

# 2015 Peacham Elementary School Values

## Mission Statement

The Peacham Elementary School is a community of learners and teachers dedicated to developing the ability of each individual to think and communicate clearly, to explore the world, to make responsible decisions, and to have concern for the common good.

## Visions for Education in Peacham

There is deep passion about education in Peacham and widespread agreement about its intrinsic value to our community. Peacham has invested in the education of its citizens since 1795, when the Caledonia County Grammar School was established. At annual Town Meetings the Peacham community has regularly supported a vision of excellence for their children by passing school budget requests. (Both the FY2015 and FY2016 school budget votes passed on voice votes, FY2016 unanimously.) At its core, the Peacham Elementary School today is a place where learning is rooted in community, grounded by local resources and brought to life through excellent academic practices. The resources unique to Peacham offer a wealth of opportunity that connect our students and their families with a wider world, engaged by curiosity and a passion for discovery.

The Peacham Elementary School is an intimate environment, where everyone is known by name. Students learn from each other as well as from the adults, teachers, and community members whose mission it is to guide and inspire students' learning experiences through applied best practices and respectful communications. Due to its long-held philosophy of valuing and challenging each unique learner, PES has a history of providing a student-centered approach to developing and delivering units and lessons. PES staff modifies instruction to engage and challenge each student as an individual. Students' strengths are leveraged to address their challenges.

Every student is challenged to realize his or her full academic, social, creative, and physical potential. Students are proactive participants in acquiring a broad foundational education to ensure their future success engaged in their local and global communities.

Graduates of the Peacham Elementary School are prepared to be thoughtful, capable individuals with demonstrated mastery of core academic standards and positive character traits that will be a solid foundation for success in whatever life paths they choose. They will confidently apply creative and effective problem solving skills, approach new experiences with self-knowledge and empathy, and continue to build on their connections with the cultural and historical landscape of Peacham, their home.

## 1. Academic Excellence

The Peacham Elementary School will continue to fulfill and exceed institutional criteria outlined in the Vermont State Board of Education *Education Quality Standards*, adopted April 5, 2014.

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment of student progress towards mastery of content and skill standards are based on nationally accepted sets of learning expectations. Peacham students will progress towards mastery of *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities in Education*. PES teachers, administrators and staff recognize that each child's development is unique and work together to support continuous growth throughout the year.

PES curriculum content is developed making use of all available resources to ensure high achievement in literacy, problem-solving, mathematics, scientific inquiry and practice, global citizenship, physical and health education, and artistic expression. In addition, PES places strong emphasis on personal growth, confidence, responsibility and team building.

Historically, the Peacham Elementary School has offered expanded learning opportunities that include subjects and themes beyond what is covered in neighboring schools, specifically:

- Second language programs have been a regular part of the curriculum since the 1980s. Both French and Spanish have been offered over the years.
- A nationally recognized Place-based Learning program, *Vermont Rural Partnerships*, was developed in the 1990s. Strong community connections exist to this day providing opportunities for student leadership and voice while enriching the school.
- Expanded Art and Music offerings effectively support the core curriculum and offer learning opportunities for a variety of learners. This program goes beyond music practice to offer introductory music composition and theory.
- A certified Tech Integrationist mentors students and staff and connects the Peacham Elementary School with a wider learning community. PES students in grades K-6 have either an individual laptop or access to our common lab.
- PES Music, Art, Tech/Library, and classroom staff are members of the *Vermont Creative Schools Initiative: A Collaborative Project of Catamount Arts and Community Engagement Lab*.
- PES integrates computer coding and robotics into its instructional program. A partnership with the Peacham Library leverages kits and expertise beyond the school walls for a variety of learners.
- PES is a VT Agency of Agriculture *Farm-to-School* grantee. Our Science and Social Studies instruction includes embedded components of plant science, the economics of food production and marketing, and an understanding of nutritional choices. Our partnership with a local organic farmer supplies us with material and instructional support managing our school gardens and supplying our in-house food service.
- At least two health/physical education classes are scheduled for all students each week. These classes address all Health Core Concept Areas of the 2008 Health Education GLEs and are delivered by a certified Health Educator and a Physical Education teacher.
- The Peacham PTF raises funds to support a robust and long-standing partnership with the Burke Mountain Ski School and St. Johnsbury Academy field house to support school-

wide ski and swim lessons that enable every PES student to learn the fundamentals of these sports.

- The Peacham School's Extended Learning Opportunity program regularly features community members who share their skills and wisdom with students, teaching lessons on a variety of topics -- such as coding, programming, art, yoga, dance, and robotics -- during and after the school day.

## **Arts & Languages**

The Peacham community recognizes the importance of the arts and languages in the growth and development of Peacham Elementary School children and places high value on integrating these subjects into the curriculum. Because of the rich artistic and cultural resources available to the Peacham Elementary School, innovative arts, science and language instruction present an opportunity for a distinctive educational experiences that highlight the strengths of our community. (The Community Engagement section of this document provides a list of resources in Peacham that partner with the PES.) . Students experience learning in new settings and have the opportunity to practice leadership and communication skills with a variety of mentors.

## **2. Effective Leadership**

The school board and administration (principal and superintendent) lead effectively, inclusively, and transparently to accomplish the educational goals of the school. Leadership focuses on developing improvements in academic achievement, and the social/emotional development of the whole child.

Peacham School leadership uses clear communication and builds strong connections with all of the stakeholders in the Peacham educational community. Families, students, staff, and residents expect to be informed about challenges and successes and be engaged with decision-making.

Leadership at all levels maintains high standards of fairness, respect, professionalism, equality, personal integrity, accountability and legal compliance with all students, parents, community members, school and district staff.

The **school board and superintendent** are accountable to the residents of Peacham for the following oversight practices:

- Transparent decision-making that follows open meeting law;
- Accountability for stewardship of the community's vision for education and current best practices;
- Careful, fair and thorough assessment processes (principal assesses staff; superintendent assesses principal; CCSU Board assesses superintendent; school board has overarching responsibility);
- Assurance that all professional staff are licensed and appropriately endorsed for their individual assignments;
- Coordination of the principal's schedule to enable him/her to engage in student learning through teaching, advising, mentoring, or support services;
- Clear, comprehensive reporting on the school's mission, resources and performance delivered to the community on a regular basis, at least annually;

- Maintenance of a fiscally sound approach to managing economic and physical resources in the school facility.

The **principal and teachers** maintain high expectations for excellence for themselves and all of their students. All members of the Professional Community (staff, teachers and administrators) work collaboratively to enrich their professional practices, put new strategies to work, and continually refine their work. In this way, the Professional Community holds its members accountable while fostering an excitement about learning on both the personal and professional levels.

All staff are responsible for:

- ***Project-Based Learning***: Students engage in project-based learning, building curiosity, creativity, problem-solving skills based on individual interests. Projects must be engaging, hands-on, multidisciplinary, and experience-based. They are designed for active, applied learning in real-world settings.
- ***Differentiated Instruction***: Teachers use assessment data and evidence of individual student progress to implement differentiated instruction to meet students where they are, thereby providing learning options and sufficient levels of challenge for each child. Teachers match tasks, activities, and assessments with their students' interests, abilities, and learning preferences. Teachers educate students about different learning styles, helping them understand how they learn best.
- ***Multi-age Learning***: Teachers and administrators identify and create opportunities for multi-age learning both within the school and the broader Peacham community. Examples include appropriate multi-age classrooms, reading buddies, big pal/little pal, and mentoring.
- ***Multi-Tiered System of Supports***: All students' math and ELA needs are equitably assessed and addressed through specific intervention and remediation plans based on regular monitoring of individual student progress towards mastery of CCSS goals. Staff will be assigned to address student needs based on their own strengths to optimize student growth.
- ***Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports***: PBIS instruction and data collection paired with Responsive Classroom practices create and sustain a safe, positive school environment.
- ***Integrated Music and Visual Arts***: This curriculum-wide expectation is supported by experienced artists and artisans who share their expertise and skills through formal and informal programming, which can take place inside and outside of regular school hours. Opportunities to share creative success are organized, celebrated and promoted by the school administration and teachers.
- ***Individual Personal Learning Plans*** are developed that challenge and support each child's growth.

The Principal is responsible for:

- Consistently evaluating teachers to hold them accountable to excellent standards of teaching that enable personal growth for all students, provide timely supportive feedback to improve their practice, and support teachers' individual strengths and independent work to achieve academic success in the classroom;

- Providing needs-based professional development to help teachers determine appropriate yearly professional goals to enhance their teaching practices (principal assesses teachers; teachers engage in self-reflection);
- Enlisting staff to develop collaborative and creative professional day-to-day practices that demonstrate current best practices and enhance effective teamwork, characterized by rigor, curiosity and passion for learning;
- Building respectful trustworthy relationships with all stakeholders based on open communication and empathy;
- Regularly inviting the community to participate in the life of the school.

Teachers are responsible for:

- Delivering a well-articulated, rigorous, and relevant curriculum that meets or exceeds Vermont *Education Quality Standards* with support from the CCSU and other district resources. They will seek learning opportunities within and far beyond Peacham's boundaries;
- Evaluating student progress using assessments that students understand, participate in, and which enrich their learning;
- Reaching out effectively to parents and residents regarding curriculum, expectations, priorities, calendar, activities, and events;
- Making use of community resources to enhance and deepen educational experiences.

### **3. School Social Climate**

The Peacham Elementary School encourages collaboration and respect for individual contributions that build on each other, making the whole more meaningful than the sum of each part. Our school nurtures curiosity, discovery and confidence. Our school community celebrates innovation, encourages creativity, and inspires excellence.

A sustainable, positive school climate nurtures development and learning in students so they are prepared for transition beyond sixth grade. PES encourages students to engage independently with their neighbors and community members outside of school in ways that are safe, productive and satisfying. In the Peacham Elementary School, this climate is characterized by trust, collaboration, accountability, respect and the joy of learning. The Peacham Elementary School welcomes all families equally and fosters respect for diversity, including differences in socioeconomic or cultural backgrounds and in learning styles and abilities.

The Peacham Elementary School Social Climate includes the following:

- Clearly articulated norms, values and expectations support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe;
- People are engaged and respected; all members of the school community approach each day prepared to work together for the benefit of the children;
- Students, families and educators work together to develop and contribute to a shared school vision. Teachers, staff and administrators know every student and make an effort to meet her or his family. Parents and caregivers visit the school regularly to understand the resources and contribute to its vitality;

- Educators model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning;
- Parents or guardians address concerns regarding the school as they arise through the appropriate channels as described in the Peacham School Handbook. Parents speak first with the teacher, then the principal, in an effort to resolve differences. If problems persist, parents or guardians consult with the superintendent and finally the school board.
- Peacham Elementary School staff, parents, and community members contribute actively to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment, investing in and caring for this valued community resource.

#### **4. Communication**

The Peacham Elementary School takes advantage of its small size to encourage parents, guardians, and others in the community to engage with the school for the benefit of the children. Effective and successful communication is established so that all members of the Peacham community are connected with the School and understand its mission. Clear, consistent, respectful and meaningful exchanges are a priority to sustain vital and dynamic involvement with the School and support formal and informal learning. All communications are acknowledged in a timely manner.

- The principal distributes information regarding school policies, calendar, administrative issues and curriculum goals. This information is easily accessible and current through the School's weekly newsletter and website.
- The principal organizes a public forum at the beginning of the school year to outline a vision for the year ahead, introduce teachers and staff, welcome students and families and address any questions or concerns.
- Teachers communicate weekly lessons and homework to students and families through written newsletters distributed in print or online.
- Parents, guardians, teachers, staff and administrators engage in informal exchanges regarding immediate questions and concerns.
- The Peacham Elementary School community creates regular events for students to practice appropriate written, verbal and listening skills as a commitment to building their ability to communicate effectively. Daily morning meeting is an example of a forum to celebrate accomplishment and honor school spirit before an audience.
- Additional public meetings arranged by the principal can be organized throughout the year.
- The school board, administration, staff and community work transparently in the best interests of all students.

#### **5. Community Engagement**

The Peacham Elementary School provides a sense of place that stays with graduates and grounds them in a caring and involved community. The school board, superintendent, principal, teachers and staff engage with families and neighbors throughout Peacham to build trust, invite involvement, respond respectfully and create opportunities that highlight the values and points of pride in the Peacham community. The School building serves as a welcoming facility that provides a center for people of all ages to gather throughout the year.

Peacham provides multiple community resources that are rich learning environments and are leveraged by the school to amplify and enhance learning. Peacham's community assets include:

- Northeast Kingdom Astronomy Foundation/Northern Skies Observatory
- Peacham Library
- Peacham Historical Association and cultural heritage sites (roller barn, historic homes)
- Peacham Walking Trail Network, Town Forest
- Peacham Cafe
- Community Garden
- Skating rink
- Local artists, artisans and musicians
- Local residents with expertise in world languages, music and traditions
- Residents with expertise in vocational trades and professional fields
- Working farms and resident farmers
- Established community events (Fall Foliage Festival, Mud and Muck Auction, Memorial Day, holiday celebrations, Green Up Day, Peacham Acoustic Music Festival)
- Community meals and other volunteer opportunities
- Town Meeting, municipal offices and Post Office

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Vision and Belief Statements**

#### **Learning Styles**

We believe that students shall be provided learning opportunities that address their individual needs, learning styles and unique abilities in a positive way. We further believe that the school shall set high standards and personalized goals, encourage healthy risk-taking and provide positive recognition for achievement.

#### **Learning Environment**

We believe that students are best served by learning in a safe, nurturing environment, which emphasizes cooperation, respect and responsibility for themselves and others, and which values diverse ideas, attitudes and cultures.

#### **Academic**

We believe that students shall demonstrate proficiency in academics and the arts through problem solving, communications and analytical thinking skills. Teaching shall include diverse, creative, hand-on activities and experiential learning.

#### **Lifelong Learners**

We believe that through the school, community and family, students shall be taught the skills, knowledge and habits that inspire within them a love of learning.

#### **Citizenship**

We believe that students shall become responsible, involved citizens of their school, community, the natural environment and wider world. We further believe that the school, family and community are responsible for instilling skills, knowledge, attitudes and information relevant to producing accomplished citizens.