

The Mountain School



Bellevue, Idaho
Education Towards Freedom

After-School Curriculum

The Mountain School provides an environment that sets the foundation for a life-long love of learning and holistic balanced living. Our learning environment and our programs strive to awaken and encourage exploration through the head, heart, and hands (thinking, feeling and willing). Learning becomes much more than memorizing facts ... learning becomes an engaging voyage to discover the world and oneself while the magic and wonder of childhood are protected and respected. Waldorf Education inspires our educational philosophy and pedagogy and our accountability is to its governing body – AWSNA, the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America.

Hours of Operation:

Monday – Thursday: After-school program open 1:00 p.m -5:00, doors open until 5:30 p.m.

Fridays: doors only open until 1:00 p.m.

4-6 year olds: 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

7-12 year olds: 2:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Tuition – Sliding scale tuition of \$6 - \$8/hour, there is a financial aid application for the \$6/hr and \$7/hr rates.

Weekly Artistic Rhythms – farm or wilderness activities will occur every afternoon in accordance with seasonal rhythms. Our artistic activities revolve accordly:

Monday – Painting

Tuesday – Handwork/Woodwork

Wednesday – Drama

Thursday – Movement (cooperative games, yoga, performance toys – juggling, poi, hula hoping)

After-School Curriculum Overview

Sustainable Living: We introduce our students to simple, ethical, and balanced energy-efficient living through permaculture with gardens, greenhouses, animals, and wilderness skills. We provide a healthy, living, green classroom in which the children learn responsibility for their basic needs – namely, food, shelter, and clothing – through hands-on experience working within the interdependent relationships of the mineral, plant, animal and human kingdoms.

Establishing Rhythms: One of the primary tasks of the growing child, of parents and educators is to bring the child's nerve-sense system (brain, sense organs & central nervous system), metabolic-limb system (digestion, elimination, and reproductive organs and limbs), and rhythmic system (heart and lungs) into a healthy working balance. We support this development by establishing regular, predictable rhythms in conjunction with the natural rhythms of day and night, the days of the week, the moon's monthly cycle and the four seasons through daily, weekly and yearly schedules which we celebrate through story, song, dance, games, crafts, food and festivals.

We also establish a “breathing” rhythm to our programs by moving between outward, more physical activities (such as free play) and quieter, more inward activities (such as story time). Just as we become uncomfortable if required to hold our breath in too long or are kept from taking a breath in when we need to, the young child finds the greatest amount of ease and comfort if their activities reproduce balanced, steady in breaths and out breaths. Following familiar rhythms also benefits children emotionally as it provides stability and continuity in a world which is still unfamiliar to them. This is why being part of this school for many years is especially beneficial to the student.

Early Literacy:

“There is no evidence that ever earlier instruction in decoding helps children to become better readers. This type of instruction may consign children to a narrow, limited view of reading that is antithetical to their long-term success not only in school, but also throughout their lifetimes. In other words... such instruction might actually undermine, rather than promote, literacy learning.” Susan Neuman and Kathleen Roscoe, *“Whatever Happened To Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Literacy?”* Journal of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), July 2005.

The teaching of the technical aspects of reading, also referred to as decoding, which is the ability to know which symbols (letters) represent which sounds and that clusters of those symbols represent words, has moved from 1st grade to kindergarten and now even into preschool. Reading, however, is a developmental skill and requires these other following skills:

1. A rich and varied experience of language
2. A large vocabulary
3. A broad conceptual knowledge based on varied life experiences
4. Verbal reasoning skills

Our students, through play with undefined materials which call forth their imagination, artistic activities, games, and poetry, song and story, often involving sequencing of movements and mental processes (intrinsic to reading, writing, doing mathematics, and thinking abstractly) are acquiring the very capacities that will help them to be skilled readers. Our curriculum offers them a varied experience of language, the opportunity to develop a large vocabulary enunciated clearly, and a broad experience of life and the world – a store of conscious content knowledge.

The factors that contribute to reading ability are all intellectual capacities and must be supported by proper brain development and function. Much research indicates that sensory experience and physical movement are crucial to full and healthy development of the brain during childhood. Our site and curriculum combined offers our students many varied opportunities for sensory stimulation and physical movement – both fine and gross motor skills – as a means of discovering the world.

“Higher-order thinking skills, knowledge, and dispositional capabilities, encouraging children to question, discover, evaluate, and invent new ideas enable them to become successful readers,” Susan Neuman and Kathleen Roscoe.

Mathematics: In a similar fashion to teaching early literacy we refrain from technical instruction of mathematics to our young students in favor of imbuing them with an intrinsic bodily sense for numbers and their qualities and a real-life use of mathematical processes. We also expose our students to numbers and mathematical processes using rhythm, movement, songs, stories and games that involve sequencing.

The young child has the opportunity to learn joyfully, through movement and artistic sensory-integration. By hearing and moving with musical and poetic rhythms (which are mathematical in their every essence) and finding an emotional connection to the subject proficiency with numbers is learned in a very unforgettable way.

Storytelling: Oral storytelling rendered from memory by the teacher (without accompanying images) stimulates mental picture imaging, the correct brain development stimulation for

symbolic cognitive activity (making connections between symbols and their meanings). Symbolic cognitive activities includes literacy, mathematics, and foreign and music language acquisition, for example. Our story telling exposes children to complex and beautiful vocabulary, builds concentration and memory capacity. It also naturally passes on culture - including ethical expectations without finger-wagging moralization. We tell stories from many diverse cultures and historic eras.

Free Work & Play ~ both indoor & outdoor: This undirected, uninterrupted time for child directed work and play within a diverse and developmentally appropriate environment allows them to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, physical, cognitive and emotional strength. It also allows children to learn how to work in groups, to share, to negotiate, to resolve conflicts and to learn self-advocacy skills. Children practice decision-making skills, move at their own pace, discover their areas of interest and ultimately engage fully in the passions they wish to pursue. Work and play builds active, healthy bodies and increases physical activity levels in children.

During these times at school the teachers are engaged in the work activities and ethic of the adult world. Children are instinctively imitative. This environment allows the young children to observe the adult world and safely practice this work in an unselfconscious way. After building confidence through imitative play they may then choose to join the teachers in their actual work. This is a non-stressful approach to ever improving their fine and gross motor skills. This teaching method of modeling activity without forcing instruction or requirements calls forth our student's innate capacities for a joyful work ethic.

Drama & Non-Competitive Movement: Drama is a powerful tool for self-discovery and self-knowledge. It also ignites imagination, encourages creative expression and builds social relationships. After our younger students have become thoroughly familiar with the stories we tell them orally they are given the opportunity to act out these stories many times, trying on different roles as they wish. This activity allows them to explore different personality types: the hero, the witch, the simpleton, the princess, etc. With our older students we play many improvisational games, create skits, build sets, and combine all the arts together - music, dance, painting, poetry, spoken word, sculpture, and costume design. We'll offer performances on Friday afternoons to show off our work.

Non-Competitive Movement, such as yoga, Pilates, dance, and games, is a powerful tool for teaching children. It not only keeps us physically fit, but also is a vehicle for information

reaching into the depths of children. If children have not had enough of this in their early education they will greatly benefit from it in their elementary and middle school years. It is an excellent way to bring a sense for number qualities and the deeply expressive potential of language to children. Movement keeps us flexible – not only in our bodies, but also in our emotions and in our thoughts.

Handwork Arts: Through painting, sewing, woodwork, and sculpture – using natural and environmentally conscious materials – we provide our students with the opportunity to develop mentally, emotionally and physically through the sensory integration of color, texture, and smell. The Arts develop fine and gross motor skills, encourage self-expression, and create social bonds. Each art builds specific strengths within the human being – for example, painting develops a steady emotional life as experience with color and the delicate nature of applying the paint brings the breath into a slow, steady rhythm. Sculpture, on the other hand, develops the will as it requires us to take a blob of clay or beeswax and form it into our vision. Handwork such as woodwork, weaving, spinning and sewing develop fine motor skills. Much research indicates that fine motor skills are crucial to brain development. We have a motto, “nimble fingers make nimble thoughts”.

Music: Some say music is the most spiritual energy on earth. With the young child we primarily focus on using our bodies as instruments through singing. As the child matures we teach them to play recorders and finally offer them the opportunity to have private lessons in piano, guitar, and drumming. We also plan to offer “Band Camp” where groups of students motivated to start bands will be supported in this endeavor by a teacher.

Cooking and Nature Crafting: A great benefit derived from the farm and nature element of the site is the endless opportunity for working with the vibrant natural materials we will be producing and collecting. From preparing meals with our vegetables and animal products to nature crafting with herbs to make soap, essential oils, and toys, our students will benefit from the nourishing sensory-integration benefits of such fresh resources.

Farm Activities: Garden and farm work foster healthy physical development and nurture strong bonds with the natural world. It is this exposure in their early lives that will set the foundation for their future relationship to the Earth; a stewardship complete with reverence for the simple but true, an awareness for the interdependence of all natural systems, and an active responsibility for a balanced existence in the world.

Wilderness Skills: We will be offering both wilderness survival and wilderness arts skills.

Wilderness Survival - hiking, fire-starting, tracking, shelter-making, archery, foraging, and leaving no-trace practices will be undertaken in all seasons of the year.

Wilderness Arts - Exploring the inherent patterns of the natural world through nature art.

This type of artistic activity occurs within the wilderness, the process invokes a contemplative mood, the product is temporary and left in nature. Students will work individually and groups.

The older the students, the more time will be taken to observe each other's work and reflect on the qualities of nature they are discovering.

Rite-of-passage exercises - The pristine environment of undeveloped wilderness is a wonderful place to contemplate life and explore our inner-selves - alone or together. We will lead our older students in activities traditionally practiced by indigenous peoples within nature to support and honor stages of maturation.

Self-directed Work & Play: We are committed to offering after-school programs that provides ample hands-on, real-life experiences through the arts, the farm and the wilderness to our students. We will be conducting these programs in such a way that allows our students to decompress from the busy schedules our society often dictates.

By providing ample periods of time for self-directed activity around faculty members constantly modeling work in the classroom, farm and wilderness we offer plenty of inspiration and opportunity for our students to join in with the activities they find interesting (Please see our Curriculum Overview of Free Play - both indoor & outdoor).

Age-appropriate Activities: There are times of the day when the students will separate into the three age groups: 4-6 yr. olds, 7-9 yr. olds, and 10-12 yr. olds. This will happen when activities require age-appropriate group instruction.

4-6 yr. olds – The youngest students will be given lots of opportunity to observe the older students and teachers. If they show interest in an activity a teacher or older student is performing they may join in through imitation or will usually opt to recreate the work in an imaginary play scenario close by. If a younger child wishes to perform an activity that is beyond their developmental ability it will be explained that they may watch and will be able to do it soon, we will also encourage them to perform the same activity in a less demanding and more age-appropriate way.

7-9 yr. olds & 10-12 yr. olds – These age groups will be spending some time together being free to choose the type of activity they are drawn to rather than having to perform specific activities because their age group must stay together. They will be separated when specific activities require vastly different maturity and/or skill levels.