the student body. Most of these students come from China. The student-faculty ratio is 5:1, and this year the school will be graduating 39 seniors. Approximately half of the student body receives need-based financial aid.

The students are friendly, passionate, and grateful for the opportunity to be mentored by such a dedicated group of teachers. Evening extra-help sessions are common. Seniors talk at great length about their LASR (Leadership, Art, Service, Research) projects, which are required for all graduates. One student focused her project on sustainability and talked with confidence and intelligence about what the school can do to improve its commitment to environmental sustainability.

The sense of community at White Mountain is not just a result of its small size. There is an intentionality that clearly promotes interdependence. Students do chores side-by-side with faculty. As

one student said, “If my friend doesn’t sweep the floor, I can’t mop it.” As a result, the sense of entitlement that can be present at some independent schools is absent at White Mountain. Morning meeting is yet another opportunity to strengthen community. Students and faculty give talks, make announcements, organize the day, and celebrate important events. On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the Director of Diversity and Inclusion gave a stirring and captivating talk about the lesser known heroes in the Civil Rights movement. Student voice is valued and sought after. When renovation plans for the McLane Building were being considered, students were invited to review the plans and provide input.

The sense of community at The White Mountain School creates a culture of acceptance. Students can be quirky, they can have unusual passions, and they can forge their own identities without the fear of bullying or isolation. The energy that many students at other schools expend creating a persona is, at White Mountain, directed toward discovering a passion, making an authentic friend, trying something new, and ultimately becoming the person the student wants to become. White Mountain is a safe place to fail, grow, and flourish.

Of course, what makes this all possible is a faculty that fully buys into the White Mountain way. The care and support teachers provide students is extraordinary, even by boarding school standards. They work together to find the best ways to reach their students, and as noted above, they go the extra

mile to help their charges be successful. 59% have advanced degrees and many are attracted to the school because of its location and the importance of the outdoors in defining the school program and culture. Although fully on board with the school's emphasis on student-driven inquiry, teachers hunger for more professional development and support so that they can do a better job of advancing "curiosity" as a vital element of the school's mission. As is the case with most boarding schools, time is a constraining factor and the lack thereof inhibits the level of collaboration both teachers and administrators would ideally like to see.

PROGRAM

In many respects White Mountain's academic program looks like that of a standard college preparatory school. Students take the traditional college prep classes in the five majors as well as AP and Honors classes and also have opportunities to delve into the arts, both fine and performing. Of particular note is a well-established dance program that receives rave reviews from students. Reflective of its Episcopal roots, the school requires that students take at least one course in religion and philosophy for graduation. A distinctive element of the academic program is the Sustainability Studies Department offering courses in AP Geography and AP Environmental Studies.

Throughout the curriculum, White Mountain incorporates an exciting approach to education developed under Tim Breen's leadership: student-driven inquiry. Based on solid research that demonstrates the importance of students generating their own questions, student-driven inquiry exists side by side with a more traditional college prep program to give The White Mountain School a distinctive program in keeping with the requirements for success in the 21st century. The development of a curriculum and pedagogy in which questions are as important as answers reflects the school's intent to fulfill its mission. It also fits with the kind of students The White Mountain School attracts, many of them

very bright but who feel like round pegs in square holes at larger, more traditional schools. Student-driven inquiry manifests itself in the LASR program, which requires students to construct a semester-long inquiry into a topic of their choosing. In some cases, seniors can spend their second semester away from campus working on their LASR project. In addition, all White Mountain students are required to participate in week-long Field Courses which typically take students off campus to study a topic in depth. Field Courses for the 2017-18 school year include: *Art History and Theatre in New York City*; *The Geography and Geology of Iceland*; *Everyday Feminism: An Examination of Gender, Power and Sexuality*; and *The Physics of Climbing*. Even regular classes have a student-driven inquiry component (mini-LASR) in which students construct a significant question that they then answer through research and study.

Of particular note is the Outdoor Education Department, considered one of the leading programs of its kind regionally and nationally. The Learning Center and the English as a Second Language program provide students with additional support.

The co-curricular program at The White Mountain School is rich and varied. Many students participate in interscholastic sports while others choose opportunities like rock climbing, kayaking, and snowboarding, all of which take advantage of the spectacular outdoor opportunities the region provides. A variety of student-directed clubs rounds out a robust program of activities that allow students the opportunity to pursue their particular interests.





ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

The White Mountain School has been ably headed by Tim Breen since 2010. Tim's programmatic vision developed in concert with faculty over several summers has set the course for the school going forward. Although there are clearly issues related to the implementation of student-driven inquiry, trustees, administration and faculty endorse the forward-thinking direction and its potential as a differentiator in the marketplace. Since Tim became the Head of School, the enrollment has grown to capacity.

As a small school, White Mountain has a lean administrative staff. The Leadership Team consists of the Head, the Associate Head of School/Dean of Students who oversees the non-academic program, the Associate Head of School for

Enrollment Management, the Chief Financial Officer, the Director of Development and Alumnae/i, the Academic Dean, the Director of the Learning Center/Director of Professional Growth and the Director of College Counseling/Director of Diversity and Inclusion. The team meets weekly and has open, transparent conversations about emerging issues. The Head of School office is in the McLane Building and gives that person visibility with students and faculty. Under the leadership of the Director of Development, the school has significantly increased its annual fund (by more than 20% since 2015) and is on the verge of its first successful and comprehensive capital campaign, raising more than \$4.8 million dollars to date.

The White Mountain School is governed by an 18-person Board of Trustees who gather at the school three times a year as is standard practice with many boarding schools. Trustees serve on committees, and committee chairs are in close contact with the appropriate administrator. The Board is active, friendly, and

engaged. Under the leadership of the present Chair Deborah Lowham, P'18, '20, and with the help of the administration, the Board has made excellent progress in clarifying its role, understanding the responsibilities of trusteeship, and contributing "time, talent, and treasure" to ensure the success of the school. The endowment stands at \$2.3 million.

The Board and administration are guided by an ambitious strategic plan approved in 2016. The school aspires to be the best small boarding school in the country with fully engaged students constructing their own learning. The pillars of the plan are strengthening intellectual excellence, creating an even more vibrant community life and becoming a financially sustainable school so that future generations of students and teachers may benefit from the White Mountain experience. The recent momentum of the school has engendered an optimistic sense that the school will achieve great things.



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The White Mountain School is an extraordinary community of acceptance and growth. It is a healthy community where relationships are valued as a key component to the success of students. But as with all schools, White Mountain has its challenges. The following is not meant to be an exhaustive list but rather a more nuanced explanation of the critical challenges facing the school.

Although all stakeholders embrace student-driven inquiry, there is a widespread perception that the reality does not match the aspirations. In particular, the foundation for the development of this educational approach is weak. Like all boarding schools, White Mountain has high teacher turnover, perhaps even more than one might see at other more established boarding schools. The turnover makes it difficult to create a sense of continuity in developing programs. The absence of an onboarding program for young teachers just out of college exacerbates the problem. Professional development funds are limited, and as is the case with many boarding schools, the lack of time inhibits faculty collaboration as well as innovation. Limited facilities also restrain the development of programs that would be ideal for student-driven inquiry. And of course, with any major change initiative, administrators must pay attention to faculty morale as a necessary precondition for establishing long-lasting change- not an easy task with the many demands made on

boarding school teachers. Finally, what do the results of student-driven inquiry look like? How will the school know it is being successful in this initiative? Can these results be presented as an alternative but legitimate path to authentic excellence? The next Head of School will need to address these foundational issues and questions in order to advance the school's ambitious vision.

Key to the success of The White Mountain School is its small size. Few stakeholders want to grow the school significantly (more than ten or so students). In addition, the facilities simply could not handle significant growth in enrollment. The limited enrollment, though, puts pressure on the budget and this pressure is exacerbated by a majority of students on financial aid. In short, there is simply not a lot of margin. Despite significant progress in deferred maintenance over the last eight years, a number of projects

remain. There are clearly areas of the operation that are understaffed. Working with the Board of Trustees, the next Head of School will need to find financial resources to help the school maintain its present plant and provide funds for the support of faculty and the enhancement of program.

The White Mountain School is a gem, but it is not well known. The new Director of Enrollment Management and the entire Admissions staff have received high marks for making White Mountain more visible in the world of boarding schools. But more will need to be done in order to get the school on prospective students' radar screens.



QUALITIES OF THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

Resource Group 175 and The White Mountain School realize that there is no candidate who possesses all the qualities of the perfect next Head of School. Moreover, the successful candidate must possess a baseline of leadership skills in order to successfully navigate the complexities of any headship. However, for this particular opportunity there are some critical qualities that should be noted as potential candidates consider this position.

The ideal candidate will appreciate and embrace the essential elements that make White Mountain the special place that it is: a vibrant and diverse community where students feel accepted for their individuality, a forward-thinking approach to education with a focus on student-driven inquiry, an appreciation for the outdoors and all that it has to offer, and an appreciation for boarding school life and the value it provides for students.

In addition, he or she should be a champion for the school, a cheerleader both internally and externally, for what the school is and what the school aspires to be. A positive, optimistic persona will be essential in maintaining faculty morale, raising funds, and effectively marketing the school. As with any leadership position, inspired communication with all stakeholders will go a long way in helping the school realize its ambitious vision. An entrepreneurial spirit will be a plus.

Finally, the ideal candidate must have management skills and an eye toward systems and structures that influence faculty and student behavior. He or she must understand the critical preconditions for change and the existing as well as potential capabilities of the school. Systematically, thoughtfully, and sequentially addressing these issues will set the stage for success.

