

PARENT HANDBOOK 2008-2009

Rainbow Mountain Children's School
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MISSION STATEMENT

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.

VISION STATEMENT

RMCS is a strong, diverse learning community that manifests respect and responsibility among students, staff, and families. Drawing on our long history, we model educational leadership and innovation. We teach from a rich curriculum that is based upon the five-domains and multiple intelligence theory and that fosters essential life-long learning skills. We provide an emotionally safe setting in which students are challenged to reach developmentally appropriate academic goals. Our community works to support and retain the highest quality staff. We create and maintain physical space that meets the educational needs of our students and the practical needs of our entire community. It is with confidence, hope, joy, compassion, creative imagination, and leadership that RMCS students venture forth on their unique journeys to make a difference in the world.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Founded in 1977, Rainbow Mountain Children's School and Omega Program offers preschool, elementary and middle school education. Our sixth through eighth grade middle school program is called the Omega program. Our student population spans ages three through eighth grade. We are a community-centered school that seeks to nourish each child in five domains: mental, physical, emotional, social/moral and spiritual - using the multiple intelligence theory of Dr. Howard Gardner as a conceptual framework.

RMCS provides a holistic curriculum in an open classroom setting. Creativity, imagination, critical and divergent thinking, problem solving, as well as appreciating a world of various cultural and spiritual values, are central to our curriculum. Community service learning and multi-age classroom experiences are also an integral part of our curriculum.

Our teaching integrates disciplines presenting math, the sciences, social studies, art, movement, reading and writing into one unit of study. Additionally RMCS provides Spanish as a second language and music. Our low student - teacher ratio, about 12 to 1, allows us to nurture the individualization of each child.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The RMCS Board of Directors operates under the Carver Policy Governance Model .

Briefly, policy governance separates issues of an organization's purpose/mission ('Ends') from all other organizational/administrative issues ('Means'). In other words, the Board is responsible for cradling the RMCS Vision ('Ends') and the Executive Director is exclusively responsible for all matters involved in the *operation and management* of the school ('Means'). Most importantly, policy governance creates alignment between the Board, the Executive Director and the school's 'Owners' who are defined as staff, students, families and other members of the RMCS community.

The Board prioritizes systematic connection with 'Owners' in order to ascertain their values about our school's purpose. The Board also creates written policies in four areas: Board Governance; Board-Director Relationship; Executive Limitations; and Board Ends. (A copy of all the current policies is

kept in the School office.) To assure accomplishment of RMCS's vision and purpose the Board continuously evaluates its written policies and rigorously monitors their reasonable implementation by the Executive Director.

THE STAFF

Executive Director: Hired by the Board of Directors, the E.D. is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the school's mission, policies and operations. The E.D. makes decisions about operating budgets, supplies and materials, staffing and professional development, as well as coordinating admissions, community outreach and school publicity. Parents with questions, concerns, ideas and comments are invited to communicate directly with the E.D. on Wednesdays by drop-in and other days by appointment.

Business Manager: Assists the Director in day-to-day financial operations of the school. The Business Manager handles accounts receivable and is responsible for communications to parents regarding the status of their accounts with the school. Any questions regarding tuition payments or other accounts with the school may be addressed to the Business Manager. The business manager also handles facilities issues, shipping and receiving, and safety.

Administrative Assistant and Office Assistants: Assists the Director with admissions, special events, communications, volunteer coordination, marketing, and student records and handles daily office operations, including assisting parents and staff with office needs.

Maintenance staff: We have one part-time maintenance staff member, and a full time custodian. If you have a maintenance request, please complete a written request in the office.

Faculty: Visit the RMCS website (www.rmcs.org) to read faculty biographies for our regular and specialist teachers.

THE RAINBOW MOUNTAIN FOUNDATION

The Rainbow Mountain Foundation is an independent non-profit organization consisting of people who are dedicated to providing resources that make it possible for our school community to realize its mission. RMCS tries to keep tuition low enough to encourage economic diversity at the school. Like most private schools, the RMCS tuition does not cover all the operating expenses of the school. The true cost of educating your child is much higher. The Rainbow Mountain Foundation asks parents to contribute generously to close the gap between the total cost of educating your child and operating expenses. Your donations to the Foundation provide the funds necessary to further nurture the discovery, enjoyment and development of the unique gifts of each student.

We invite you to help strengthen our educational community by giving to the Foundation's Annual Fund Drive each fall. Nearly 100% of contributions go toward enhancing our children's daily educational experience by providing classroom and curriculum materials, funding for visiting artists, and tuition assistance, to name just a few.

It is our hope that every RMCS family will make an intentional commitment to our annual fundraising campaign for the benefit of all our wonderful children and gifted teachers. Your generosity will enrich your child's learning experience and gratify your heart.

TUITION AND FEES

Tuition: The monthly installments of yearly tuition are due on the first of each month regardless of holidays, breaks or vacations. There is a grace period of five business days after the first of the month. If a monthly installment is not received during the five-day grace period, a late fee of 5% of the monthly payment due will be assessed. An additional 2% late fee will be added to the total outstanding balance, including all accrued interest, when a payment is 30 days late. An additional 2% late fee will be added to the total outstanding balance, including all accrued interest, every month thereafter.

You may bring your payment to the office or leave it in any classroom's "Office" mailbox slot.

To propose an exception to the fee schedule, a parent must make arrangements with the RMCS Finance Committee Chairperson by writing a letter of explanation with an alternative payment plan to the Finance Committee.

AFTER 60 DAYS OF NO PAYMENTS OR PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS, THE STUDENT(S) WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO ATTEND CLASS UNTIL THE TOTAL AMOUNT DUE, INCLUDING INTEREST, IS PAID IN FULL.

Tom Sawyer Days and Tom Sawyer Fees: RMCS uses quarterly Tom Sawyer Days, usually a Saturday from about 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., as a means to nurture both community building and the physical plant of our school. It's an opportunity for us to set a positive, community-oriented example for our children. The annual \$200 Tom Sawyer Day Fee is due from each family upon enrollment for each academic year. A \$10 credit for every hour worked (up to 20 hours total) on a Tom Sawyer Days is applied to your last billing of the academic year. You may also receive one hour credit by signing up *prior to Tom Sawyer Day* to bring a pot luck dish for the day. Please sign in and out on the Tom Sawyer Days you attend in order to receive credit for your time.

Alternative Tom Sawyer Credit: In some cases, the director may pre-approve Tom Sawyer credit for volunteer work outside of Tom Sawyer Days. Helping prepare classrooms during the summer, volunteering in the office, maintenance work, and professional help may be included, but please seek approval from the director beforehand. *It is important that you turn in your Tom Sawyer hours to Margaret Gerleve, the business manager, so the credit is applied to your bill.* Remember, however, that Tom Sawyer Days are an important way for the community to work together in a "barn-raising" type of event. Even if you have completed your Tom Sawyer hours, we encourage you to participate in Tom Sawyer Days.

Before and After-School Program Fees: You may choose to be billed on an hourly basis or on a flat fee basis for before-school and after-school care. The hourly fee is \$4.00 per hour for preschool and \$5.00 per hour for K-8, billable on a quarterly hour basis of \$ 1.00 per quarter hour for preschool or \$1.25 per quarter hour for K-8. The flat fee for preschool students is \$200 per month; \$250 for K-8 students per month - for maximum use of the school from 7:45 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

There is a fee grace period during transition times (15 minutes before and after class start and end times) if your child is either delivered or picked up then. **The school closes at 6:00 p.m. sharp.** There is a fee of \$16.00 (per child, per occurrence) charged to anyone picking his or her child up after 6:00 p.m. The flat fee is billed on the first of the month, and payment is due with that month's tuition. The hourly rate is billed retroactively at the end of the month for the amount of time used in the before-school and after-school programs, and payment is due with the next month's tuition.

Other Fees: Most consumable materials, such as workbooks are billed to parents. Also, from time to time, teachers will request parents buy particular books, materials, a special service, or pay for an upcoming field trip. The teacher will notify parents of the cost and parents will be billed the following month, unless they prefer to make the purchase/pay the fee directly beforehand.

THE SCHOOL DAY

| | |
|---|--|
| <u>Preschool</u> | 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. |
| <u>Kindergarten</u> | 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. |
| <u>1st Grade</u> | 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. |
| <u>2nd, 3rd, 4th & 5th Grades</u> | 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. |
| <u>6th, 7th & 8th Grades</u> | 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. |
| <u>Before & After-School</u> | 7:45 – 9 :00 a.m. and 2:00 - 6:00 p.m. |
| <u>Office Hours</u> | 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. |

Start times are not guidelines (or arrival times), they are *start* times. Centering, an important part of the spiritual curriculum, is at the beginning of the day in most classrooms. Please show respect for the teachers, fellow classmates, and the spiritual curriculum by arriving on time every day. Timeliness also sets an example for your child, demonstrating courteousness for others.

Note: Some teachers may have earlier arrival requirements than noted above in order to allow transition and organizational time before centering.

SNOW DAYS AND POOR WEATHER CONDITIONS

Generally we try to remain open on snow days, but if conditions are truly hazardous then we will close. We will announce any school closing due to bad weather by 7:00 a.m. on WLOS Channel 13 TV, WCQS 88.1 FM, WWNC 570 AM, and KISS 99.9 FM. This information is on our website. If school closes early, the administrative assistant will send a broadcast email to all parents.

PARKING AND DRIVEWAY USE

To ensure the safety of our children and all members of the RMCS community, it is of utmost importance that we all think safety and courtesy when using the parking lot and follow the signs year-round. Please watch out for others, drive slowly and hold the hands of very young children. **Due to a dangerous blind corner on our 2-story building, you may not drive from the lower parking lot up the drive to the upper parking lot.** When the lot is congested during peak arrival and departure times, you may need to use street parking on either State or Haywood streets.

ARRIVAL

All children in third grade and under should be escorted by an adult to the appropriate room.

Before-School Program: Students should report to the Multi-Purpose Room and check in.

When Going Straight to Classrooms: Preschool and Kindergarten students enter through the playground gate by the Butterfly House. First, second, third and fifth graders enter via the wooden deck off the upper parking lot near Haywood Road. Fourth graders enter through the main front double doors on the historical building. Omega students enter through the pink door on the deck that's to the left of the wall mosaic.

DEPARTURE

Children who are not picked up at the end of the school day directly from their classrooms will be escorted to the After-School program, located in the Multi-Purpose Room and/or on the playground. Please notify your child's teacher or After School if someone other than you will be picking up your child. Make sure that a list of people who can pick up your child (in addition to legal parents and guardians) is on file in the school office. If someone who is not on the list will be picking up your child, they will only be allowed to do so if you have notified the teacher or After-School in advance, preferably in writing. Anyone picking up students must provide a photo ID. RMCS teachers and staff are not responsible for the care of your child once you have signed them out from school.

BEFORE AND AFTER-SCHOOL CARE

For families needing care for their children outside normal school hours, RMCS offers before-school supervision and an after-school program. The after-school program is designed to be primarily unstructured play time, where children are outside, using their imagination, and socializing. RMCS believes that such "backyard" play is an important part of childhood development. The after school program also offers directed activities, games, and study time. Occasionally, we may offer some special activities for an additional fee. For regular After-School fees, see the Tuition and Fees Section.

PLEASE SIGN YOUR CHILD IN AND OUT UPON ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE FROM BEFORE-SCHOOL AND AFTER-SCHOOL. FOR THE SAFETY OF THE CHILDREN, IT IS NECESSARY THAT PARENTS CHECK OUT WITH AN AFTER-SCHOOL TEACHER UPON DEPARTURE.

PARENT VISITS

Any parent may visit their child at school at any time unless restrained by court order. Please inform the teacher before a visit that is intended to be more than a quick stop-in.

We invite and encourage parents to participate with their child's class in our numerous school celebrations, special events, programs, and field trips. In all situations, the teacher is responsible for classroom activity and is authorized to make decisions and direct classroom activities based on her/his professional judgment.

CELEBRATIONS and COMMUNITY EVENTS

Rainbow Mountain Children's School and Omega Program embrace diversity. We therefore celebrate holidays of many of the world's cultures and study about families in many different countries. We also observe the

holidays of the world's major religions in various ways during the school year, and seek to affirm the universal values and commonality among these traditions.

Your child may come home singing a song in another language, or having eaten a certain holiday food or celebrated a custom unfamiliar to many of us. In this way, our students learn to celebrate and enjoy diversity, perceive the universality of the human spirit and to nurture the understanding that various human cultures complement one another.

RMCS ANNUAL EVENTS

Autumn Equinox, Winter Solstice, and Spring Equinox: On the day of the changing of the season, there is a school-wide gathering to celebrate the arrival of the next season. This usually includes a ceremony followed by a craft or activity.

Halloween: All children, staff and parents are encouraged to dress in costume. There will be a parade in the morning followed by trick or treating at each classroom door. The parents in each classroom provide the non-sugar treats (small toys, etc.) for their class, which are given to each classroom to distribute. See your class parents to contribute an item. The Omega class creates a haunted house each year; children enter only if they wish and can go through with the lights on first if they prefer. Don't miss it!

El Dia de los Muertos: Around November 1st, there is a school-wide celebration to remember and honor loved ones that have passed away.

May Day: On May 1st we celebrate the coming of spring with a May Festival including a maypole, fairy costumes, and strawberries and cream. Join us!

Class-Sponsored Events: Each month a different class will sponsor an event outside of school hours to give our community a chance to gather and spend time together. Facilitated through Parent Council, these are announced on a monthly basis when the sponsoring class decides on the venue. Popular gatherings have been roller skating, picnics, magic shows, and more!

Book Fair: Each year RMCS sponsors a book fair at which you have the opportunity to purchase quality books as a fundraiser for RMCS. This is also an opportunity to volunteer!

Holiday Program: Each class is involved in developing and performing in our holiday program. Crafts made by the children of each class are sold before and after the event as fundraisers.

Staff Appreciation: Each year the Parent Council organizes a way to thank the staff for their commitment to our children. This usually involves providing a meal where we serve the staff, and they can gather to eat together. Each classroom gives a special gift from the children, often handmade.

Graduation: Every child is recognized each year at graduation and will receive a certificate of recognition, with a special focus on the departing 8th grade students. Please join us for this joyous event!

Spring Carnival: Each year, usually in mid- to late-April, RMCS hosts a Spring Carnival. This fundraiser is truly fun, with each class sponsoring a booth. The Carnival committee begins work on the event in February. This year, first grade parent, Jenny Hatcher, is the carnival committee head. Please contact her if you would like to volunteer for this important fundraising community event.

Gourmega: Twice a year, the Omega class hosts Gourmega. At this important fundraiser, a fine meal is served by Omega students. Wine is available (served by an adult) by donation.

Other Fundraising Events: The school plans fundraisers to help offset the cost of tuition, and to provide special services. This year, we are planning a large auction to be held around Valentines. It will take many, dedicated volunteers to make this a memorable, successful event. If you would like to volunteer, planning will begin in October.

Note on Alcohol at School Events: Although it is infrequent, RMCS does occasionally allow a *limited* amount of alcoholic drinks at some events, particularly fundraisers, such as Gourmega. In RMCS's long history we have never experienced any disrespect of this privilege.

2008-2009 SCHOOL CALENDAR

August 2008

- 15 Last Day Summer Preschool
- 16 Tom Sawyer Work Day
- 18 Teacher Orientation Meetings
- 19-20 Staff Retreat
- 21 Board Meeting 4:00 pm
- 22 Teacher Training
- 25 Mandatory Parent Meeting for K-8
5:30 pm (and Teacher Work Day)
- 26 Mandatory Parent Meeting for
Preschool 5:30 pm (and Teacher
Work Day)
- 27 First day of school for all ages

September

- 1 No School: Labor Day
- 11-12 No School: Listening Conferences
- 18 Board Meeting 4:00 pm
- 20 Tom Sawyer Work Day
- 26 K-8 Closed for Teacher Training
(Preschool Open)
- 29 Testing Week begins (3rd – 8th)

October

- 9 School Picture Day
- 10 K-8 Closed for Teacher Training
(Preschool open)
- 16 Board Meeting 4:00 pm
- 16-17 No School: Fall Break
- 25 Tom Sawyer Work Day

November

- 7 Half day – School closes at 12:00

pm (Teacher Training in the afternoon)
8 Teacher Training
12 School Picture Make-up Day
14 No School: Parent Conferences
17 No School: Parent Conferences

November, continued

20 Board Meeting 4:00 pm
26-28 No School: Thanksgiving Break

December

12 Holiday Program (*Tentative*)
19 K-8 Closed for Teacher Training
(Preschool open)
18 Board Meeting
22 No School: Winter Holiday Begins

January 2009

2 Teacher Work Day
5 School Resumes for all students
15 Board Meeting 4:00 pm
19 No School: MLK Day Holiday

February

19 Board Meeting 4:00 pm
27 K-8 Closed for Teacher Training
(Preschool open)

March

6 No School: Teacher Work Day
16-17 No School: Student-Led
Conferences
19 Board Meeting 4:00 pm

April

4 Tom Sawyer Work Day
13-17 No School: Spring Break
16 Board Meeting 4:00 pm

May

1 May Day Celebration
2 Spring Carnival
15 No School: Teacher Work Day
21 Board Meeting 4:00 pm
22 No School: Parent Conferences
25 No School: Memorial Day

28 No School: Parent Conferences
29 Last Day of Classes and Graduation

June

1-2 Teacher Work Days
9 Summer Preschool Begins

GENERAL POLICIES

CONFERENCES: Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled four times a year; please consult the school calendar. RMCS tries to schedule a full two days off school for each conference cycle, so that parents have ample time to spend with the teacher.

Listening Conference: The first of these is a listening conference, at which the teacher is there to listen to the parent/caregiver discuss their child, and to have questions answered about the classroom and curriculum. (Really, every conference is a listening conference, as the teacher wants to hear your observations, questions, and concerns.)

November Parent Conference: At the November conference, parents will receive an assessment report, their child's standardized test results, and discuss the child in regards to the five domains.

Student-led Conference: In March students will present their portfolio to their parents, with guidance from the teacher, as needed. By this time of year, students should be able to express aspects of their learning style, their strengths in the multiple intelligences, as well as their challenges.

Spring Conference: At the end of the year, parents and teacher will meet again, to summarize the year, decide on a placement for the next school year, and discuss any areas the child could benefit from summer attention.

APPOINTMENTS WITH TEACHERS: Appointments with teachers may be scheduled throughout the year as necessary. Most teachers may not be available for impromptu meetings/discussions at arrival times (other than a quick message), as they are preparing for class. Some may also not be available at departure times, especially when they have after school meetings to attend. Please ask your child's teacher about his/her available times when he/she can truly be present, and not distracted, when speaking with you.

APPOINTMENTS WITH THE DIRECTOR: Wednesdays are Parent Day. The Director will be available for parent conferences or phone calls with or without an appointment all day on Wednesdays. Appointments usually run for about 20 minutes. If another day is needed for an appointment, they may be scheduled with the director.

EMERGENCIES: All RMCS teachers have First Aid and CPR training, which is routinely updated. In the event of an emergency with your child, the school will first try to contact you, the parent, and then, if necessary, the back-up contacts you noted on the emergency form. If the emergency requires immediate medical care, we will call for an ambulance while we are contacting you. Throughout the year, please notify the school office of any phone number changes for you or your emergency contacts (including work and cell phone numbers).

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Because the RMCS curriculum is not textbook driven but is experiential and hands-on in orientation, regular student attendance is critical. And, in order to respect both teachers and classmates, we require students to arrive on time.

It is considered a serious academic and social setback to be absent for 15 or more days per academic year or 10 days during a single evaluation period. If a student is absent more than 10 days in a time period, a meeting would be scheduled between parents, teacher, and the Executive Director to discuss the student's absenteeism, his/her academic progress, and plan for that student's continued success.

Under certain circumstances, an exception to the absentee policy may be formally agreed upon between parents, teacher, and the Executive Director, if worked out in advance.

In all cases of absenteeism, payment of tuition to RMCS must stay current.

APPROPRIATE DRESS: Rainbow Mountain Children's School and the Omega Program encourage individual expression. Therefore we do not have uniforms or a strict dress code. However, in response to parent and faculty request, we enforce a dress code that respects the safety and consideration of all people in our community, including the very young and elders. As a community-oriented school, the faculty feels the dress code helps children and families remember that there is always a delicate balance between individual expression and communal needs. We feel that student dress should be comfortable, appropriate for outdoor activities, refrain from anything that would offend others or make others uncomfortable, and support the mission of the school.

Please do not allow your child to wear:

- Heels, sandals, or shoes that are not PE or playground compatible
- Skirts or shorts that do not allow the child to sit cross-legged on the floor without being revealing
- Clothing that reveals the body's midriff or underwear
- Tops that have a neckline below the middle of the sternum
- Printed phrases, logos or other makeup or accessories that do not support the mission of the school

The school will keep some large T-shirts on hand and sweat pants for children to change into if the clothes they arrive in do not meet the dress code. Please make sure your child has a pair of tennis shoes at school.

Outdoor gear: We go outside in most weather, so please send your child appropriately dressed on cold and/or rainy days: hats, mittens, scarves, warm coats, etc. Please mark your child's name on each item.

FIELD TRIPS AND TRANSPORTATION:

Field trips are an integral part of the curriculum at RMCS because they expose students to many new experiences and environments. Outdoor learning opportunities are common. You will be asked to sign a form granting blanket permission for your child to take field trips all year. If your child cannot go on a field trip, that child will be able to stay at school and will be adequately supervised.

Cost: Most field trips do require a fee, but often times the children and families conduct fund-raising to pay all or part of the field trip cost.

Safety: Successful field trips depend largely on parent drivers and chaperones, so when possible, please plan to participate in your child's class field trips. Drivers must:

- Be over 21 years of age
- Carry sufficient insurance
- Have a safe driving record
- Submit a copy of their drivers license to the business manager for a violations check

North Carolina Child Restraint Law, Effective January 1, 2005:

- All children less than 16 years of age must be buckled up in both the front and back seats.
- A child who is younger than age 8 or who weighs less than 80 pounds must be secured in a child restraint.
- To meet the law, use a belt-positioning booster for children 40 to 80 pounds.
- If no seating position is equipped with a lap and shoulder belt, a child less than age 8 or 80 pounds must be restrained in a properly fitted lap belt only.
- Warning: Belt-positioning boosters must NEVER be used with just a lap belt.

Parent expectations: Check with your child's teachers about their expectations of chaperones for class trips. Parents or other adults who chaperone a trip are acting in a teaching assistant capacity and are expected to follow the same guidelines as staff.

FOOD GUIDELINES: We are committed to whole, unrefined, natural foods as much as possible. Our nutrition policy is important to us because we feel strongly that good food benefits the children's health and positively influences the children's energy while at school. Children should be sent to school with a lunch and a snack (two snacks if they will be attending After-School). Preschool students may not have any glass containers, and they must have their own utensils. We request that any food sent with the children be wholesome and nutritious. We ask that all foods that are essentially sugar items, with little nutritional value (i.e. sodas, commercial cookies, candy bars, cup cakes with filling & icing, etc.) not be sent to school. On special occasions, with the classroom teacher's consent, a party may be held at the school and, at such events, sugar items are permissible. Please first check with the teacher beforehand and be willing to bring the same item for each child in the class (plus a sugar substitute item for each child who cannot eat sugar).

Lunch: All students must bring a nutritional lunch. Please check with your teacher to find out if a microwave is available. Some teachers do allow a 30 second microwave warm-up per lunch, others request that warm food arrive in a thermos. Occasionally a class may provide pizza or another lunch item for sale as a fund-raiser.

Morning Snack: Each mid-morning our class schedules include a time for a fruit or other nutritious snack that children bring from home. **Again, candy of any kind and soft drinks are not appropriate in lunches or snacks.**

After-School Snack: A nutritious snack is also scheduled for 3:15pm (3:35pm for middle school students) for children attending the After-School program. **If your child attends After-School, please send two nutritious snacks per day to school.**

HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS: Children should be kept home from school if they are feverish; have dark, mucousy noses; if they had a fever or threw up during the previous night; or if they show signs of becoming sick. We realize that this is difficult for working parents, but sick children do not belong in school. Our teachers are requested to send any child home that arrives at school with signs of illness or develops them during the school day. *Please wait 24 hours after the last fever before sending your child back to school.* Please notify your child's classroom teacher in the morning if your child will be absent. Please notify the school office if your child has a highly communicative illness.

IMMUNIZATIONS

NC Immunization Law (G.S. 130A-155) requires all schools and day care facilities to have on file a record of each child's immunization record. Within 30 days of the first day of your child's attendance at RMCS, you must provide the school office with *any one of the following:*

1. a copy of your child's shot record from your child's doctor or the county health department
2. a completed Immunization History form (*available from the school office*)
3. a completed Religious Exemption form (*available from the school office*)

Failure to comply with this law is grounds for student dismissal.

ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICINE: Parents must fill out a medical permission form in order for a staff member to give medicine to a child. This form must give date, time of administration, and dosage. If it is a prescribed drug, the doctor's prescription must be affixed to the medicine and staff will, at all times, follow the doctor's prescription -- even if the parent is requesting something different. Your child's name must be indelibly written on the medicine, and the medicine must be taken home at the end of the day.

CUBBIES AND LINENS: Each child's cubby should be cleaned out regularly. Preschool parents: please take your child's nap-time linen home to wash at the end of each week and return it the first day of the following week. If a child does not come to school with clean linen, the school will temporarily provide it. The parent will be expected to wash and return the school's linen as well as to bring a fresh set of their own for their child.

For preschoolers, please bring one change of clothes to leave at school.

Please label all clothing, lunch boxes and recyclable containers.

LOST AND FOUND: Lost and found items will be kept in the Multi-Purpose Room for a limited time. Items not claimed will be donated to charity at various times throughout the year.

PHONE CALLS:

After office hours, the after-school staff will answer the phone if possible, or messages can be left on the voice mail system. Please check with your child's teacher for the best time to call if you need to reach your child or your child's teacher during the day. We do not interrupt class time for phone calls. Messages may be left in a teacher's voice mailbox.

CELL PHONE USE AND COURTESY: To ensure a wholesome educational environment for all RMCS students and a productive work environment for all RMCS staff, please follow these community guidelines for cell phone use while on campus:

- Remind your children that RMCS students are not allowed to use cell phones while on campus
- Take & make cell phone calls outside all school buildings (classrooms, offices, Multi-Purpose Room)
- Use cell phones away from all open campus building doors and windows; sound travels
- Please ensure that your cell phone will not ring during RMCS events, meetings, gatherings, etc.
- When possible, please offer to return incoming cell phone calls after you leave the RMCS campus
- **Our playground is a "cell phone free zone."**

PRESS / PHOTO RELEASES: Occasionally a newspaper or television station wishes to do a story and take a few pictures of RMCS children involving one of our field trips or an activity at school. We also use photos and articles about student activities and accomplishments on the school website and RMCS publications. You will be asked to sign a press release / photo release form, which will be one of the initial forms you will be given upon your child's admission to RMCS. If you choose to not sign the form, or if after signing it you change your mind, your desire will be honored. In that case, your child's picture may still appear on materials that have already been designed and printed, but his/her image will no longer be used on new materials.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE POLICY

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE PHILOSOPHY

The discipline policy at Rainbow Mountain Children's School is consistent with the educational philosophy of the institution and is based on Positive Discipline by Jane Nelsen, Ed.D. It safeguards each member of the school community and furthers the mental, emotional, physical, social/moral, and spiritual domains of our curriculum. Essentially, our discipline approach is not just to keep students "behaving" so the teacher can teach. It is an important part of the curriculum -- helping students learn how to work together, respect their community, and to be mindful of the needs of others.

To this end, each student shall conduct him/herself in a manner that supports the general learning environment, respects the right of all to live and learn in a physically and emotionally safe atmosphere, develops independent and collaborative learning skills, supports the development of problem solving skills, and generally upholds the noblest aspects of the human spirit.

PRESCHOOL DISCIPLINE

The North Carolina Day Care Licensing Rules require that we keep in your child's file a signed statement by you attesting that our discipline practices have been shared with you and that you understand that they exclude all forms of corporal punishment; discipline related to food, rest or toileting; and discipline delegated to another child. Our method of discipline, which we consider energy or behavior management, generally follows these steps:

1. Guidelines/rules are discussed as a class.
2. Energy is redirected. We redirect a child's activity to another center where the energy is more appropriate, i.e. sand, water, clay, hammering, Playdough.
3. Reminders are given.
4. Problems are discussed. We discuss a problem with the child or group rationally and try to think of solutions together and examine their possible effects. Calming techniques are discussed and practiced.
5. Warnings with consequences are given if behavior persists. Consequences to fit the behavior, i.e. asked to sit "out of community" when the behavior is disruptive. This is done in a neutral fashion, and the child sits in view of the teacher, in a part of the room where the group is playing. A child is never left alone when he/she is having behavioral difficulties. "Sitting out" is not used to punish or humiliate, but rather to allow time to change the child's energy pattern and to think about things. Calming techniques are often practiced to help change the energy. A child may be asked to put work away if playing disrespectfully.
6. There are times when a child's energy is such that he/she is not able to cope with his/her feelings alone, or is simply not able to sit alone by him/herself for a minute. In such instances, where one-to-

one intervention is necessary, another staff member may be asked to intervene and give the child extra attention until he/she is able to re-enter group activity.

Generally, our environment and activities are designed in such a way as to avoid the need for disciplinary measures. Our faculty is trained to use early intervention, to help shape the classroom atmosphere toward a happy, harmonious, playful one. Faculty give the children lots of positive feedback and affection, and vary the rhythm of activity during the day to provide for successful experiences. The staff offers a variety of materials to work with in order that extra energy can be vented naturally. In cases of discord, children learn to say to each other how they feel *and* to listen carefully to each other's feelings. This facilitates their solving their own problems instead of a teacher solving it for them. Children are taught to consider each other's feelings and are given lots of positive strokes for caring behaviors.

Protocol for Aggressive Acts and Sexual Experimentation:

Whenever a child performs an aggressive act toward another, toward him/herself, or toward school property, that child's parent will be informed of the act, the conditions preceding it, and the consequences of it. This is not to suggest that the child should be in any manner punished by the parent. It is simply a way to develop a tracking procedure with the parent's understanding and participation. If such acts persist, by tracking them we may be able to develop a care plan with the parent that successfully resolves the situation. RMCS is dedicated to maintain a safe and healthy learning environment. Our goal is to teach each child social skills that foster such an environment. If we are unable, after a period of careful intervention, to maintain this type of environment due to the behavior of a certain child, that child's parents will be asked to school her or him elsewhere.

It is natural and normal for children between the ages of three to five to be interested in sexual differences. There may be a period of "you show me yours and I'll show you mine" activity. Whenever this occurs, the parent will be informed on the day it occurs. We do not feel it is appropriate for a parent to punish a child for this type of behavior. Again, we see it as natural and normal. But we do feel that it is probably the time for a parent to discuss body parts and appropriate social customs with the child. If such activity persists, the school director will discuss with the parent possible care plans to help the child move on to other, more socially appropriate activities.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND THE OMEGA MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM

Context: We want teachers and students to enjoy a diverse, stimulating, and mutually supportive learning environment that celebrates collaborative as well as individual achievements, is essentially noncompetitive, and enables each student to function at his or her optimum level. We support every student in managing the rights and responsibilities appropriate to his or her level of maturity as a self-motivated, life-long learner. During the first few weeks of each academic year the teachers and the students of each class shall work on developing strong team-building skills and creating a creative, mutually supportive, democratic classroom - a learning culture that nurtures and explicates the educational philosophy of Rainbow Mountain Children's School.

Method: Within this context, the needs of both teachers and students shall be assessed and supported through democratic processes. During the first few weeks of each academic year, teachers and students together will explore not only the needs of the teachers and students but also the characteristics of a successful teacher and those of a successful student. Each class will post its agreements and share them with the students' parents. These needs and characteristics will be

revisited regularly, and the establishing of them should be a living, ongoing process. The teachers shall determine the “bottom line” ground rules of classroom behavior. Possible consequences, with time limits for meeting expectations, shall be noted.

Classroom Meetings: During the first week of school, each class shall decide when and how often it wants to hold classroom meetings. In addition to covering routine classroom business, these meetings should serve as a forum for students and teachers to discuss problems that arise and to reassess individual and class needs. Each classroom will also have A method, such as a suggestion box, for students to request classroom meeting agenda issues, so those students who are uncomfortable voicing a concern in a meeting can be heard. Of course, classroom meetings and the suggestion box are also be used to offer positive comments about the behavior of a classmate or teacher!

If a problem can't be resolved at the classroom meeting, teachers may suggest mediation. Whatever the venue, teachers should always enable students to explore their feelings in a safe environment; at times, a private rather than public setting may be preferable.

Chronic Disruptive, Defiant, or Disrespectful Behavior: A teacher may ask the Executive Director to call a teacher-parent-director meeting to discuss a student's chronic disruptive classroom behavior. After reviewing all dated and signed incident reports and any other written records the teacher provides for the parents on the student's behavioral history (copies of which must be delivered by the teacher to the student's parent(s) in a timely fashion), and after some classroom observation by the Executive Director or by someone delegated by the Executive Director, s/he may decide to convene such a meeting. If it seems appropriate, the student shall also be invited to this meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to establish an action plan that the teacher(s), the parent(s), the Executive Director, and the student deem both appropriate and effective in addressing the noted behavior.

A second meeting is scheduled (usually within two weeks of the first meeting) to further assess the situation and the effectiveness of approaches implemented after the first meeting. If, at that time, the behavior has not been corrected, then the student and the parents must be given an additional agreed-upon period to demonstrate the desire and ability to correct the behavior in question. If that is not demonstrated during this additional period, then the student will be dismissed from the RMCS campus for a specific period of time or for the remainder of the school year by the RMCS Executive Director. If the students are dismissed for the remainder of the school year, the student may be re-admitted to the school the following academic year with the approval of both the Executive Director and the teacher to whom the student will be assigned.

Removal From Class Or Dismissal From School/Suspension: Any student who demonstrates an unwillingness to respect the needs of others, presents an immediate physical or emotional threat to others, or refuses to uphold the established ground rules of classroom behavior, may be excused from the class by the teacher. If the student's behavior is destructive of the body or property of self or of others, he or she may be dismissed from the RMCS campus for a specific period of time or permanently by the RMCS Executive Director. The Director shall notify the parents with the following information:

1. A statement of what the child was accused of doing and the basis of the allegations.
2. A request for a meeting with the parents/guardians.

STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROTOCOL

Any student may submit to the Executive Director a request for mediation if s/he feels unjustly treated by a teacher or has an unresolved issue with that teacher. After reviewing the situation, the Executive Director must either provide the requested mediation or personally explain to the student why it will not be provided.

PARENT CONDUCT

As the adult leaders of our community, RMCS faculty, staff members, and parents should model cooperative conduct in all situations. We also urge all parents and other adult members of our educational community to understand and support the philosophy and methods of our discipline policy, the essential goal of which is to resolve conflict by educational rather than punitive means, using democratic processes which support the inherent dignity and rights of every individual.

If any member of the RMCS community shows repeated disrespect towards other members of our community, including the use of abusive language or gestures toward a child, teacher or staff member, and/or an unwillingness to mediate a solution or to resolve a conflict situation using the respectful steps outlined below, RMCS reserves the right to ask the family in question to leave the school and terminate that family's contracts with RMCS.

COMMUNICATION WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY

Parental responsibility to receive communication:

Parents are expected to receive, read, and respond to all communication from the school.

Parents will be assigned a mailbox in their child's classroom. We ask you to check your mailbox and your child's cubby regularly, at least weekly.

Much of the communication within your classroom and from the administration will be done by email. Please let your teacher, class parent and the Office know if you need to use another form of communication. Also, please check the roster to make sure your address, phone numbers and email address are current.

Other sources of information parents are responsible for checking:

- Glass bulletin boards next to green Preschool door and on upper deck outside of Media Center
- RMCS web site (www.rmcs.org): This is a great source of overall information about the school, including an updated school calendar. As an informed parent, please be familiar with its contents.

Office Mailboxes: There is an office mailbox in each classroom and in the Computer Room/ Media Center. Tuition checks and messages for the executive director, business manager and administrative assistant may be left in one of these mailboxes. All faculty have a mailbox in their classrooms, and all staff have a personalized mailbox in the Computer Room / Media Center.

PROCESS FOR PARENT CONCERNS

Creating a positive culture of communication: As a community oriented school, it is essential that the adults in the community model the cooperative, compassionate communication we want our children to imitate. In the recent past, RMCS has been fortunate to foster a positive culture, where adults in the community are mindful of

their communication. Generally, RMCS adults are aware of the toxic culture that can result from habitual negative communication, and conscious about how to foster a functional community.

In the spirit of Rainbow, we know it isn't healthy for people to push away their concerns and unmet desires, but that it is necessary to *move through them*. The conflict resolution process below is designed to help us all recognize our needs and to move through them toward resolution... while treating people respectfully *and* keeping things in perspective. Although we may not, individually, always get *exactly* what we want; as a community we increase our health and happiness (which, ultimately, brings the best kind of individual satisfaction.) The intended result is the gratification of feeling understood, while continuing to grow as humans. It is life-long learning at its fullest.

The Conflict Resolution Process

Please take a minute to read these recommendations regarding the steps to conflict resolution. We want to hear from you as we are committed to making RMCS a community where needs are addressed in a clear and respectful way. After all, a problem cannot be fixed if school personnel are not aware of the problem or if they don't understand that a particular situation, policy, or action is/was considered a problem or concern to you or the community. Ultimately, the process establishes Trust.

The Process: *

1. Identify and define the conflict
 - a. Recognize that conflict is a normal part of the human condition, and does not make you weak or wrong. To recognize our feelings, and to directly confront the person with whom we have a conflict, requires courage.
 - b. What really is the problem? Can you identify the problem without blaming the other person or group? Think in terms of "I want....I need....I feel....," rather than "You did this, or "You didn't do that." Be aware of your true feelings and the feeling of others.
2. Find a safe way to vent your feelings without damaging the community. Feelings strongly influence our behavior, and they need validation. It is human, with our need to validate our feelings or to simply think them through, to spread the problem to others, which often creates stronger feelings and moves things beyond perspective. When possible, we recommend that you work directly with your child's teacher (or applicable person) if you have concerns or needs that involve the teacher or a classroom situation. This way, you work with the person who has the ability to solve the problem.

Note: In a school community, many conflicts are resolved after the first two steps. When a conflict or concern is shared directly with the teacher or leader, often a miscommunication, misinformation, missing information, or a misunderstanding come to light. If this is the case, most likely it can easily be resolved (if it hasn't spread among too many people).

3. If you feel a need for further resolution (after going through this process) or the concern involves RMCS as a community, you may make an appointment with the Executive Director.

Written Concerns: If you would like the concern documented, please write a letter to the director stating the concern *and* stating your needs and proposed solutions. If you need mediation between you and the teacher, the executive director will help you. If you choose to, or if you are asked to write down your concern, we encourage you to be as clear and concise as possible. Try to be equally clear in writing about what you feel you need from the teacher or the school.

4. Expect the teacher and/or executive director will listen to your concern, but may not immediately offer a solution. Provide the teacher and/or executive director time to analyze and/or observe first hand (if applicable) the situation, and gather information. Allow him/her time to respond, which may be a day or several weeks.
5. Expect that the teacher and/or executive director may ask you to brainstorm for solutions with him/her.
6. Together, agree upon a solution. This may require compromise. Remember the solution is not written in stone, but is something both parties are committed to trying.
7. Together, implement a solution.

8. Follow-up evaluation. After allowing plenty of time, make sure the chosen solution has really solved the conflict to your mutual satisfaction.
 - a. If you are satisfied with the result, please let the other party know. If you submitted a written concern, please also indicate your satisfaction in writing for documentation.
 - b. If the conflict has not been resolved to your mutual satisfaction:
 - i. Start the process over again and try a different solution
 - ii. You are welcome to address the Board at their next regularly scheduled meeting. The board, while not designed to manage problems, will take the information into consideration, and determine whether the executive director has violated any policies.

Suggestions for moving through the conflict resolution process with grace and dignity:

- Remember that RMCS educators are dedicating to finding solutions that fit within the school's philosophy. Conflict can be a time to better understand the philosophy of the school.
- Remember that a "perfect educational environment" for children, is not truly perfect, i.e. "without flaw" – but one where children (and adults) can experience problems (and learn from them) in a supportive environment.
- Recognize many problems represent the proverbial balance between individual and communal needs.
- Have faith that unless a situation is extremely traumatic, that your child is resilient. Believe in the holistic strength of your child.
- Remember that many problems are best solved by our children – for their sake and for ours.
- Remember that educators and support staff, although they try to be saints, have the same human frailties, emotions, and flaws as everyone else.
- Keep the feelings of others in your heart.
- Forgive.
- Keep the problem in perspective. Ask yourself:
 - How much do I value Rainbow Mountain in relation to this particular problem?
 - How important will this problem seem in a year, in several years?
 - Is the problem something I can live with?
 - Is the problem important, urgent, both, or neither?
- While our emotions can make problems seem incredibly urgent, most conflicts can be wisely resolved with time and patience.

*Adapted from literature provided by The Conflict Center.

VOLUNTEERING

RMCS is a holistic, community-centered educational environment. In keeping with this emphasis, parents are expected to become an integral part of the classroom and the school community by volunteering for a wide variety of school-related activities.

In addition to volunteering in your child's classroom, here are other ways parents can get involved:

- Board of Directors membership
- Committee membership
- Parent Council membership
- The Rainbow Mountain Foundation membership

- Volunteering for special programs and celebrations throughout the year
- Attending Tom Sawyer Days (on the School Calendar)

Contact your Class Parent(s) for volunteer opportunities in the classroom; contact the office for more information about school-wide projects and current committees.

FACULTY TRAINING

Faculty Education Days: Rainbow Mountain is proud to have a dedicated, well-trained faculty that participates in the administration of the school. Faculty days serve two purposes that are critical to serving the mission of the school:

1. **Training:** Well-planned, relevant training re-charges and inspires teachers to be their best. Trainings help teachers learn how use time with students efficiently, effectively, while giving them an opportunity to kindle their creative juices and to remember their sacred purpose. Teachers learn strategies and techniques that have direct application in the classroom so they can deliver the highest quality of education.
2. **Collaborative Planning:** In the spirit of democracy, students and parents are given a voice in how their classroom(s) and school are managed and governed. Faculty days provide teachers time together to collaborate with the executive director on school policy, events, communication, and general management of the school. Collaboration creates a positive school culture through an empowered faculty.