Rainbow Mountain Children’s School, since 1977, has been ahead of its time in understanding child development from a spiritual perspective. Rainbow Mountain is very unique from public schools who 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.

However, like all things spiritual, our spiritual curriculum is difficult to describe in words. Therefore, the purpose of this Heart of the Matter is to bring the spiritual domain to light. In the following pages each aspect of the Spiritual Domain is explained.

~Spiritual Aspects~
- Meaning and Purpose
- Creativity
- Initiation/Celebration
- Joy
- Transcendence
- Myth and Mystery
- Silence and Reverence

Rainbow Mountain Vision: Students will be explorers of the sacred and have a deep connection to self, all beings and to the earth.

A student who is an “explorer of the sacred” is someone who is fascinated by the BIG questions in LIFE, yet she is not fundamentally tied to any absolute truths as she is on a life-long spiritual quest. Just as our students become life-long learners in the academic/mental domain, they are life-long seekers of wisdom, kindness, and personal growth in the spiritual domain. They explore, or at least tolerate, the different ways many religions and cultures have answered life’s big questions, and they find personal faith in the answers through their own experiences.

Students are not only explorers of the sacred, but they demonstrate reverence for the sacred. In primitive cultures, just about everything is sacred – every sound, every meal, walking, sleeping, the sun, the dirt, trading, and every living plant and creature. If all children in our culture were raised to revere all of life as being sacred, Rainbow Mountain Children’s School’s vision for a better world would be possible. A student who reveres the sacred, “walks in beauty,” as Native Americans phrase it. They are grateful for all they have and experience, and they truly respect and honor all others and life itself.

Furthermore, a student who has a deep connection to self has developed an intrapersonal relationship of knowing and understanding. He recognizes and nurtures personal emotions and needs. A student with a deep connection to other beings feels compassion and empathy for other people and living things, while exhibiting an authenticity and a sense of fellowship with them. A deep connection to the earth involves stewardship for our planet, an awareness of the pulse of our life source, and, most importantly, a deep love and relationship with the natural world. This also implies an appreciation for the oneness of life itself – down to the core.
What Does It Look Like at Rainbow Mountain?

- Students are asked and encouraged to ponder the big questions in life, such as “Who am I?” and “Why are we here?” This occurs in centering, but also throughout academic courses and projects. It’s evident in student writing.
- Participation in Gender Mysteries and Mystery Council gives older kids the experience of pondering their relationships with themselves, their peers, their families, and their spirituality. Students anonymously ask deep questions, and with reverence and silence in between comments, they talk about the questions in the form of a quest, which is the base-word of question.
- Our school community, and the way it functions, provides an example of people caring for one another, for all beings, and for the earth. We have Tom Sawyer Volunteer Days, kids and volunteers recycle, we collect rain water, we garden together, celebrate together, and we take care of one another – especially when people are in need. When a community member is ill, we mobilize to provide meals, emotional support, money, and love.
- Students venture into the natural world frequently. The older classes use many Native American inspired concepts and traditions to help the students understand their totem, and what “all their relations” means, along with how to really listen and see like an animal. We are dedicated to not just admiring nature, but revering it, and making it part of each child’s inner life.
- The Fourth/Fifth Grade is doing the Peace Jam curriculum, studying Peace Price Laureates from the around the world, including their biographies; their culture; and the geography, history, and political landscape of their countries – many of them have deep spiritual lives, and the kids ponder and write about the relationship between spiritual beliefs, positive character traits, and meaningful work.
- The board, in its visioning process, decided Rainbow Mountain’s “higher purpose” as a school is just as important than the service provided to each individual family.
- Service learning and philanthropy are common experiences to the Rainbow student. An eighth grade graduate has participated in many service projects, and may have designed and/or led at least one. She should see service as something that one does on a regular basis.

A few examples of service learning activities include:
- Raising vegetables for food bank boxes
- Doing a gently used book drive for children in temporary housing
- Knitting winter articles for orphans
- Adopting an endangered elephant
- Clearing out invasive plants and planting native elderberries along State Street Stream.

~Meaning and Purpose~

One of our loftiest goals is for RMCS students to desire 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. Life isn’t just about making money for a Rainbow graduate; it’s about making a life.

~Creativity~

Rainbow Mountain students are often cited as being very imaginative. The creative arts have a strong holding in the curriculum.

Our curriculum encourages imagination and creativity by allowing the time and flexibility for children to explore. Students aren’t afraid of having “wrong” answers, and are encouraged to think of many creative solutions. Creativity and imagination are developed, building a foundation for academic problem solving and critical thinking skills.

A creative student is open to the mystical aspect of creativity: that ideas and epiphanies beget spontaneously when one is in the present moment.

What Are Some Examples at Rainbow Mountain?

- Every year, we have about a dozen visiting artists who work with students at Rainbow Mountain in all the major areas of the arts. Artists have included Red Herring Puppets and Adame Dembele of Afro-motive. Students have made and learned to play handmade dulcimers, made a movie, and choreographed dances. It all culminates with IMAGINE! — an arts extravaganza where students display art and perform.
- Formal visual art class and music class occur weekly, besides the daily music and art in the classroom.
- Teachers allow children to have patience when they do not have an answer immediately, so they can let the creative process work. Similar to the chaos theory – great inspiration arises out of a time of questioning without answering.
- Creativity is highly valued at Rainbow Mountain. Students are encouraged to “think outside the box.”
Students have experience with the indescribable feeling from natural highs, whether from exercise, human contact, revelatory ideas and thoughts, being in nature, being in the “zone,” meditation, artistic expression, or prayer. Bliss.

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.

What Does It Look Like at Rainbow Mountain?

Even traditional schools have many opportunities for transcendence (artistic performances, athletic events, etc). At RMCS the experience is not taken for granted. It is recognized and students appreciate and honor one another when they have transcended goals or reached a new height. Their expression of joy is more typically important that how perfectly they execute a play, for example.
Myths and stories are told in each classroom as a way of understanding concepts and cosmology.

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 is within them.

Mystery and the mystical is something that is 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. They ask “Why?”

A Rainbow Mountain student is not only comfortable with silence, but knows it. 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.

Peace, both personal and planetary, can be envisioned and sought.

Students know how to focus and get into the flow. This is especially helpful for students who have attention or hyperactive tendencies. They learn how to monitor themselves internally.

What Does It Look Like at Rainbow Mountain?

- Myths, such as Creation stories in preschool, African tales in first grade, and Norse mythology in fourth grade, are enjoyed. Teachers also take events and phenomena that many see as ordinary, such as how a seed sprouts, and highlight the wonderment and mystery of such events. To learn science is to partake in magic! (See Heart of the Matter titled “Children of the Mystery” for a more in-depth explanation.)
- Classes study many cultures, including their religious beliefs and practices. These cultures are not considered “foreign,” but a part of our human neighborhood.
- Students at Rainbow come from a multitude of religious and cultural backgrounds, which they share with one another. For example, Doreen Dvorscak, kindergarten teacher, once told about once of her students coming back to school after Ash Wednesday services with the ash-mark on his forehead. Of course, all the kids were curious, so Doreen asked the child to tell about the service and the meaning behind it. The class was enthralled, and many commented on how they would like to be Catholic.

In Conclusion......

Students at Rainbow Mountain Children’s School understand that spirituality is not an isolated experience. It doesn’t just happen when we are centering, at church, or “being spiritual.” It is a way of being.

Simply knowing that spirituality and the spiritual domain are part of the curriculum helps students honor and seek a spiritual life. They also learn to be mindful throughout the school day through positive discipline, compassionate communication, and through the culture and norms of the school.

The most important core-value at RMCS is Namaste, the belief that everything alive has a spirit and a soul that we each recognize and honor.

As educators we believe it is our duty to raise a generation that will create a better world. Our students not only learn that it is important to abide by the Golden Rule, but they believe that what they do unto others, they are doing unto themselves. Children who are raised with a cooperative mind-set, will be cooperative, rather than competitive adults. They will work together to make a difference.