



# HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH Year 2022

VAIL MOUNTAIN SCHOOL | 3000 BOOTH FALLS ROAD | VAIL, COLORADO USA | 970-476-3850



## SCHOOL HISTORY

Vail Mountain School's roots are closely intertwined with the town of Vail and its namesake ski area. Originally called Vail Country Day school, VMS began serving an inaugural group of four students in 1962 using the home of Vail-founder Pete Seibert as the school's first classroom. Over the next decade, the school grew and moved, among other places, to the Vail Fire House, the Tivoli Lodge, and the Lionshead Gondola Building. In 1973, Vail Country Day was renamed Vail Mountain School, and the next year, the school moved to Minturn. The inaugural class of four students graduated in 1976. Three years later, the school built its first campus near the confluence of Booth and Gore Creeks in East Vail. A generation later, in 2005, construction was completed on VMS's current 92,000-square foot building — which now serves about 440 students.



When VMS was granted the land for our present campus, it came with the caveat that we preserve and maintain the homesteader cabin located on the property. Built by the Baldauf family in 1906, the cabin was moved and renovated twice but remains in its original form as a reminder of the pioneer spirit that built the town, the resort and the West. The image of the cabin is at the center of our school seal symbolizing the same pioneer spirit that built VMS, Vail's first school.



## OUR MISSION

*DEVELOP CHARACTER; SEEK KNOWLEDGE;  
BUILD COMMUNITY.*



## OUR TEACHERS

To achieve our Mission, faculty at VMS are singularly focused on one thing--your child. They bring their passions into the classroom and develop deep, caring relationships that inspire a true love of learning. Our teachers pay close attention to the social, emotional and academic needs of each individual,



adapting curricula and lessons that fuel the fire more than fill the bucket. Put simply, a good school knows your child by name, a great school knows your child by heart.

## OUR CURRICULUM

VMS is the only independent K-12 school in Eagle and Summit Counties and, we embrace the freedom this provides. Our rigorous, globally inspired, college preparatory curriculum readies students for challenges both in and out of the classroom. The experience is enriched by athletics, independent projects, service learning, in-depth intraterm classes, winter hut trips, outdoor education, and Ski Fridays. We believe teachable moments are everywhere and we are bound neither by belief nor government mandate to teach in only one way. One size does not fit all, one size fits one.

## OUR LOCATION

Our community works and plays together, sharing a love for the active mountain lifestyle that defines us and that has converted countless visitors into lifelong residents. Our location is truly unique, enabling us to provide an education that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. Outside our front door lies the world famous Vail ski resort. Just steps from our back door are trails that lead to majestic 13,000 foot peaks, mountain meadows filled with wildflowers, pristine waterfalls, and diverse ecosystems. Interstate 70 provides quick access to the learning opportunities of Denver and Boulder and the sublime desert playgrounds and rivers to the west.

## OUR COMMUNITY

Matching the beauty and elegance of our natural setting, our school community is housed in a state-of-the-art facility with design inspired as much by our beliefs about how learning best occurs in a K-12 environment as by aesthetic considerations. Lower, middle, and upper school classrooms are mixed throughout with abundant open common spaces to encourage cross-age interaction and give students room to move.

Operating on the principle that emotional stability is a requisite for academic success, students start each day at VMS with Homebase, a unique advisory forum designed to build community, strengthen character, and encourage ethical decision making. In partnership with parents, teachers help students confront problems, and set positive, proactive examples, challenging students to be their best in the classroom, on the playing field, online, and outside the school. We pride ourselves on celebrating individual achievements and supporting each other's struggles. The result is a caring community of engaged learners that supports the greatness in one through the strength of many.

Few other schools are so supportive. Very few other schools offer the independence, small class size, invested faculty, and welcoming community found at VMS.



## **PORTRAIT OF A VMS STUDENT**

### **DEVELOP CHARACTER**

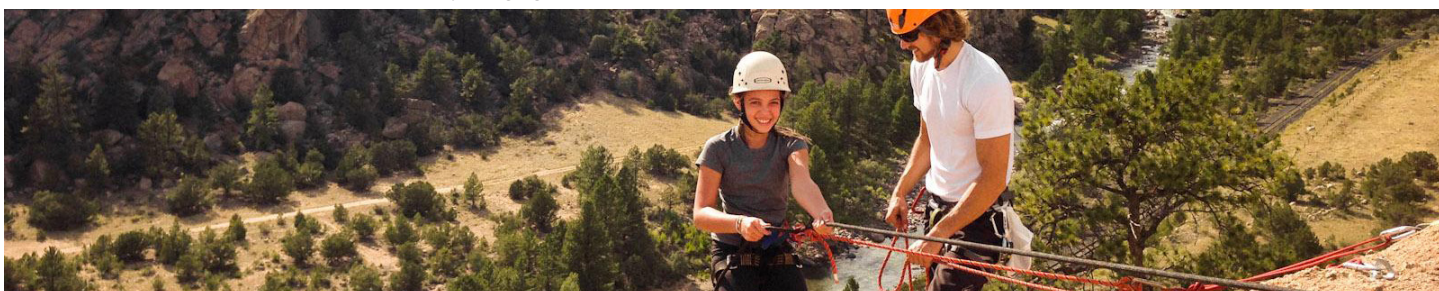
- VMS students speak articulately, respectfully, and confidently to all members of the community.
- VMS students' behavior is kind, respectful and honest.
- VMS students understand and employ empathy, recognize different perspectives, and see the value of diversity.
- VMS students are guided by an ethical framework and a strong ethical code, providing them with integrity in the face of challenges and injustices.
- VMS students possess strong self-advocacy skills and have the courage to ask for help, not for the answer.
- VMS students take responsibility for and accept the consequences of their actions and behaviors both in and out of school.
- VMS students approach life's challenges with perseverance and grit.

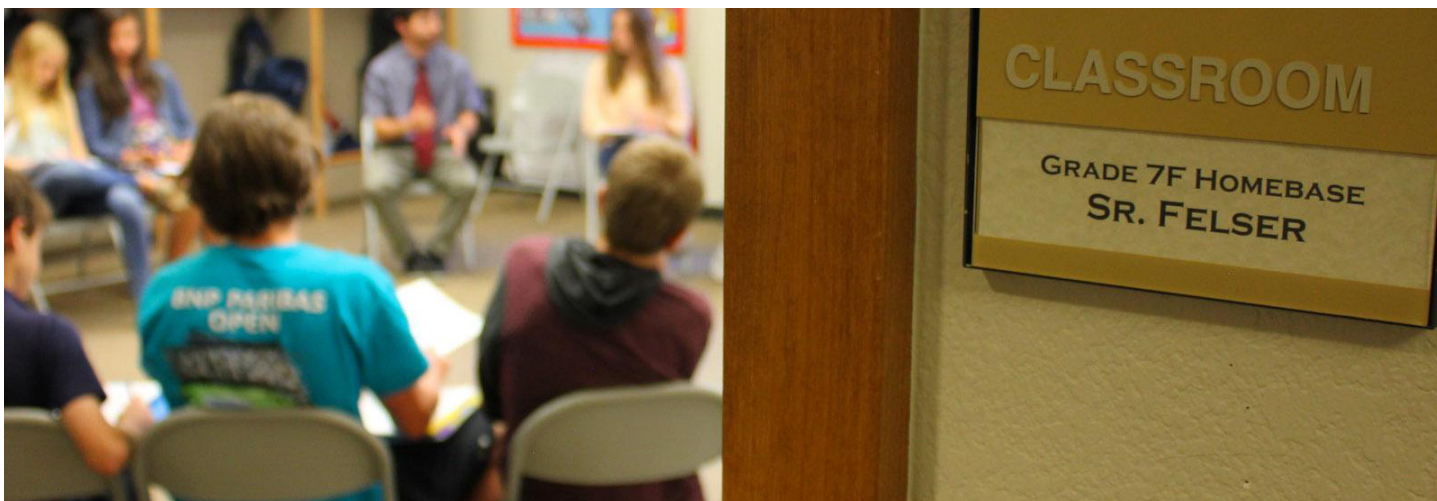
### **SEEK KNOWLEDGE**

- VMS students find joy in learning, in thinking open mindedly, and in exploring areas that are important to them.
- VMS students respect knowledge; however, they also question doctrine in order to find their own answers to life's questions.
- VMS students work well both independently and collaboratively in order to achieve personal and group success.
- VMS students develop strong executive functioning skills.
- VMS students are curious and willing to engage in courageous and often uncomfortable discussions about issues of power, privilege and inequality.

### **BUILD COMMUNITY**

- VMS students appreciate the natural world around them as they thrive in the surrounding mountain environment.
- VMS students are kind and considerate to people of all ages, exemplified by relationships with their younger peers.
- VMS students recognize that their education provides them the opportunity and skills to serve a public purpose both locally and globally.
- VMS students choose to be fully engaged participants in (all) school sponsored activities.





## HOMEBASE PROGRAM

Every child participates in the Homebase program, which is a defining element of a VMS education. Homebase is a daily meeting between students and an advising teacher which serves as a time to reflect, plan, prioritize and support each other in a family environment. In addition, the Homebase class provides a venue for “dinner table conversations” which teach ethics and build character through discussions of real-life challenges. As a social, emotional and physical hub to daily life, the term Homebase is used interchangeably to refer to the actual meetings, a group of students within a grade, and the physical space that they call their own. In addition, Homebase advisors are advocates for their students and are concerned with all aspects of those students' lives, facilitating communication between students, teachers, coaches, and parents, ensuring a true learning partnership.

## PREPARATION FOR COLLEGE & LIFE

Visitors to our school remark that our students are happy, comfortable in their own skin, and look you in the eye. These simple yet timeless virtues are the result of combining rigorous academics with arts, athletics, community service, 21st Century technological literacy, outdoor education, and a unique daily Homebase advisory forum to promote inquiry, knowledge, character, leadership, and citizenship. It's a lot, but so are the challenges of the future. As true preparation for college and life, it is our firm belief that teaching a child how to use information responsibly is just as important as learning the information itself.

The result of this program are young men and women of the utmost social and emotional development-- mature, confident, respectful, grounded, and upstanding, who are comfortable speaking in public, at ease in leadership positions, and happy working independently. Involved in their communities, VMS students display integrity and awareness, and become ready not just to succeed in the world, but poised to actively and positively contribute to it.

Since the first graduating class, every single VMS senior has been accepted to a four-year college or university. They've matriculated at nearly 200 different colleges and universities across the country. Most importantly, VMS has taken great care to ensure that they've gone to colleges that don't just sound good, but that are a great fit for that individual student. That, too, is a hallmark of VMS.

## QUICK FACTS

**OUR MISSION:**  
Develop Character; Seek Knowledge; Build Community.

**TOTAL SCHOOL ENROLLMENT:**  
Total enrollment: 433  
Lower school: 158  
Middle school: 114  
Upper school: 161

**TOTAL FACULTY & STAFF:**  
Lower school: 17  
Middle school: 9  
Upper school: 14  
Cross divisional: 8  
Administration/Support: 24

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES:**  
Parents of current and alumni students: 19

**FACILITIES OVERVIEW:**  
11 acre campus  
5 miles from Vail town center  
92,000 sq. ft school building housing grades K-12  
384 seat, world-class theater  
two art studios  
full and auxiliary gymnasium  
state-of-the-art fitness room  
full-size, synthetic turf soccer field  
year-round greenhouse teaching space  
MakerSpace/Technology Suite



## CROSS-AGE EXPERIENCE

Our building, our program, and our traditions are all designed to develop organic relationships between students of all ages. Cross-age learning opportunities are abundant through both planned activities, such as All-School Ski Day or Field Day, and through spontaneous and natural interactions within our shared space. We know that a kindergartener can teach a senior just as much as a senior can teach a kindergartener. Not many schools can say that their high school sophomores have a peer group that includes third graders, seventh graders, and their math teacher. Students learn together, play sports together, work in classrooms next to each other, and interact throughout the day. These cross-age experiences help to make VMS not just a school, but a community.



## SERVICE LEARNING

Service to others is at the core of the VMS mission and one of the most important lessons we teach. Service is woven throughout our curriculum, with projects ranging from a second grade read-a-thon that raised money for a school in Uganda, to volunteering with local non-profits such as Habitat for Humanity. Other longstanding service traditions include serving at a Denver soup kitchen feeding the homeless. As a centerpiece to service learning at VMS, each year, our community honors Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by spending the holiday learning about his work and working in service to others. This work stays with our students long after they leave VMS, and we are proud to say that our Alumni not only do well, but also do good.



## OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Lessons taught in the classroom are complemented by learning in the field and by the knowledge gained about oneself while exploring the outdoors. With our location in the middle of one of the most incredible places on Earth, students have a unique opportunity to witness geology, biology, and snow science firsthand. Equally, if not more important, field trips, orientation trips, winter hut trips, and Ski Fridays provide a structured and safe environment for students to take risks, face and overcome challenges, and build confidence and leadership skills that will serve them their whole life. From canoes and cliff faces, they see the world — the real world — and learn to operate confidently and comfortably in it. Experiences like this also build strong bonds among teachers and students, which serve as the foundation for our rapport-based learning community. This is why, for decades, each school year begins with orientation trips for middle and upper school students.





## FLEXIBLE PROGRAMMING

Many VMS students pursue interests outside of school that demand significant commitments of both time and energy. VMS faculty willingly work with students, parents and coaches to ensure that ski racers, athletes, musicians, and artists can compete, train, and perform without compromising academics. These students are expected to be scholars as well as athletes or artists, and we are committed to supporting the highest level of achievement as both. Students and parents keep up with schoolwork and grades via an online course-management system, and by working with two full-time support staff, one of whom is a former ski racer.



As a formal academic partner of of Ski and Snowboard Club Vail (SSCV), VMS is staffed, prepared, and accustomed to ensuring the academic success of snowsport athletes, and to helping their parents with the logistics of competing while keeping abreast of schoolwork. VMS's dedicated liaisons can assist with communication as much as with tutoring, and help students compete or perform internationally, stay on top of academic demands, and make friends at the same time. Few schools offer this level of attentive, proactive support.

## TUITION

VMS tuition is competitive with elite independent schools throughout the country that provide a top-notch college preparatory education. Tuition includes daily dining experience, books, most trips within the state of Colorado, and most other fees.

### 2021-2022 TUITION

LOWER SCHOOL (Grades K-5): \$28,800

MIDDLE SCHOOL (Grades 6-8): \$30,800

UPPER SCHOOL (Grades 9-12): \$32,400



## TUITION ASSISTANCE

Throughout our more than fifty year history, we've been committed to serving the local community by providing need-based tuition assistance, which currently amounts to more than \$1,400,000 per year and is granted to approximately 25% of our families. Applications for tuition assistance must be submitted each year a child is enrolled at





## **STRATEGIC PLAN 2020**

This strategic plan puts forth an overall aspiration for Vail Mountain School to be widely recognized as a top tier independent school and a model for the interweaving of:

- A robust experiential and global education program
- The rigor of a high quality college preparatory curriculum combined with a rapport driven environment that inspires character development
- An unparalleled collaborative relationship with our community and our mountain environment
- The flexibility to support our athletes, thespians, musicians, artists, and diverse learners, in and outside of school

Our efforts are focused on initiatives in five primary areas, Teachers, Students, Parents, Academics, and Economic Stability. Each initiative has corresponding goals that guide and inform specific direction for action. In addition, the plan contains written Portraits of a VMS Graduate, a VMS Faculty Member, and a VMS Parent that clearly define how our community can best work together to serve our students. This plan takes a four-year view, but is also rolling in nature, in order to provide the flexibility to respond to new opportunities as they arise.

## **TEACHERS**

### **Recruit and Reward**

- Attract and retain a diverse group of top educators aligned with the Portrait of a VMS Teacher.
- Benchmark faculty and staff total compensation against Colorado and mountain resort schools, and strive to offer competitive packages in the Colorado market.

### **Encourage and Expand Professional Development**

- Provide more support for teachers to enhance their abilities to maintain a healthy work/life balance.
- Help our teachers continue to meet the needs of diverse learners within their classroom.
- Support Project Based Learning professional development.
- Contribute up to 2% of the operating budget to promote continuous learning, self-discovery, and improvement.

## **STUDENTS**

### **Diversify Student Body**

- Expand enrollment of students from different socio-economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds.
- Continue to welcome and provide a climate of acceptance for a diverse student body in accordance with NAIS definitions of diversity.

Develop our students as defined by The Portrait of a VMS Student



- Develop and foster the qualities of resilience and grit.
- Promote self-reliance and accountability.
- Improve executive functioning skills.

Attract and retain the most mission appropriate students

- Evaluate and enhance our entry and retention strategies.
- Provide a Taft Conlin Scholarship for each upper school grade.

## PARENTS

Become the community thought leaders in parenting and education

- Introduce the VMS Speaker Series.
- Create permanent funding for the VMS Speaker Series.

Encourage parent attendance at VMS Speaker Series events

Educate our parents as defined by The Portrait of a VMS Parent



## ACADEMICS

Curriculum Review

- Design a process to ensure vertical integration of scope and sequence across divisions and K-12.
- Create a product to communicate the vertical integration of scope and sequence across divisions and K-12.
- Review at least two disciplines per year.



Pursue Innovative Ideas in Education

- Empower students to own their own learning by participating in self-paced, project based learning investigating and responding to authentic, engaging, and complex questions, problems, or challenges.
- Connect VMS students to the outside world (local, domestic, international) showcasing research, writing, and creativity through extended capstone projects, internships, and community partnerships.
- Research and create funding for an Entrepreneurship Program.
- Explore daily schedule flexibility and options in order to enhance and support innovations in education
- Explore global education opportunities

## ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

Grow the VMS Endowment

- Add at least \$10M to our existing endowment in order to support the legacy of VMS in perpetuity.

Measure our sustainability using the ISM Stability Markers

Update our Rolling 5-Year Financial Plan

Launch our Rolling 5-Year Facility Maintenance Schedule



PROGRAMS

LOWER SCHOOL	MIDDLE SCHOOL	UPPER SCHOOL
Lower School Philosophy	Middle School Philosophy	Upper School Philosophy
Curriculum	Curriculum	Curriculum
Ski & Snowboard Club Vail Partnership	Ski & Snowboard Club Vail Partnership	Ski & Snowboard Club Vail Partnership
Homebase Program	Homebase Program	Homebase Program
Intraterm	Theatre & Dance	Intraterm
Theatre & Dance	VMS Greenhouse	Theatre & Dance
Technology	Technology	Technology
VMS Greenhouse	Class Trips	VMS Greenhouse
Class Trips	Outdoor Education	Class Trips
Outdoor Education	Cross-Age Experience	Outdoor Education
Flexible Programming	Athletics	Flexible Programming
Cross-Age Experience		Cross-Age Experience
After School Care		Athletics
After School Academy		Senior Project
		International Summer Programs
		College Counseling & Matriculation List

LS PHILOSOPHY

Children begin to acquire knowledge and skills, but also develop executive functioning and metacognition. As Kindergartners, our youngest students learn what it means to be a part of a community. As fifth graders, they become leaders and role models for their peers. By the time students graduate lower school, they have found their voice and developed the confidence to use it.

The lower school homebase program revolves around the Responsive Classroom model, which is a student centered, holistic methodology that emphasizes social, emotional, and academic growth equally.

MS PHILOSOPHY

“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.” Martin Luther King Jr.



US PHILOSOPHY

Our upper school program ensures that students will not only be admitted to colleges that best suit them, but also that they have the skills and confidence to thrive once they get there. The path to this destination varies for everyone; therefore, we offer myriad opportunities to delve deeply into subjects supported by a broad-based foundation in the liberal arts. Surrounded by a caring community of faculty and peers, students feel safe—socially, emotionally, and physically—and consequently, take the measured risks necessary to support high academic achievement, develop passion, and build character.



## **ELITE SNOWSPORT TRAINING**

### **SKI & SNOWBOARD CLUB VAIL PARTNERSHIP**

VMS is a proud academic partner of Ski and Snowboard Club Vail (SSCV), which is recognized as one of the best snowsport training programs in the world with offerings in Alpine, Freeski, Freestyle, Nordic and Snowboard. SSCV was represented at the 2014 and 2018 Winter Olympics by current or alumni athletes and has been the catalyst for many recruited D1 College Athletes and US ski team members. Our relationship means that a student at VMS can train at an elite level and receive a rigorous college-preparatory education without compromising either. As members of the VMS community, it also means that these athletes will have social, enrichment, and athletic opportunities beyond the mountain.

### **ACADEMIC SUPPORT**

During the ski season, SSCV athletes work with full-time tutors, who track their progress and challenges. The tutors help students manage workload, time commitments, and stress. When needed, the tutor acts as a liaison between the student and teachers to help plan their schedule and manage any upcoming assessments. VMS may accommodate students who are competing in Europe or across the state by scheduling exams around travel, providing afternoon tutoring, or allowing students to submit work online.

### **FLEXIBLE FACULTY MEMBERS**

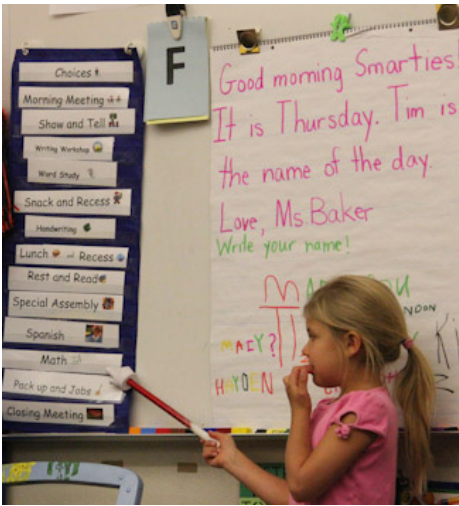
Our faculty understands the schedules and lives of our scholar-athletes. VMS enthusiastically welcomes these individuals, and helps them keep up in class even while competing. Teachers utilize a number of strategies including recording their lessons, posting notes online, Skyping students who are traveling, accepting online submissions of projects and tests, and meeting one-on-one after school.

### **SUMMER PROGRAMS**

Both the middle and upper schools offer classes over the summer that allow students to lighten their third quarter class load. By taking advantage of summer school, students have been allowed to complete 1-2 classes in advance of their travel-intensive competition season.

### **DAILY SCHEDULE & LOGISTICS**

Full-time SSCV athletes train Tuesday-Friday mornings on Vail Mountain, which is five minutes away. In addition, during Ski Fridays, SSCV athletes have the opportunity to dedicate the whole day to training or race preparation. After morning training, VMS provides transportation from the mountain to the school where students attend 4th-7th periods and then work with dedicated tutors after school. The tutoring staff is also available throughout the day to work with students during free and study hall periods.



## LEADERSHIP PROFILE

The next head of school at VMS shall be:

- A visionary leader who will embrace the three pillars of the VMS mission: knowledge, character, community. The new Head will inspire all VMS constituents to support the mission, ensure it is reflected in every aspect of the school, and align all programs, initiatives, and actions to fulfill it.
- An instructional leader with demonstrated ability to create, inspire, and lead a community of learners through the process of teaching and learning. S/he should have experience in working to develop and align a K-12 curriculum, provide for students' individual learning needs, and develop an ethos of inclusivity for all learners, adults and students.
- A strong and collaborative team builder, with demonstrated ability to communicate effectively and build a climate of trust among all constituents.
- A role model and mentor to adults and students.
- Willing to embrace and participate in the range of outdoor and community activities that VMS has to offer.
- Willing to engage fully in the broader Vail community, beyond the school.
- Committed to balancing program and financial management, ensuring that VMS continues to be sustainable into the future.



## APPLICATION PROCESS

Interested candidates should submit the following documents in a single merged pdf to:

Pilar Cabeza de Vaca:

[pedevaca@gmail.com](mailto:pedevaca@gmail.com), [pcabezadevaca@educatorscollaborative.com](mailto:pcabezadevaca@educatorscollaborative.com)

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Mary Seppala:

[maryseppala@gmail.com](mailto:maryseppala@gmail.com),  
[mseppala@educatorscollaborative.com](mailto:mseppala@educatorscollaborative.com)



- EC Candidate Summary
- Letter of interest to the VMS Search Committee
- Current resume
- Statement of leadership philosophy
- List of five references with e-mail addresses and telephone contact.



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