

Rivendell School: Knowing Us by Name

“Rivendell was the perfect house, whether you like food or story-telling or singing, or just sitting and thinking best, or a pleasant mixture of them all. Merely to be there was a cure for weariness, fear and sadness.”
-J.R.R. Tolkien

The logical question first asked by Rivendell newcomers tends to focus on our school’s name: what does that name, “Rivendell” mean? Does it have anything to do with the vision or mission of the school?

As many of you probably know, the Rivendell name is fictional. It comes from Tolkien’s series of fantasy novels, which started with The Hobbit and continued with The Lord of the Rings trilogy. In this modern classic, Rivendell was “the last homely house,” a place for elves and hobbits that was literally sacred, set apart and thus, holy. It was a stopping place, a temporary home with truly hallowed halls and an essentially creative, redemptive, “preparing others to go out and engage the world” purpose.

Before our school became a reality, several founding families shared a dream to educate their children in a manner that would reflect the integrity, wholeness, and beauty of the Creator and His Creation. They wanted an education that would inspire their children to explore and understand the world, to discover what God has made, and how He has designed it, and to wrestle to understand all of the intricacies and relationships therein. It was in the process of thinking about this grand educational experiment that one founding parent sank into a restless night of sleep in which she awoke with the name “Rivendell School” and the images of Frodo Baggins’ epic adventure impressed on her mind.

Rivendell School’s vision and our school motto “Helping Children Explore God’s World and Discover their Place in it” settle comfortably within the spirit of Tolkien’s Rivendell Home. Our educational philosophy of *Relational, Christ-centered Education* and the underlying values of the Rivendell School community are reflected clearly in the following quotes taken from The Lord of the Rings:

Rivendell . . . a house of learning for active minds

“. . . always a bit more to discover, and no knowing what you’ll find around the corner. . . . a fortress of wisdom, not weapons, and the unraveling of hard words. . . . where much was said of the events of the world; where tales of the world were told; where one could find counsel for the perils of the world.”

Rivendell . . . a community of faith for tender spirits

“. . . the place where visions can be born, where fragile dreams can become reality, where battle plans can be laid for great battles ahead, and faith renewed in ultimate inevitable success.”

Rivendell . . . a company of friends for open hearts

“. . . but such was the virtue of the land of Rivendell that soon all fear and anxiety was lifted from their minds. Health and hope grew strong in them, and they were content with each good day as it came, taking pleasure in every meal, and in every word and song.”

As you can see, Rivendell is not just a novel name. It is fanciful, and it also points to something real. It is fictional, yet it vividly reveals a solid truth: healthy, flourishing schoolchildren need a place of adventure, exploration, and even a bit of calculated risk in which to:

- ❖ imagine, explore and create
- ❖ gather thoughts and gain friends
- ❖ pursue the truth of God's reality
- ❖ listen to others, silence one's self, and wait patiently
- ❖ develop strong learning skills to use in service of the King
- ❖ discover the beauty of God's creation
- ❖ engage in thoughtful discussion, and guided by wise and godly counselors
- ❖ grow in goodness, virtue, and the fruit of the Spirit
- ❖ study the rich and transcendent ("integral") truths of Scripture, literature, math, science, history, Latin . . .
- ❖ reap the rewards of spirited work
- ❖ enjoy the wonder of surprise and comprehension
- ❖ receive the blessings of others and be a blessing to others
- ❖ frolick and play as children who are innocent and informed
- ❖ prepare for effective service in a fallen world in need of redeeming agents

Rivendell School is far from perfect, of course, but it nonetheless exists, in its own unique way, with a desire to nurture each whole-child (heart, soul, mind, strength, and relationships). This objective sets it apart from any commonplace education. The Rivendell School name is a constant reminder that our aim is to be a wholesome place, set apart for the dance of ideas and the romance of faith. And in partnership with the Holy Spirit and each child's home, it is our earnest hope that every Rivendell student will be nurtured into "an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do every good work."

- Steve Larson, Headmaster 1992-2002 and Byron List, Headmaster 2002-present