



Mountain Lake Academy  
is a therapeutically driven educational  
community which serves to meet the  
needs of our students, empowers them to  
be leaders, and helps them transition back  
to their home communities with an  
expanded growth mindset.



# THE PEAK

WINTER EDITION FEBRUARY 2025

## Professional Development and Planning

Professional development is crucial for Mountain Lake Academy. Investing in our staff ensures that educators and support personnel are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills to address the diverse needs of our students. Continuous training enhances the effectiveness of therapeutic and educational interventions, promotes staff retention by fostering job satisfaction, and upholds the institution's commitment to excellence. By prioritizing professional growth, Mountain Lake Academy can better serve our students and their families and achieve our mission of helping youth succeed.

### Future of Education Technology Conference (FETC)

Eric Hunter, Instructor of Education Technology

Attending the Future of Education Technology Conference (FETC) was an incredible experience that showcased the latest advancements in educational technology. Most of the sessions and workshops offered deep dives into the transformative power of artificial intelligence in education. Whether exploring how AI can personalize student learning, streamline lesson planning, or revolutionize classroom engagement, the insights gained from industry leaders and fellow educators were invaluable, providing many practical strategies to implement with students and colleagues.

A true standout of the conference was the massive Expo Hall, where attendees were surrounded by cutting-edge technology, hands-on demonstrations, and innovative solutions from hundreds of exhibitors. It was an opportunity to explore the tools shaping the future of teaching and learning, from AI-driven platforms to robotics and immersive VR experiences.

Beyond the sessions, FETC served as a hub for networking and collaboration. Educators connected with like-minded peers, exchanged ideas, and left feeling inspired to integrate new technology into their teaching. This conference was not just about learning—it was about experiencing the future of education firsthand.



### **Therapeutic Programing and Development**

Three residential staff members traveled to California to participate in a conference highlighting critical discussions in teen addiction treatment, digital health anxieties, AI-driven therapeutic tools, and specialized intervention strategies.

Experts explored comprehensive approaches to teen addiction treatment, emphasizing evidence-based interventions, family involvement, and long-term recovery planning. The impact of social media on health anxieties was examined through the lens of Munchausen's by Internet, revealing how online misinformation can influence self-diagnoses and clinical challenges.

Artificial intelligence's role in therapy was a key theme, with a focus on student-centered AI for personalized therapeutic interventions, progress tracking, and virtual support. Additionally, the complexities of Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) were addressed, offering insights into diagnostic challenges and effective, low-pressure treatment strategies.

A particularly impactful session featured firsthand accounts from former struggling teens and a parent, providing valuable perspectives on treatment experiences, what worked, and how professionals can better support both students and families.

### **Future Peak Experience Planning**

Mountain Lake Academy's most unique opportunity for growth is its "Peak Experiences" — outdoor expeditions the students undertake with staff guides. Last spring a student was able to travel to the Grand Canyon for a week long adventure under staff guidance.

In anticipation of the next Peak Experience expedition, staff spent two days exploring Joshua Tree National Park. Joshua Tree is a haven for outdoor adventure enthusiasts, offering exceptional opportunities for rock climbing, hiking, and camping. Known for its world-class climbing, the park features thousands of routes across its unique granite formations, making it a perfect destination for our students who have been honing their climbing skills in the Adirondacks.

Hiking trails, from the short but scenic Hidden Valley Trail to the challenging Ryan Mountain Trail, will reward our students with breathtaking panoramic views. Camping under the vast desert sky will be an unforgettable experience, with campgrounds like Jumbo Rocks and Hidden Valley providing the perfect setting for stargazing and connecting with nature. Whether scaling rock faces, trekking through rugged terrain, or spending a night under the stars, Joshua Tree will offer an unparalleled "Peak Experience".