

Nature School at Camp Albemarle K-5th

Our Story and Future Vision:

Nature School's expansion into a private school offering grades K-5th started with a dream and a prayer, much like nature school itself started. Nature School teachers are proponents of alternative education. Our hearts and souls are dedicated to a mode of learning not found in public or private schools, locally. We began searching for other options for our elementary-aged children and came up short. We began to dream of what Nature School could grow into, looking at other places around the country that are doing place-based, outdoor education for more than just preschool. We see a need in our community that we can fill, by bringing the joy back into learning, getting our kids active and outside while still providing quality academics.

We began by offering a combined classroom of 1st-3rd graders with nine students. We filed the necessary paperwork and were approved to operate as a private school in the fall of 2021, offering K-4th. In 2022 we added 5th grade. We are excited for the possibilities ahead of us and committed to put in the work to make this dream a thriving reality. We prayerfully invite you to consider us for your child's education.

Mission and Philosophy

Our mission is to educate and inspire the whole child, and to prepare each student to be an engaged explorer of their world, learning about nature and learning through nature. We believe that the natural world is an exceptional classroom for inspiring wonder, sharing God's love through His creation, cultivating a strong sense of self, and developing empathy towards others.

We're reimagining what school looks like.

We believe that school should be a joyful, engaging, and active experience. We strive to develop inquisitive, creative, kind children who will become lifelong learners with a deep connection to nature, through an educational experience that transcends the classroom. Students who attend Nature School will spend well over 500 hours outside in a school year, becoming ecologically literate experts on local flora and fauna. This closeness to the natural world inspires awe and wonder for our Creator. We see God's character revealed in wild places. As it says in Romans 1:20, "From the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly observed in what he made."

We're reimagining what being a teacher looks like.

Instead of teaching to a test, our teachers develop relationships with their students, creating rich, faith-based learning environments and experiences tailored to the unique learning needs of each student, inspiring and nurturing them to be independent, creative, and compassionate. Our teachers are mentors, trained in the art of asking the right questions to open-up fields of inquiry to guide student learning. Our small student to teacher ratio enables our teachers to truly focus on each student as a whole person. We trust our teachers' ability and passion to educate and hold space for them to develop all their gifts and talents to benefit their students.

The Nature School at Camp Albemarle Elementary Approach

- Rooted in daily nature immersion, capturing students' inborn curiosity about the natural world to foster deep connections to God, nature, and each other
- Progressive and integrated curriculum that covers all academic subjects and aligns with NC state standards while nurturing the unique skills and abilities of each student and providing time for them to learn at their own pace
- Close-knit classrooms offering opportunities for individual and group learning
- A close-knit school atmosphere where students interact and develop deep friendships and mentorships across grade levels
- Educating the whole child: academically, physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually
- Time for free play and exploration built in as integral for students' success

Daily Rhythm and Overview

- The Nature School at Camp Albemarle day will run from 8:30am – 2:30pm
- Drop-off is no earlier than 8:30am
- Lunch is a half hour
- Daily snack and lunch must be provided by each family for their student(s)
- All our Nature School students are expected to be prepared to be outside no matter the weather. Students need to have a full set of rain gear (rain pants make a world of difference in a child's ability to enjoy rainy days) and appropriate clothing for colder weather. We are happy to provide gear recommendations, if needed. We will be outside as much as possible.
- We have no mandatory homework, but we will maintain clear and consistent communication with our student's families at all times so that their education can be supported at home, as well.

Sample Daily Schedule:

This is a sample daily schedule that varies with each grade level. Our younger students have longer times for free play in-between learning, while our older students have longer learning times, as developmentally appropriate. Our students also have Vespers and Art once a week on various days.

8:30 – 8:45	Class will begin in a cabin with choice activities as students arrive.
8:45 – 9:15	Morning Meeting following the Responsive Classroom Model
9:30 – 10:15	LA Instruction
10:15 - 10:30	Bathroom Break and Snack
10:30 – 11:00	Math Instruction
11:30 – 12:00	Lunch
12:00 – 12:15	Quiet Time

12:15 – 12:45 Science or Social Studies Instruction

12:45 – 2:15 Hike