



Nature School at Camp Albemarle Lower & Middle School

Daily Rhythm and Curriculum

Nature School encourages children to learn at their own pace. We value free play and the intersection of academics and social learning that can happen during that time. Some of our most important learning happens in unplanned moments, through the children's discoveries. Our Shape of the Day makes room for this kind of emergent learning, while providing a rhythm to cover academic work that aligns with standards and follows a consistent course of study through each year.

We begin each day with choice time where children can explore various activities at their cabin. This will happen mostly outdoors.

Next, students gather for a **Morning Meeting** following the Responsive Classroom model where they:

- Greet each other
- Have a time of sharing
- Do a group activity
- Read our morning message

Morning meetings also include a daily devotional for some classes. Other classes do this during the closing circle.

Language Arts Time

All classes participate in Language Arts time after morning meeting. This includes phonics instruction, vocabulary development and reading and comprehension practice, as well as writing and grammar instruction. K-2nd uses Core Knowledge and Tara West's KinderPhonics. 3rd grade through our eventual 8th grade uses ELA Guidebooks which is a literature-based language arts curriculum created by teachers in the state of Louisiana with the goal of equipping students to read and understand complex, grade-level texts and express their understanding of those texts through writing and speaking.

Morning Snack

Children enjoy a small, healthy snack brought from home with their teachers and peers, building community and enjoying conversation while they snack.

Math

Math instruction in Kindergarten and 1st grade uses Tara West's KinderMath and Firstie Math which is a teacher-created curriculum aligned with standards that features hands-on and engaging units with a spiral approach. 2nd through our eventual 8th grade utilizes Core Knowledge Math, a math curriculum with the goal of developing conceptual understanding and procedural fluency with real world application. Our goal is that children understand a concept thoroughly, while recognizing that each child's brain works differently.

Lunch

Lunch, brought from home, will generally happen outside, picnic style, but indoor space is available on days of inclement weather.

Social Studies

All classes use MasterBooks for Social Studies. MasterBooks is a Christian curriculum which embeds a biblical worldview within a Charlotte Mason and Montessori inspired learning framework. K-2nd follows My Story which begins with My Family, My Life, then expands to the World Around Me, and then My Country, My World. 3rd through 5th grade travel through American history with the America's Story series, while 6th through eventual 8th will use The World's Story series.

Science

Science also follows MasterBooks beginning in 1st grade. Kindergarten utilizes a variety of teacher-created resources to introduce students to foundational science topics while exploring the natural world. 1st through 6th grade uses the God's Design series which covers the world of plants, the human body, the world of animals, planet earth, weather and water, the universe, chemistry and ecology, machines and motions, heat and energy, and inventions and technology. 7th and our eventual 8th grade will complete General Science 1: Survey of Earth & Sky and General Science 2: Survey of Geology and Archeology.

Hike

At the end of the day, children will pursue various projects, traditional wilderness skills and handicrafts, and have time to explore and play across Nature School. They may pursue interests as a class, across classes, in small groups or individually and these interests may cross content areas. Teachers will act as guides and facilitators during this time, following the children's lead and providing books and materials to grow the learning. This is also a time when a teacher can provide additional help or instruction in a topic or a class can continue to pursue a topic that may have ignited their imagination in the morning.

Closing Circle

Towards the end of each day, children will gather again in their class to share their reflections and questions about the day. This time often gives teachers an inkling of how to prepare for the next day and allows them to ask questions to further curiosity and learning. Some teachers utilize this time to do a daily devotion. Following the meeting, children can enjoy free time with their classmates at play until parent pick up or our after-school program begins.

Music

All classes participate in music once a week. We also offer an optional choir. Classes are guided by the NC state standards.

Vespers

Our students take part in our version of chapel, called vespers, once a week with other students. K-3rd and 4th-7th graders participate together in learning about the Bible and the basics of our Christian faith.