



Rainbow Mountain  
Children's School • Omega Program

2009/2010 ANNUAL REPORT

## *From the Board President*

Dear Rainbow Mountain Family,

What growth! When I look back on the last few years at Rainbow Mountain Children's School, I think of the growth first in my children, then in the teachers that shepherded them and finally in the leader that has created a safe place for all this growth to occur: Renee Owen. Since Renee took the position as Executive Director, she has established an amazing faculty and staff, she and the faculty have created and implemented an inspired and cohesive curriculum throughout the grades, and she has increased teacher salaries to a more competitive level, all while running the school in the black and increasing our financial reserves during glum economic times.

And we have grown in many ways as a community: Cathy Hebert has led our Parent Council to be the great communicators that they are, in conjunction with our administrative staff. Our community picnics and potlucks are well attended and full of fabulous food. A tour de force of volunteer parents, faculty and staff culminated the 2009-2010 academic year in the Imagine arts extravaganza. There is a positive energy and creative force buzzing throughout the whole school community.

And the board has "grown" in its own way. The 2009-2010 school year saw the end of board service for several members: Jim Tate, Marisa Morgan (past Secretary), Anne Stieber (past President), Donna Fortini, and Miriam Stuart, all wonderfully practical, yet with the school's core mission and spirit deeply engrained in each of them. It was an honor to serve with each of them. Gayle Mair, Keith Costello and I had the pleasure of welcoming four new members to our team: John Keller, Geni McKee, Stewart Stokes, and Anne Wainer. This group brings a breadth of experience and connection to the school through children in the younger grades, and an energy that has inspired the entire group.

This group undergoes initial training in the spring and summer and ongoing training throughout the year in the board's policies, which are based in John Carver's Policy Governance model. These policies clearly separate the role of the board from that of the director. Ultimately, our main job is hiring and evaluating the director, to ensure that the mission of the school is being met. But we also "link" with community members ("owners") in order to determine who we serve, what we do, and at what cost.

As I look forward to the 2010-2011 school year, which will be my last as President of the Board of Directors, I am energized about what lies ahead for our school. We, as a community, will be embarking on a process of sharing and imagining that directs our future, culminating in a clear vision for the growth of our service and campus.

In gratitude,

Donna Burkett



*Rainbow Mountain's Mission is to nurture the discovery, enjoyment and development of the unique gifts of each student through a holistic, community-centered educational environment that encourages self-directed, lifelong learning and fosters a holistic moral understanding of our connection to all people and to the earth.*

## *From the Executive Director*

Children love to learn at Rainbow Mountain Children's School. That is because, as one Rainbow Mountain student put it, "My teachers don't just teach me, they love me." Every Rainbow teacher is excellent, both in terms of their training, their incredible teaching talents, and their personal qualities. They are deeply spiritual people who are inspiring role models for our children.

Children are naturally more motivated to learn when they feel loved and appreciated. It's logical that we remember more of what we learn when we learn in a context that is joyful. At Rainbow, creating memorable moments is part of the secret to our high achievement in academics and the level of maturity of our graduates.

Some of the most memorable moments from 2009-2010 are the big community events we held: the Halloween Harvest Hoe-Down, the Hands of Hope Service Learning Program and Billy Jonas concert, and *Imagine!*, the Arts Extravaganza. Certainly, these were exciting, but the moments some of our children may remember the most are much simpler: learning to canoe while being on a Lewis and Clark expedition, understanding how to perform a quadratic equation, or watching a caterpillar hatch into a butterfly.

My favorite moment was at graduation when two of our eighth graders stood up at the beginning of the ceremony. They announced that they had been students at Rainbow since preschool, and have, therefore, centered every day for 11 years. It was only appropriate that they lead the centering for the evening. After leading all of us in a short activity and a contemplative silence, they ended centering by asking everyone to use their arms to draw a circle around the moment, "for there will never be another moment exactly like this one."

Life is always in motion. As our children grow and change, so does our school. The 2009-10 school year was our 33<sup>rd</sup> year, so it's only appropriate that we move into the new school year with a sense of maturity – the program operates seamlessly from preschool through eighth grade. Rainbow has been through a lot of changes, but one thing that always remains the same: It's a joyful place to learn.

Renee Owen

Executive Director



Grace, 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade



*“Rainbow Mountain has taught me to shine, to laugh, to cry, to love, and to try as hard as I can to understand.” Johanna, 2010 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduate*

## Rainbow Mountain Foundation

The Rainbow Mountain Foundation (RMF) is a non-profit organization consisting of volunteers dedicated to providing resources that make it possible for the Rainbow community to pursue its mission. The tuition payments don't cover the true cost of running the school. The RMF annual drive supplements the regular school budget thereby keeping tuition more affordable for all.

Rainbow Mountain should be open to anyone whose heart calls them to the school, regardless of financial resources. Money raised by RMF goes to provide scholarships to families who could not otherwise afford the tuition. These families increase the economic, social and cultural diversity that make our community vibrant.

Rainbow Mountain nurtures children in all realms: spiritual, emotional, social, physical, and intellectual. This holistic approach to education requires a

strong emphasis in the arts, which connects all the domains. Funds raised by the Rainbow Mountain Foundation support visiting artists in residence at Rainbow Mountain. During the past academic year the students learned puppetry, performed on their own hand-made dulcimers, choreographed and performed original dances, and sang and recorded original world music - all drawing upon the wealth of local artists in our community.

Our teachers at Rainbow Mountain offer our children education from the heart for the heart. The RMF helps to support our teachers by providing a classroom allowance to each teacher to spend on items needed to effectively teach your children. Maps, microscopes, books, chairs, and lockers, are all items that teachers purchased with RMF funds to enhance the learning environment in their classrooms.



# Parent Council

Parent Council is composed of all the class parents that meet together regularly for discussion of RMCS community event planning and parent concerns. Parents are welcome to attend regular parent class meetings with teachers and they can contribute to the agenda. Parents are welcome to read the meeting minutes upon request.

Parent Council is responsible for coordinating RMCS celebrations including the Halloween Hoedown, the Holiday Program, the Grandparent Tea, *Imagine!* and many others.

Each and every class parent through Parent Council ensures that our teachers receive appreciation through holiday and end-of-year gifts and a special breakfast on staff appreciation day. Our parents know how good our teachers are and Parent Council makes sure we let them know!



*We are members of a great body.  
We must consider that we were  
born for the good of the whole.*

*Seneca*



*"I've always had an alternative way of doing things. And every single person, and I mean EVERY single person that I've encountered (at Rainbow Mountain) on my figurative journey has helped me, and supported the fact that I learn differently. If I started to drift off the symbolic bike path, I'd get a helpful little handmade sign stuck in the ground in front of me that kindly reminded me, "Dude, you're on the wrong trail!," and I would hop back on the right path until blocked by yet another obstacle. (...) My love for this school and the people in it is not orchestrated; it's real."*

*Summit, 2010 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduate*

## Summary

The 2009-2010 academic year was one of challenges met and new ventures accomplished. In spite of a severe downturn in the national economy, Rainbow Mountain was able to hold its enrollment and finish the year on sound financial footing. The school graduated six amazingly articulate and inspiring 8<sup>th</sup> graders who are certain to make their mark in the world.



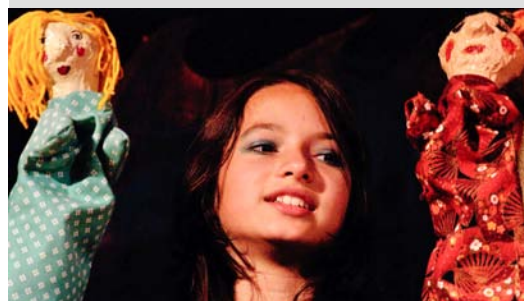
# Highlights

- Rainbow Mountain envisioned and accomplished a very ambitious arts extravaganza and fundraiser called, *Imagine!*. This venture engaged over a dozen puppeteers, dancers, actors and other artists from the Asheville area to lead classes and create works of art that then became the basis for an all-school dramatic performance and auction. *Imagine!* enabled the children to acquire many new skills and discover many new talents, and the auction realized a net profit of about \$5,000.
- The children's social and spiritual lives grew in depth and substance. In each class there were multiple projects that involved the children in service to the community and the environment.
- Teachers, through exposure to the teachings of individuals such as John Shackleton and Lauren Rosenfeld, as well as training in the methods of the Waldorf educational model and the writings of Rudolf Steiner, have grown in their ability to engage the children at a meaningful spiritual level as well as at an instructional one.
- The school completed its first survey of parent opinions. In the spring, parents completed an Internet questionnaire and were later able to see the results of the survey on the web.
- Teachers, board members and others have been learning and implementing Dynamic Governance, a system of consent-based decision-making that is helping the Director to focus more on vision and leadership and less on operational details thus yielding a more collaborative management structure.
- Complete exit outcomes in Reading, Writing, and Math, K-8, were implemented for the first year. School-wide Math was used for the second year, as was a complete curriculum map in Science and Social Studies, K-8.
- Donna Burkett, MD met with teachers to plan a Healthy Choices curriculum for the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade class, covering sex education and substance abuse prevention.
- At the end of the year there were 96 students enrolled in K-8 and there were 39 students enrolled in preschool.



*"Imagine '10 was imaginative, magical, out of the box, unpredictable...not the usual school performance, if there is such a thing...much more personal and much more surprising! I laughed and cried my way through it."*

*Elana, Parent of 5<sup>th</sup> Grader*



*Imagination is more important than knowledge.*

*Albert Einstein*

## Goals For The Year Ahead

- Proudly communicate to the Asheville community the strength of our academic program, the high quality of our staff and faculty, and our unique spiritual program to ensure that we will continue to attract people with a higher purpose.
- *Imagine!* will enter its second year to provide unique experiences in the arts for Rainbow Mountain students.
- Faculty, staff, Board and key leadership will receive training in Appreciative Inquiry that will provide remarkably effective skills for facilitating the imagining and planning of facilities updates and program improvements.
- Continue implementation of Dynamic Governance throughout the school with the purpose of developing a more collaborative and inventive governance structure, which supports the Director in using her time more efficiently.

*"I was very happy to be a part of the Imagine! Arts Extravaganza at Rainbow Mountain Children's School last year. The performance was wonderful and all the children showed such talent it was unbelievable! The staff and parent volunteers, the students and the entire community came together to culminate into an unforgettable performance for our school. The children were happy and the parents were thrilled! I was so proud of my granddaughter Nakaya's class for their dance performance that they had worked so hard on. It was complicated and required a lot of focus and stamina. It gave her a feeling of accomplishment that was second to none."*

*Diane C., Grandparent*



*Art is a human activity having for its purpose the transmission to others of the highest and best feelings to which men have risen.*

*Tolstoy*

## Financial Performance

- Income** Rainbow Mountain had total revenue in the school year 2008-2009 of just over a million dollars (\$1,078,400). Of this, far and away the greatest portion came from student tuitions (92%). Five percent came from the Rainbow Mountain Foundation, and the remaining 3% came from events and student fundraising, grants, miscellaneous income, and interest income.
- Expenses** Expenses totaled \$1,054,490.00, leaving a surplus for the year of just under \$29,000. Rainbow Mountain's costs are concentrated in staff salaries (70%) and benefits (14%). The remaining 16% is distributed among seven expense categories (mortgage service, materials, etc.). Of these, marketing and fundraising accounted for the smallest percentage (just 1.2% of the total).
- Equity** The total value of all assets at the end of the 2009-2010 FY was \$1,326,973. Cash reserves were \$361,084.



Ava, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade

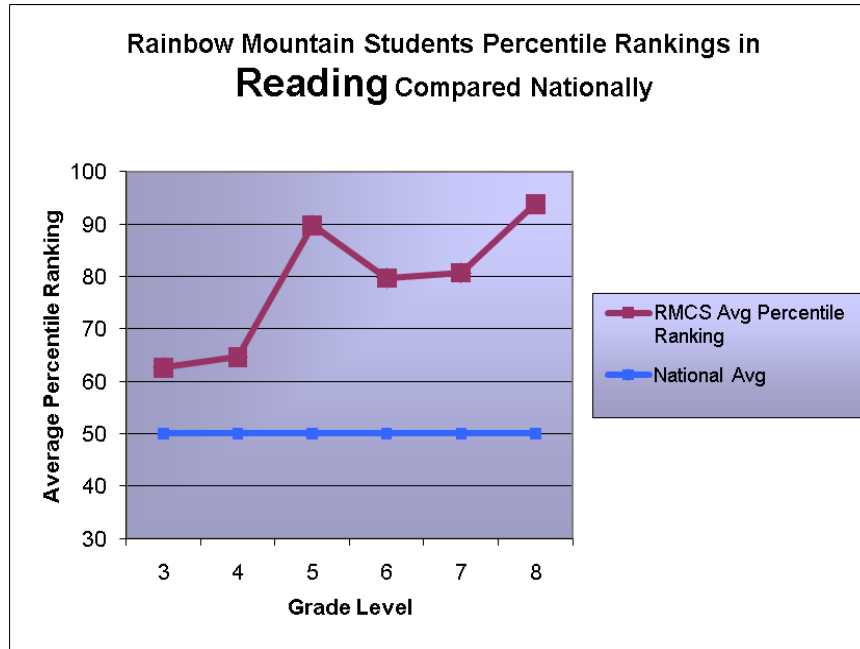


*"(At Rainbow), I have discovered who I have always been. As Christopher Robin once said to Pooh Bear, "Promise me you'll always remember: You're braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think." I now know this is true."*

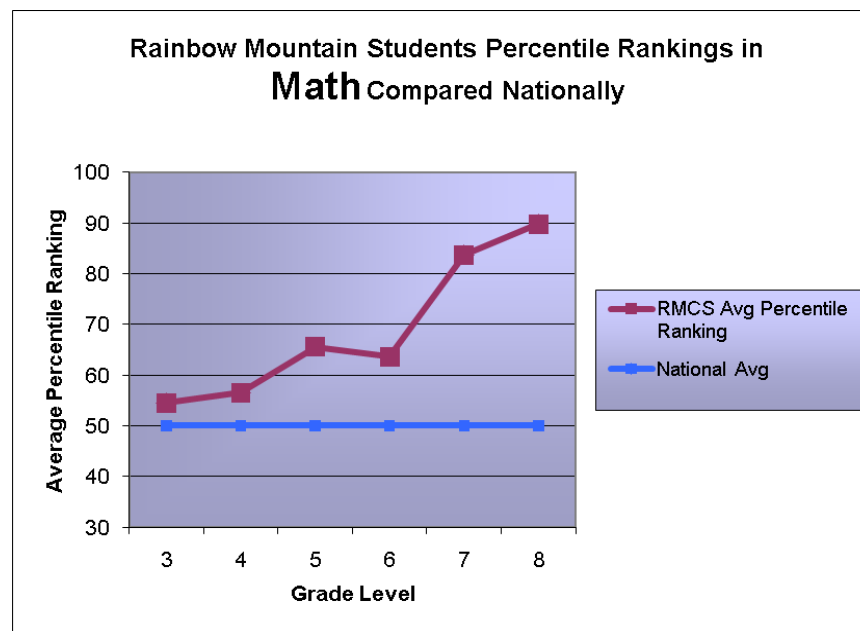
*Ian, 2010 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduate*

# Academic Performance

**Test Results:** Stanford 10 Results from September 2009, show students scoring well above national averages, especially in the upper grades.



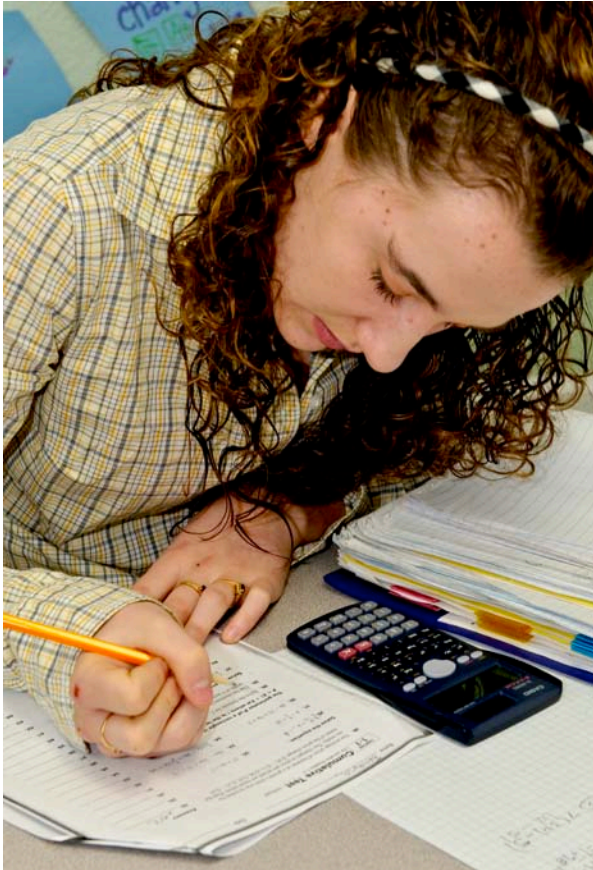
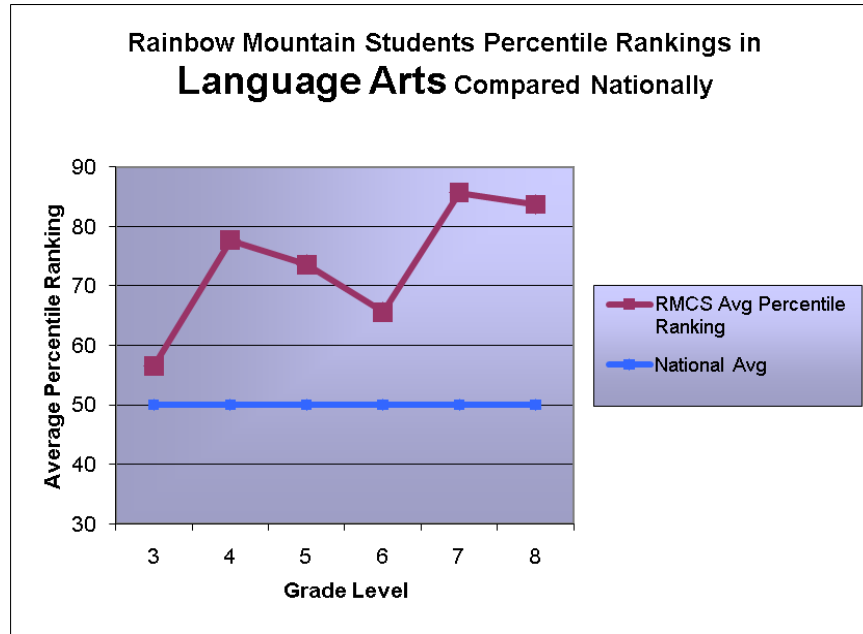
Reading is a special strength for Rainbow. RMCS 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading scores were in the 81<sup>st</sup> and 94<sup>th</sup> percentile ranking, respectively.



In math, the scores generally improve with each succeeding year. Students in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade rank in the 84<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentile, respectively.

# Academic Performance *(continued)*

In Language Arts 7<sup>th</sup> graders scored in the 86<sup>th</sup> percentile and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in the 85<sup>th</sup>.



*“Author John Jake said, “Be yourself. Above all, let who you are, what you are, what you believe, shine through...” When I shine you will see someone who is Determined. Vivacious. Dedicated. Loving. Kind. Compassionate. Exuberant. Outgoing. Strong. A Leader. Tenacious. As I walk out the gate in front of the school for the last time as a student, (I) enter the world as myself.”*

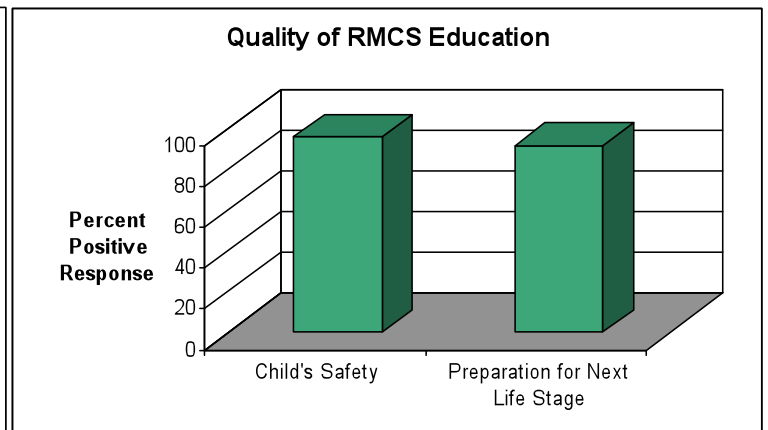
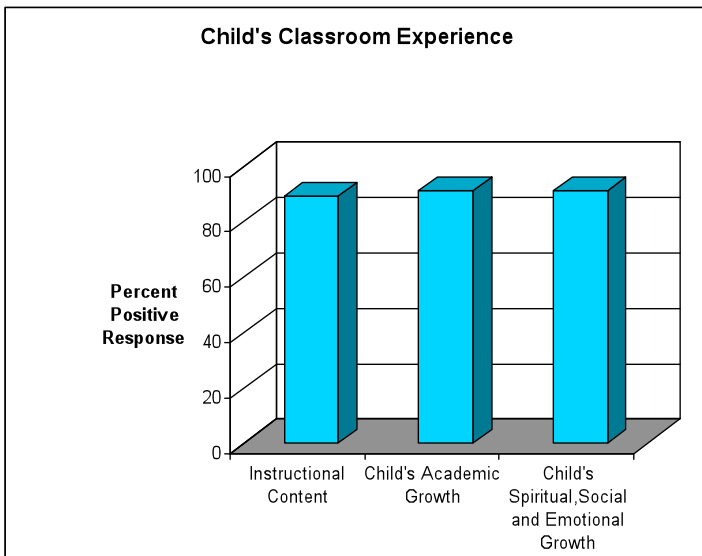
*Tatiana, 2010 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduate*

# Parent Satisfaction

Rainbow Mountain’s first-ever survey of parent opinions was administered at the end of the school year. Roughly half of all Rainbow parents answered a comprehensive set of rating items about the school and their child’s classroom experience. Most parents also contributed long and extremely informative answers to the survey’s open-ended questions.

**Survey Highlights** The survey’s quantitative results were overwhelmingly positive. As shown in the charts below, parents are generally very positive about the overall school and classroom environment as well as the academic and social-emotional preparation their child receives. An overwhelming 94% of respondents say they would readily recommend Rainbow Mountain to another parent.

**Written Comments** Parents offered many substantive suggestions for improvement – in the school calendar, in the School’s major artistic and fund-raising event, *Imagine!* and in numerous other aspects of school administration, staffing, and curriculum. Above all else, the comments revealed how deeply committed Rainbow parents are to the school and to their children’s academic, emotional and spiritual growth.



Savannah, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade

*“There are so many things about Rainbow that are positive, so many reasons why we are here. Rainbow children love learning at this school. It is a place where children can thrive and grow, and are appreciated, respected and taught with love and caring.”*

RMCS Parent



# Volunteer Leadership 2009/2010

## Board of Directors

### Board members: 2009/2010

Donna Burkett, President  
Jim Tate, Vice President  
Gayle Mair, Secretary  
Keith Costello, Officer of Finance  
Marisa Morgan  
Anne Stieber  
Miriam Stuart

### Board members: 2010/2011

Donna Burkett, President  
Stewart Stokes, Vice-President  
Gayle Mair, Secretary  
Keith Costello, Officer of Finance  
Michelle Bowling  
John Keller  
Geni McKee  
Anne Wainer

## Rainbow Mountain Foundation

Bobby Granieri, Chair  
Alan Ward, Treasurer  
Sarah Corley, Secretary  
Jen Tracy  
Donna Burkett  
Geni McKee  
Mindy Barrett



Maggie, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

## Parent Council

Preschool: Dalton McCrary, Jennifer Nicolini, Jen Tracy, Joele Doty, and Janet Salonious  
Kindergarten: Angel Utz, Jennifer Waite  
1st Grade: Tracy Hildebrand, Mike Hayes  
2nd Grade: Caryn Hanna, Macy Pugh  
3rd Grade: Claudia Konijn, Andi Morrell  
4th Grade: Donna Fortini  
5th/6th Grade: Marisa Morgan, Pamela Goodrum, Dutch O'Connor, and Lauren Cundiff  
Omega (7th & 8th Grades): Cathy Hebert, Mary Sigler

*"Rainbow Mountain has helped me to believe that anything is possible if I follow my heart and show my true colors. "We must be the change we wish to see in the world." This statement from Gandhi has been one of my favorite quotes ever since I saw it written on a piece of paper, hanging on the wall in the old Omega classroom. Through my years here, I have learned to be that change."*

*Rachel, 2010 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduate*

## *The Spiritual Domain*

Since the inception of the school in 1977, Rainbow Mountain Children's School has been ahead of its time in understanding child development by looking holistically at the whole child and engaging students in learning across the Five Domains: Academic/Mental, Spiritual, Emotional, Social/Moral and Physical.

When we consider a child's development at Rainbow Mountain, we always address every domain, during curriculum and lesson planning, in Parent/Teacher/Student Conferences or through the monitoring of policies by school's Board of Directors. An example of such a policy is: "Students will be explorers of the sacred and develop a deep connection to self, all beings and to the earth."

Through daily activities and learning, students at Rainbow Mountain Children's School understand that spirituality is not an isolated event; there is a rich and multi-layered experience of the spirit in all levels of learning. This makes Rainbow Mountain unique from public schools that are not at liberty to be expressive about spirituality, and we are different from private schools which often claim to be "holistic" but lack a deep spiritual program. As explained below, the spiritual domain at Rainbow Mountain is developed through the following: *Creativity, Initiation/Ritual/Celebration, Joy, Meaning & Purpose, Silence & Reverence, Transcendence, and Myth & Mystery.*

***Creativity*** A creative student is open to the mystical aspect of creativity; ideas and epiphanies occur spontaneously when one is in the present moment. The creative arts have a strong holding in the curriculum. Students experience integrated arts where they express what they have learned through drama, dance, music and the visual arts. The creative process is taught, and both process and products are celebrated.

***Initiation/Ritual/Celebration*** Students at RMCS learn to understand that transitions into new beginnings and the shedding of old are recognized and aided with initiations. Celebrations and ritual are viewed as a part of human existence and are a way of having fellowship with others while enjoying and honoring special days or events. "Celebration" is a frequently used term at RMCS. Often, to create a ceremony, a teacher will tell a story about a particular celebration or share a ritual from a culture or a religion, and then the children design and perform something that is similar which catches the essence and meaning of the celebration or holiday, while having a RMCS twist.

***Joy*** A joyful student is one who has experienced bliss in his life. He knows the "high" feeling of great experiences. He doesn't try to hide joy. (This is especially evident in the upper grades, where our teenagers, instead of being sullen and rebellious are playful and joyful.) The joyful student knows gratitude and "counts his/her blessings." He looks for the wonderful side of life, even in the worst situations.

***Meaning and Purpose*** One of our loftiest goals for RMCS students to desire is a life of purpose. Although they have healthy egos and personal ambitions, they are altruistic by nature. They see deep meaning in serving others and/or connecting with something beyond their material world and their personal achievements. For a Rainbow Mountain graduate, life isn't about making money; it's about creating a life.

***Silence and Reverence*** A RMCS student is not only comfortable with silence, but *knows* it. Students are taught focusing techniques so they are able to get into the flow. He/She balances our fast-paced world with a sense of calmness and peace. He/She knows how to simply *exist* as a way to recharge the mind, body and spirit. Students demonstrate reverence for the sacred and respect for the awesome. Silence, solace and solitude are honored. While helpful to all, this reverence for inner calm is especially helpful to students who have attention deficit or hyperactive tendencies. They learn how to monitor *themselves* internally.

*"Peace is a quiet place. Peace is beauty swimming..."* Bella, 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Student

## *The Spiritual Domain (continued)*

**Transcendence** Students have experience with the indescribable feeling from natural highs, whether from exercise, human contact, revelatory ideas and thoughts, being in the “zone,” meditation, artistic expression or prayer. Students also understand transcendence from going beyond foreseen limits - not just in mystical terms, but also physical and mental, such as exceeding an academic goal. They also have experience with transcending barriers such as prejudice and suffering.

**Myth and Mystery** Students experience their life as a microcosm of large life themes. They understand the hero's journey and how the ups, downs and challenges of the hero's life are within them. Myths and stories are told in each classroom as a way of understanding concepts and cosmology. Mystery and the mystical are things that are not scary, dark or embarrassing, but something that implies a deeper meaning. Students who delve into the mysteries of life enjoy asking purposeful questions more than defining answers.

The above is excerpted from *The Heart of the Matter: The Spiritual Domain. Vol. IV: Issue 2*, a publication by Renee Owen, Executive Director and edited by Carole Smith, Admissions Director

## *A Tribute to Volunteers and Contributors*

There are so many wonderful people who give their heart, soul and sweat to Rainbow Mountain. We want to acknowledge as many folks as possible, beginning with our dedicated teachers, office staffers, management, after-school care folks and parents and community members who give their all and then some.

Our volunteers and projects are numerous, so if we have inadvertently left out your name, please accept our apologies and let us know about the error.

We would like to thank Cathy Hebert for her commitment and leadership on Parent Council. We recognize Mindy Barrett for making the new wooden floors in the 5th and 6th grade classrooms possible, as well as the lighting fixtures and other things that made these classrooms shine this year. Rainbow Mountain would not be the same without the generous heart and willing hands of our beloved Dr. Mike; thanks to you, our friend, for all that you are and do for us.

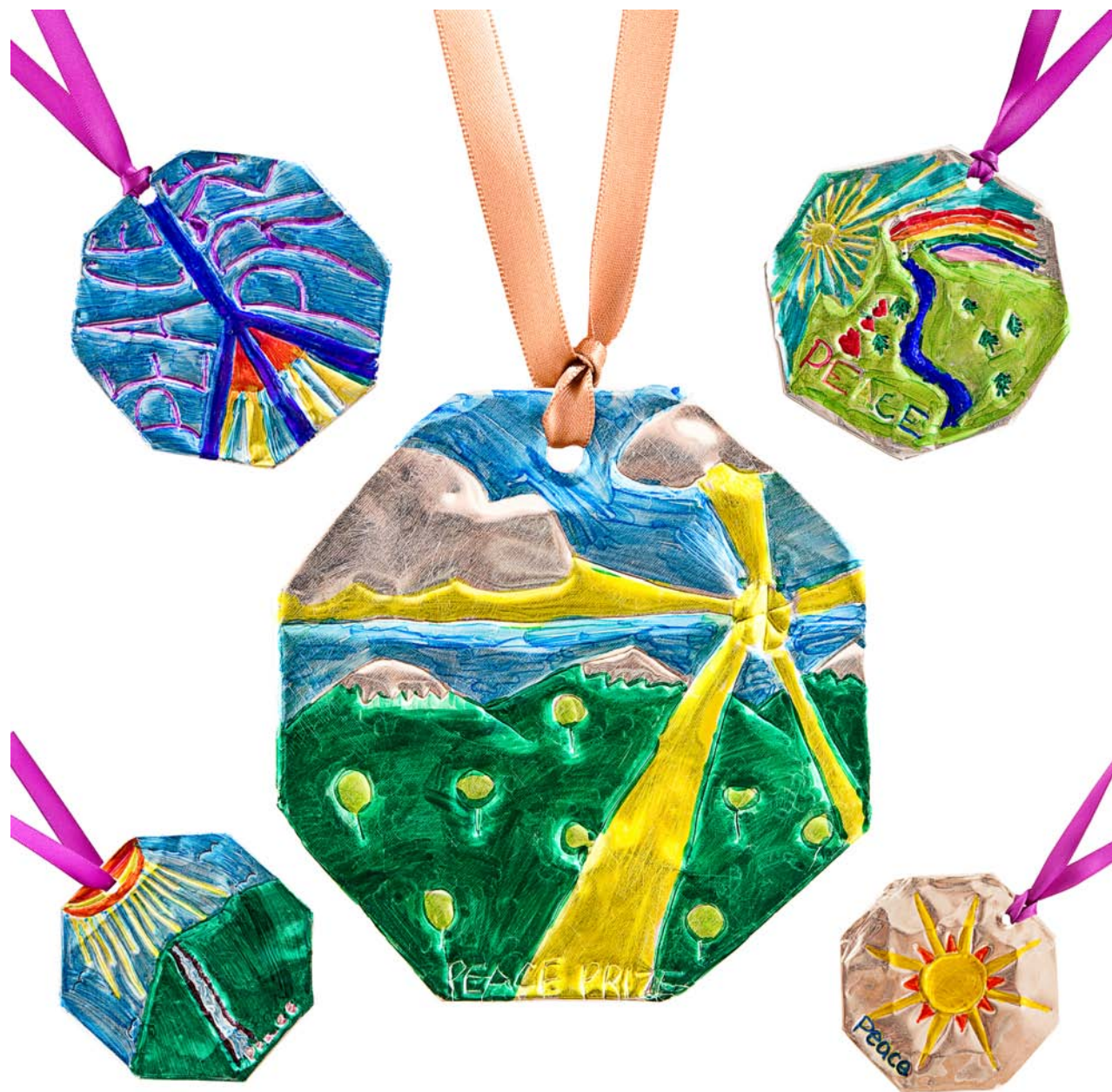
Special thanks go also to Angel Utz and Jenny Hatcher for their tireless commitment to the *Imagine!* auction and production, respectively. To all the parents who worked with Jenny Hatcher on this past year's Hoe Down, we say a cheery hee-haw.

And many thanks go to the countless parents and kids and community members who help out on Tom Sawyer days. Through their work our volunteers are developing ownership of the school by being part of our community and enriching the daily experience of our children and the whole of Rainbow Mountain Children's School.

A heartfelt thank you is shared with all the parents, teachers, alumni, grandparents and friends of the school who participated in this year's Annual Giving Campaign.

*"Peace is when you are in total silence and you have a lot of respect in yourself and you're only thinking about the positive things, not the negative stuff."*

*Mateo 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Student*



Peace Medals (inspired by the Nobel Peace Prize) were created and awarded by members of the 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Grade

## Rainbow Mountain Children's School

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