

RAINBOW INSTITUTE

Presents

More Than Mindfulness Conference 2017: Education as a Sacred Art

Workshops, Seminars and Panel Discussions

Keynote Address

Establishing a Heart Centered School- Who are children really? Where do they come from? What kind of educational environment provides them the best chance of loving themselves? Of developing fully? Of expressing all that they are? And of living harmoniously in a way that contributes to others and to our world? These are the questions that we asked ourselves as we were designing Rainbow Mountain School 41 years ago. The heart is the key: first, because children are centered in their hearts, secondly, because the heart is the doorway to the brain as we now know from research, and thirdly, because the heart is the faculty that knows the essence of life on the seen and unseen levels. The language of the heart is connection and love. Education that opens up the experience of love and unity leads students to excel and thrive in all areas of their lives. Children's hearts are alive, vibrant and curious. The heart is their main channel of learning. As educators and parents, when we tap into their hearts along with their minds, we bring out the best in them and help them to be all that they are created to be. This is education in service of healing and transformation. It is crucial work for our time. It is holy work. Through lecture and experiential exercises, we will explore how we can reach and nurture children's hearts so that they are fulfilled, productive, and in service to others.



Nura Laird, formerly known as Ashrita, was one of the original founders of Rainbow School in 1977, known then as Rainbow Mountain Children's School. She has been an educator in public and alternative schools since the early 1970's. She co-founded both an alternative secondary school in Vermont before Rainbow, and more recently the University of Spiritual Healing and Sufism in Northern California. Nura has been a lifelong advocate for children and a parent educator and coach. She spearheaded a formal research study in spiritually-based parenting and family healing which became the PhD dissertation of one of her students. Nura is also a mediator with extensive experience in family mediation and a number of counseling modalities. She works mostly with couples and family members to resolve conflict and restore love and harmony to families. For the past 40 years Nura has been a student of Sufism, the age-old Islamic mystical path of wisdom and love. Currently Nura is a professor of Sufism, spiritual healing, and peacemaking at the University of Spiritual Healing and Sufism in northern California. She teaches internationally and has a private healing practice in St. Helena, California, working both in person and remotely by phone or online.

Religion & Spirituality: A conversation for the postmodern classroom and counselor: We live in a society where it is not the "norm" to talk about spirituality. Yet, the most recent research from multiple fields, especially neuroscience and psychology, are proving that spiritual development is as important as cognitive, physical, and social/emotional development. For example, healthy spiritual development can reduce the likelihood of depression by as much as 80%. This session will discuss

some of this landmark research, and discuss why spiritual development is critical in the lives of children, and critical for a postmodern, complex world, where most of our problems are created by humans, and could be solved, as the Dalai Lama says, “with a spiritual revolution.” We make the assumption that the reason spirituality is avoided in society and in public schools is because it is confused with religion. We will discuss some of these implications and define the difference between spirituality and religion.



Led by RCS’s Executive Director, Renee Owen and RCS’s Director of Counseling, Will Ray

Learning Through a Holistic Lens: Exploring how teaching the whole child enhances the learning path of all children: In this workshop we will explore how teaching the whole child enhances the learning path of all children, but can positively and powerfully impact students with diverse learning needs. We will share strategies, lessons, and activities to engage children of all ages in facing their challenges, while reinforcing their strengths and self-concept. Our Seven Domains model is the foundational structure through which RCS approaches learning and teaching.



Led by Eddy Webb: Rainbow Seven Domains master teacher

Awakening a Deep Nature Connection Through Communing with the Natural World: In this day and age, an understanding of the human impact on the environment is virtually impossible to ignore. Likewise, these environmental problems impact our daily lives and will continue to do so for generations. At RCS we believe that environmental stewards are birthed from a learning atmosphere that sees nature as sacred and divine. The culture, climate and programming at RCS aims to nurture an intimate and empathetic bond with the natural world, specifically, during the formative years of childhood that will grow over time into meaningful and enduring environmental action. In this workshop we will investigate rituals and activities that help infuse a love, appreciation and reverence of the natural world into our lesson plans and classroom culture even for our “littlest” learners; setting a primary stage of development for lifelong environmental stewards.



Led by West Willmore: Rainbow Seven Domains master teacher, RCS Curriculum Director, RCS resident naturalist and Rainbow Institute’s Director of Operations.

The Art of Storytelling and The Hero's Journey: Come join us for a fun session designed to bring back the sacred art of storytelling to the classroom. Learn how the ancient act of gathering for fellowship around the fire can lead to relevant learning in all classroom settings today. Children young and old can be inspired by story to understand history, gain perspective of the diverse human condition, experience gratitude for the magic and science of the natural world, and much more. Explore a classroom curriculum designed around: *The Hero's Journey!* Discover how students can recognize personal transformations in their lives, acknowledge and embrace the unknowns ahead of them, and realize the hero within themselves. Through mythologies old and new, we discover archetypes that may be paralleled in our own students' struggles and successes, setting a platform for growth and resiliency.

Led by RCS lead teacher, Jenny Armocida and RCS's Creative Director Justin Pilla

Inner Alchemy: Different Spiritual Traditions of Self: Coming of age is often a special time in many cultures marked with celebration and ceremony. However, it can also be a time of confusion, questioning and growth as our youth explore ideas of ethics, peer relations, puberty, gender, intimacy and much more. In this workshop we will share the curriculum, conversations, and learning moments from Rainbow's implementation of a social/emotional curriculum designed to embrace and encourage open dialogue around these all too often taboo topics in our society.

Led by RCS's Director of Counseling, Will Ray

Mindfulness as Playfulness: Experience the first-hand the transformative power of play: We invite participants to experience how teaching and practicing mindfulness through games embedded within a structured framework evokes curiosity, engagement, and fosters repetition thus facilitating learning. Attendees are encouraged to experience first-hand the transformative power of play, loosening up and connecting with their creative, playful nature in a safe, non-threatening way. No previous experience with practicing mindfulness or teaching mindfulness to children is required to attend the workshop.



Led by Lucy MacGregor: RCS preschool lead teacher, Rainbow Institute Mindfulness Consultant and Mindful Schools certified teacher

What Does Centering as a Contemplative Practice Look like at RCS: The nuts and bolts of a 40 year legacy: There are certain stand out elements of the Rainbow Seven Domains Learning Model that have huge impacts on the culture of the school, the daily centering practice is one. This morning ritual serves to awaken the spiritual center of each child, opening pathways to learning. This whole class activity than has an opening and closing ritual with an activity in the middle. The activity can include mindfulness, but also extends into other aspects of contemplative and spiritual learning with experiences that can integrate with the academic curriculum, social/emotional learning, creativity, kinesthetics, and students' connection to the natural world. The learning targets for each centering are inspired by RCS's spiritual learning goals. In this workshop, you will learn the rituals that lay the foundation for RCS's culture of centering.

Led by a RCS Alumni students

Beyond Mathematics and Linguistics: Blending the Spiritual and Mental Domains: In this session, we will explore how the social, emotional and spiritual domains can be seamlessly woven into any English and Math curriculum, highlighting writing, reflection & language arts routines and the tool, techniques and power of sacred geometry.



Led by Omega Program Coordinator and Lead Teacher, Susan Waddell and Omega's Sacred Geometry Teacher Mark Hanf. Susan has taught in the Omega Program since 2006. Prior to moving to Asheville, she spent three years teaching language arts and math in middle schools in Houston, Texas. Susan holds a Bachelor's Degree in

English with an emphasis in creative writing from Elon College, has her teaching certificate, and obtained a Master's degree with a focus on Curriculum and Instruction in the Middle Grades in the spring of 2016 from Gardner-Webb University. Mark Hanf uses sacred geometry and uses an innovative approach in his teaching. When Mark isn't at Rainbow, he's busy promoting an incredible game he created called the AT Board Game. He's hiked the large sections of the Appalachian Trail.

Holistic Psychotherapy: Using the Seven Domains to provide clinical care



Led by RCS's Director of Counseling, Will Ray.

MINDFULNESS & RACE PT 1: The Creation of Whiteness

The current way in which we understand race and racism is flawed... and historically incorrect. As a result, the ways we talk about and teach race- both directly and indirectly- in our schools is failing our students. In this workshop, we'll shift the paradigm of race- and racism- and get in touch with our own stories of who we are so that we can better, more mindful, anti-racist teachers.

MINDFULNESS & RACE PT. 2: HOW WE SHOW UP?

How do we, as educators, perpetuate the institutional and structural systems that cause the achievement gap? In this workshop, we will explore how implicit bias and other stressors show up in our personal interactions, and brainstorm ways we can maintain mindfulness and interrupt those impulses.



Led by Danae Aicher. Danae Aicher is the Equity Director at Rainbow Community School and co-Chair of Building Bridges of Asheville, an Asheville-based anti-racism organization. She comes to equity and social justice work after two decades of being a political journalist, a political operative and then a very political at-home Mom. And it's that last role that pushed her into this work. In her pre-Mommy professions, she saw up close (and behind the scenes) the ways in which equity wasn't present and the ways in which we, as a society, maintain and perpetuate inequity. She says she wants a different world for her children.

Rites of Passage: Integrating these transformative, coming of age experiences into class culture and curriculum



Led by Creative Director, Justin Pilla and Jason Cannoncro, RCS Seven Domains master teacher

Theater as a Transformative Practice: Image and applied theater in the classroom



Led by RCS Theater teacher, Ange Moore.

Mindfulness and Movement: Ground learning in the body by weaving mindful practice into active learning: In this workshop participants will learn tools on how to incorporate mindfulness within the physical domain. Mindfulness takes many forms during active movement. Come away with strategies to connect mindfulness concepts to game play, recess, and competition to help foster good sportsmanship and respectful behavior and language during the educational process.



Led by RCS Athletic Director and Physical Education teacher, Mark Strazzer. Mark graduated from the University of Delaware with a degree in Health and Physical Education and holds a Master's in Health Education from East Carolina University. He has taught both middle and elementary health and physical education for 10 years in Asheville, NC, Ghana, and India. He has also spent time as a personal trainer, a diabetes counselor, and tobacco prevention coordinator.

Creating Heart Spaces for Learning: The brain science of mindfulness, compassion and learning: In the midst of competing demands on our time, attention, and capacity to care, how can we guide our students (and ourselves) toward the place where our “deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet?” This is an important process, as it is here we discover work that replenishes our spirit even as it serves others. When the speed of our lives causes us to overlook opportunities for joy, connection, and meaning we may rush past opportunities to meet the world’s needs, as well as our own. In our time together, we will focus on the foundation of service beyond the classroom - slowing down enough to notice what is needed, and to care for ourselves and others. During this workshop we will experience the effects of slowing down and noticing through experiential activities that can be shared with students.



Led by Lucy MacGregor: RCS lead preschool teacher, Rainbow Institute Mindfulness Consultant and Mindful Schools certified teacher

Resourcing for Bolstered Resiliency: Mindfulness of Mind and Body



Led by Sarah Shoemaker, Academic Director of the Black Mountain Academy and founder of Your Embodied Breath, a mindfulness based consultancy. Sarah has worked as an educator and school administrator through various schools, from public to clinical/residential, and maintains that whole-child wellness be a central consideration as we raise this generation of children. She is a Mindful Schools Certified educator, and is pursuing next steps in a career path in trauma-informed healing practices.

Holding the Space: How to integrate mindfulness into your community in a sustainable and intentional way: In this workshop we will explore how to design intentional communities of practice that will integrate mindfulness into your school.



Led by Lucy MacGregor: RCS lead preschool teacher, Rainbow Institute Mindfulness Consultant and Mindful Schools certified teacher

There is no mindfulness without the heart: Sufi perspectives on awareness, love and the message of unity: Parents, education and healthcare professionals most often conceive of mindfulness as essentially limited to a cognitive function of the brain. When deeply considered, mindfulness is actually seen to be just one aspect of a fully developed and enlivened heart. The spiritual tradition of Sufism carries profound insights into the nature and maturation of the heart psychologically and spiritually. Participants in this seminar will have the opportunity to experience some of the Sufi practices which bring healing, peace and divine connection to the heart.



Led by Dr. John Laird, founder of the Great Smokies Medical Center and Co-Founder of the Great Smokies Diagnostic Laboratory (now Genova Diagnostics). He practiced integrative and holistic medicine in the Asheville area for 17 years. Dr. Laird was responsible for the passage of landmark 1994 NC legislation legalizing the practice of alternative medical therapies and physicians. He has been a student of Sufism for forty years and currently directs the Shafiiy Institute of Health and Healing in Napa Valley, California.

The Art of Environmental Design in Holistic Education: Environmental design strives to create an ecology, or home, for learning where we imagine the whole, while understanding all levels of interaction from the largest to the smallest to support human health and growth. In designing educational spaces, every choice carries with it an awareness of its environmental impact on optimum learning in the school, the community, and the natural environment. Teachers and students respond continuously through the physical senses to their surroundings of light, color, shape, temperature, surface texture, sound, moisture, odor, and electromagnetic fields. Through neurological and physiological processing, we process this complex of sensory stimuli and react with the body and mind creating physical response, emotion, thought, transcendence, and more. In

this presentation, we will use the renovations and new construction at Rainbow Community School campus as a starting point and reference to learn about the environmental design approach for holistic educational facilities. We will review evolving technologies as well as simple solutions to improving the interior environment and its connection with the natural world outside. In the well designed school, teaching can more easily become a practice in art as the surrounding environment elevates all members of the school community with beauty and resources to create a living curriculum in their very midst. Art becomes a way of infusing matter with spirit.

Greg Olson is an environmental designer and educator by practice. He holds a PhD in Education from Duke University with a focus on facility planning and a dissertation entitled "Passive Solar Design for Energy Conservation in Schools". His studies included environmental effects on behavior and learning in the classroom. He has served as faculty at the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching. He has directed the Alternate Energy Technology Program at Southwestern Community College. He is also on the faculty at University of North Carolina at Asheville, teaching the course, "Environment, Design, and Solar Energy." Greg was also the design leader and project supervisor for the renovation of the Rainbow Community School campus in the late 1990's with the upgrading of the historical home and construction of the elementary classroom building incorporating passive solar design and radiant floor heating. Since the 1980's Greg has also designed over thirty environmental homes throughout the mountain region.

What If We All Just Led With Compassion? Exploring techniques that empower compassionate collaboration among teachers, families and students

In this workshop we will explore techniques that empower our families and students to collaborate with the classroom teacher and one another in order to create a nonjudgmental, welcoming climate and culture. We will also foster conversations that give rise to the benefits of facing one another with honesty and trust. Methodology will be explored theoretically and practically to embrace the "why" and "how" of mindful and empathetic interaction.



Led by Susie Robidoux: Susie Fahrer is a grade 4 teacher at Rainbow Community School and the Dean of Faculty. She has Elementary and Special Education degrees, which have allowed her to serve in various positions and multiple settings in her professional career. She is highly invested in holistic child-centered education and seeks to engage the Rainbow Seven Domains inside and outside of the classroom.

Led by Courtney Morrison: RCS Parent Council Representative and Compassionate Communication and Holistic Wellness Coach.

How does heart-centered education impact our own lives?: Participate in the kinds of experiential exercises that we do at Rainbow that are designed to open your heart, leading to healing and transformation. These exercises can impact, not only how you are with children, but also enrich your own life and your relationships with others. Ultimately, when we open and deepen our hearts, we carry and transmit more peace and love as we serve others.

Led by keynote speaker: Nura Laird

Character Strengths to Optimize Life Fulfillment : The workshop offers a hands on approach to identifying one's passion and character strengths and then creating a life that aligns with them. We will interactively explore that practical uses of positive psychology and other resources that engages us to optimize life fulfillment.



Led by R. Kamela Laird. Kamela founded Integrate Legacy Law with the commitment to guide her clients to identify their life purpose and then integrate that legacy into their lives in a way that makes a lasting difference. As an experienced communication and relationship coach, mediator, and spiritual counselor, Kamela integrates these skills with her legal training to provide a holistic approach to estate planning. She has a special knack for supporting clients through conversations with family members regarding end of life, incapacity, and guardianship. Kamela was raised in Asheville, North Carolina and is RCS alumni. She moved to California to attend Santa Clara University where she graduated as Valedictorian. Kamela loves sailing, scuba diving, salsa dancing, camping, and traveling to as many foreign destinations as possible. Kamela practices mindfulness and wholeheartedly believes in work-life balance.

The Sacred in Science: Science is a core subject in the learning journey of a child. But, science is also a way of knowing and science is sacred. This is a workshop that excerpts from science lessons those things that are already connected, common experiences. Through hands on demonstrations, together, we will seek to honor the interesting ways you already are a great teacher and an observant student of life. If, once in awhile, you get inspired - have fun - and see beauty in science, you are already celebrating the sacred.



Led by John Bickart. John is a 40 year veteran teacher of both children and adults. He is also an educational consultant. His goal as a teacher is to always hold space by working in the background while letting good ideas speak for themselves. He believes that teachers and students know what they want and that as students empower ourselves when we listen to our hearts. He believes in helping his students go through personal transformation above learning information. Professional offerings include: higher ed. pre-service teacher preparation, in-service teacher workshops, high/middle school science and math for youth at risk, science topics for incarcerated individuals, and educational software development.

Graphic Facilitation by Caryn Hanna



With a history of “loving meetings” -- for their collaborative and learning-rich content -- and identifying “teachable moments” in a myriad of situations, Caryn is enlivened by engaging with people and purpose through her practice of graphic facilitation. In addition to using reflective graphics to capture group conversation in real-time, Caryn prepares visuals for professionals to use to demonstrate talking points for their group presentations. She is passionate about contributing to the growth of social movements within her local community particularly in the realms of social justice, food and farming, and education. Caryn works as an independent contractor hired by an event coordinator, as partner to a group facilitator, or as a

member of a facilitation team. She works with local and national corporate and nonprofit organizations. Caryn's creative adventure extends beyond the boardroom to the wild playground of the rivers and forests in the mountains of Asheville, North Carolina.