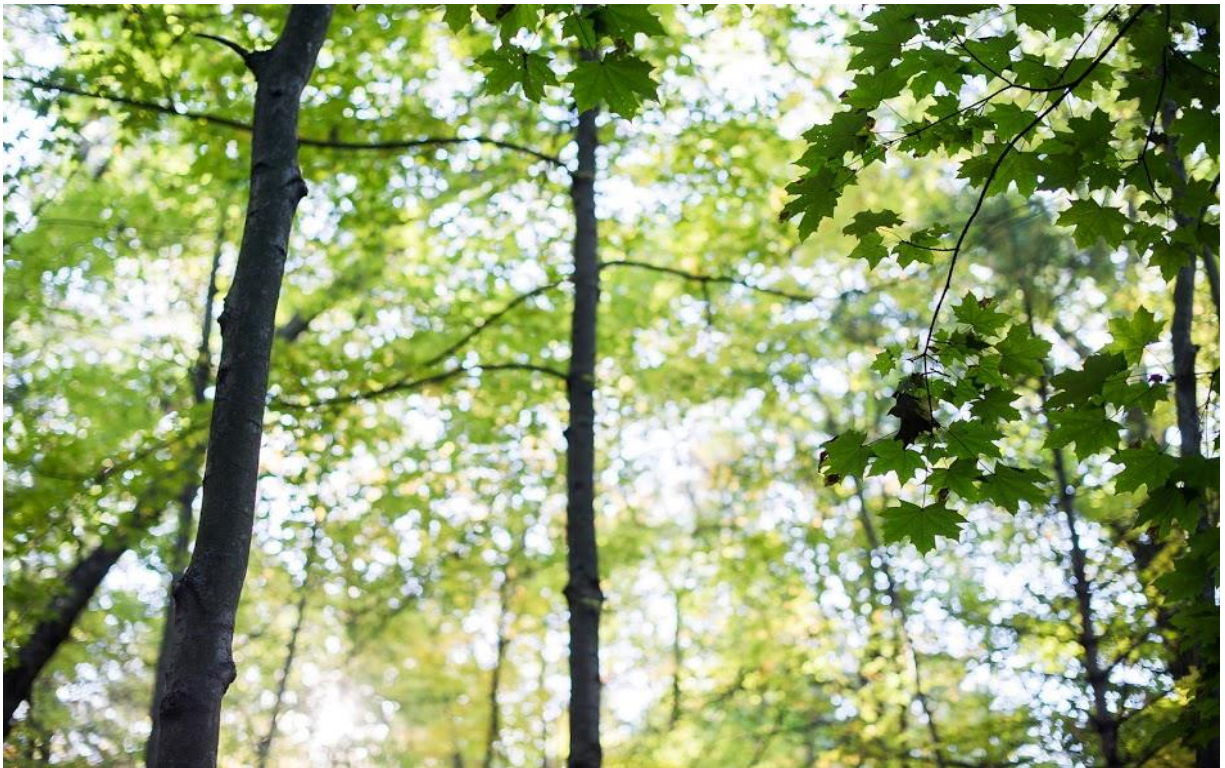




Discovery
wilderness school LLC

“It is not what we do to the child or for the child that educates him, but what we enable him to do for himself, to see and learn and feel and understand for himself. The child grows by his own efforts and his own real experience.”

Susan Isacs, “First-Hand Experience – What Matters to Children” Diane Rich et al



FAMILY HANDBOOK

2019-2020 School Year

2019-2020 Handbook

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Welcome to Discovery Wilderness School!

Our Values

CONNECTION TO NATURE:

The earth is filled with so much beauty, diversity, and life! As we explore alongside our children, experiencing the natural world with all five senses, we grow deep connections to the earth, one another, and our creator. We have seen in our own lives and the lives of our children that time spent in nature is never wasted. Outside, imaginations flourish, teamwork and cooperation are the norm, and curiosity leads to understanding.

COMMUNITY:

We were created for community. Discovery Wilderness School hopes to be a catalyst for home school families to create lasting friendships that go beyond our weekly classes. We realize that there are as many ways to home school as there are children in the world. None of us have it all figured out, and we have a lot to learn from one another.

STEWARDSHIP:

As children spend time outdoors, they grow in understanding and connection to the natural world, developing a sense of pride and protection for it. If we want our children to respect the earth as adults, they need to fall in love with it as children. We are all called to be stewards of creation. As adults we try to model good stewardship habits to our children. This is as simple as separating out compostables and recycling from our lunches, and choosing to fill our water bottles rather than buy bottled water. Pointing out these small choices throughout our day shows students that even small choices over time, can have a big impact on the health of our ecosystem.

Adjustment to Wilderness School

Starting a new program is a big step for most kids, especially in an outdoor classroom if your child hasn't had a lot of experience in the forest. We acknowledge each child's differences in adjusting to a new environment and provide support and encouragement to help each child adjust to our program. You may want to set up a visit to Wedgewood/Mill Race Park with your child to get familiar with the trails. Parents are always invited to stay with students in class. As a parent/guardian, you have unique insight as to how your child reacts to new settings. If there is specific information we should know to help your child acclimate, please reach out!

Curriculum

Our curriculum follows the principles in Jon Young's book, [Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature](#). We begin with the roots of nature education by engaging children in direct experience with plants and animals. As we get to know the students and their comfort zone, we gently guide them just beyond that comfort "edge" to new experiences and knowledge. The core of our approach is a sense of connection to nature while embracing the science curriculum that qualifies a well-trained naturalist (cross-referencing, technical names, replicating results). We borrow from worldwide indigenous cultures who demonstrate deep connection to and respect for their part of the earth. "With the Coyote as our guide, we learn both the scientific map and our landscape terrain. When we embrace fact with imagination, and combine logical evidence with intuition, we develop intellectual understanding through first-hand experience."

To the outsider, this may look like running around in a park or forest playing games and telling stories. Our underlying intention behind this is the subtle use of Child Passions to get students to practice the Core Routines of Nature Connection, and learn to read the Book of Nature. Children are learning without ever knowing it. Jon Young coined the term "Invisible School" after studying indigenous cultures' methods of cultivating a continuous, in-depth understanding of natural history within their villages without formal schools, teachers, or textbooks. With stories, games, songs, and acting, students' knowledge and skills are stretched each day, and learning happens without realizing it. Nature connection through this kind of mentoring proves to be fun, healing and empowering.

Our guides and mentors use the Art of Questioning to open a child's mind to the natural world. When outside amongst the vast array of natural artifacts, children are bound to bring several objects over and ask "What's this?" Our job as nature guides and mentors is not to answer with a scientific name and move on, but to ignite children's curiosity by asking more questions back to the child, encouraging them to discover for themselves the intricate details of the natural world. Once this object has been studied (in a fun way where the children don't even realize they are learning), then this object that has made a deep impact on the child, can receive a proper scientific name that will be imprinted in the mind and heart of that child.

We intentionally use an Emergent Curriculum with a core of Project-Based Learning. Teachers plan for about 50% of our time together in nature, and letting the other 50% of learning emerge from whatever the children find that piques interest. We build on that curiosity the following week, by using those child passions to plan the first 50% with games, stories, and experiences that enhance the learning experience, allowing space for more learning to happen when we allow children to explore and find their next learning adventure. The "focus project" emerges as students' explorations lead them to find a passion to dive into learning about. Students then use teamwork under the guidance of instructors to research and plan a project, and then solve a real-world problem.

Our goals for student growth focus on four areas: Nature Connection (Heart), Nature Awareness (Head), Social Development (Community) and Physical Development (Body). Every class together includes stories, games and music specifically designed to stretch a child just past his/her current edge of knowledge, skills, and comfort to a new place of connecting deeper to the Natural world.

2019-2020 Course Schedule

Mondays or Wednesdays

Fall Semester: September 9- November 20

Spring Semester: March 2-May 13

	Ages 2-4	Ages 5-8	Ages 9-14
9:30-11:45	Junior Nature Explorers <u>Mondays</u> Lead Guide: Chelsea Mentor: Taina <u>Wednesdays</u> Lead Guide: Dana Mentor: Shayla	Nature Explorers <u>Mondays</u> Lead Guide: Kim Mentor: Daniel <u>Wednesdays</u> Lead Guide: Kim Mentor: Taina	Nature Study <u>Wednesdays Only</u> Lead Guide: Chelsea Mentor: Daniel
11:45-12:10	Lunch		
12:10-12:55	Junior Nature Crafters <u>Mondays</u> Lead Guide: Chelsea Mentor: Taina <u>Wednesdays</u> Lead Guide: Dana Mentor: Shayla	Natural Crafting I <u>Mondays</u> Lead Guide: Kim Mentor: Daniel <u>Wednesdays</u> Lead Guide: Kim Mentor: Taina	Outdoor Sports II <u>Wednesdays Only</u> Lead Guide: Chelsea Mentor: Daniel
1:00-1:45		Outdoor Sports I <u>Mondays</u> Lead Guide: Chelsea Mentor: Daniel <u>Wednesdays</u> Lead Guide: Chelsea Mentor: Taina	Natural Crafting II <u>Wednesdays Only</u> Lead Guide: Kim Mentor: Daniel

Course Descriptions

Nature Explorers (ages 5-8)

Students will have time for exploration, social interaction, and creative/imaginative play with a themed nature study each week. Each class will follow a similar rhythm: story, hike, snack, music, and imaginative play. As students hike uneven terrain, climb, and balance on stones, they develop gross motor skills. Sharing discoveries and learning from one another develops our sense of community. Come explore with us!

Junior Nature Explorers (ages 2-4)

Students in this class have a similar flow to the Nature Explorers (read the description above). Story and music will be more repetitive, with a shorter hike, and more time for free exploration and imaginative play. Parents are encouraged to stay and explore with us! If a parent does not stay for class, your child must be self-sufficient in the restroom.



Nature Study (ages 9-14)

Students will work in groups to do an in-depth study to solve an environmental “problem.” They will use scientific tools to investigate, while developing a deep connection to nature, learning through the process of discovery. Our service-based curriculum uses the Project-Based Learning (PBL) Model, where groups of students work together to solve a real problem that directly benefits the community. The curriculum is deeply rooted in the community we participate in. With a focus on learning from one another, students develop their social skills and sense of belonging to a community of fellow nature enthusiasts.

Natural Crafting I (ages 5-8)

With the beauty of nature as our inspiration, we will create art pieces from a compilation of natural materials and traditional art supplies. Students will develop basic skills in water color, tempera paints, print-making, sewing, weaving, braiding, drawing, collage, and jewelry-making.

Junior Nature Crafters (ages 2-4)

Students in this class will be creating similar projects to the Natural Crafting I course (read description above). Junior Nature Crafters will have more support tailored to individual student skill level, with a focus on fine motor skills such as cut and paste, finger painting, stamping, and weaving. Parents are encouraged to stay and create with us! If a parent does not stay for class, your child must be self-sufficient in the restroom.

Natural Crafting II (ages 9-14)

Inspired by nature’s beauty, students will incorporate natural materials into their art pieces. No prior art experience is necessary for this class. Students will be introduced to and develop higher level art skills such as water color, tempera paints, print-making, sewing, weaving, still-life drawing, sculpting, collage, jewelry-making, and finger-knitting.

Outdoor Sports I (ages 5-8)

The purpose of this course is to teach basic rules and skills associated with each of the major sports in a non-competitive environment. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to confidently participate in impromptu games with friends at social events. Each class will focus on body awareness and locomotor basics. Using a sports-unit curriculum, students will learn and practice skills such as throwing and catching, hand and foot dribbling, kicks, batting, and balance. Students will play modified versions of the following sports: kickball, baseball, ultimate frisbee, soccer, football, field hockey, pickle ball, volleyball, capture the flag.

Outdoor Sports II (ages 9-14)

Like Outdoor Sports I, the purpose of this course is to teach basic rules and skills associated with each of the major sports so that students will be able to participate in impromptu games with friends at social events. Students do not need any sports experience to participate in this class. The following sports will be taught: kickball, baseball, ultimate frisbee, frisbee golf, soccer, football, basketball, field hockey, street hockey, tennis, volleyball, and capture the flag.



2019-2020 Tuition Rates, Discounts, and Payment Schedule

Student ages are as of September 1, 2019

But, ultimately, you are the parent and can make the best course selection for your child. 😊

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Nature Courses</u> Junior Nature Explores, \$110/sem Nature Explorers and Nature Study, \$360/sem</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Art Courses</u> Junior Nature Crafters, \$55/sem Natural Crafting I and II, \$190/sem</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Phys Ed Courses</u> Outdoor Sports I and II, \$190/sem</p>
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Checks should be made payable to “Discovery Wilderness School” and mailed to:

Discovery Wilderness School 11767 Algoma Ave. Sparta, MI 49345
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Families will receive individualized tuition statements in July with detailed payment options for the school year. Tuition may be paid by cash, check, or credit card via paypal.

Tuition Policies are essential to make sure program costs are covered.

Monthly tuition payments are due on the first day of every month from September - April. Tuition must be paid by the due date each month. Payments received more than 24 hours after the due date will incur a \$25 late fee. There is a fee of \$25 on all returned checks. Children may not attend the program until their account payments are up to date. If the next monthly tuition payment date is reached without the overdue balance paid in full then the child’s program spot may be opened up for others to enroll (and tuition is still due for all previous weeks). If a child is withdrawn from the program, tuition for any remaining classes is not refundable unless we can fill the child's spot in the program. We will work with parents to consider exceptional circumstances.

We offer several discounts for families to help make tuition more affordable (see page 7).

2019-2020 Tuition Discounts

<p><u>Full Day Attendance Discount</u> *If your child is enrolled in all three classes—Nature, Art, and Phys Ed</p> <p>*Does not apply to Juniors classes</p> <p>\$720 per semester instead of \$740</p>	<p><u>Sibling Discount</u> *First child is the oldest enrolled child</p> <p>First Child, normal rates Second Child and beyond</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$5/sem less for Art and Sports • \$10/sem less for Nature • Full Day \$700 (instead of \$740, does not apply to juniors courses) 	<p><u>Early Payments & Payment Plans</u> 5% reduced tuition, Full Year Tuition paid before August 15</p> <p>One-time paper check in mail instead of paypal- \$5 per child discount (does not apply if sending monthly payments)</p> <p>Other Payment options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay each Semester, August 15 and February 15 • Monthly Payments, September 1- April 1
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Example Family with three Children

	Full Price	Taking advantage of Discounts
First Child, all three courses (age 7)	\$740/sem	\$720 full day discount
Second Child, all three courses (age 5)	\$740/sem	\$700 full day + sibling discount
Third Child, two junior courses (age 3)	\$165/sem	\$150 two junior courses sibling discount
		-\$15 (\$5 per child, for 3 children) for paying with a paper check instead of paypal
Total	\$1645/sem	\$1555 minus 5% early payment discount
		= \$1477 per semester Savings of \$168 per semester Total savings of \$336 per year

Additional Payment Options

Partnerships-- Families that wish to have all tuition paid for should seek out information about Home School Partnerships. We have partnered with both Niles and Hamilton Home School Partnerships and accept payment directly from these schools. *Update as of 5/30/19* Partnership Registration is currently at capacity for both Niles and Hamilton, but there is a waitlist you are welcome to register for.

We believe every child should have the opportunity to fall in love with nature. Please contact us if tuition just doesn't sound possible to you, and you are unable to participate in a Home School Partnership. Every situation is unique, and we are happy to talk about what might work for your family.

Staff Contact Information



Chelsea Eerkes
Director, Lead Guide

616-540-3984

discoverywilderness@gmail.com

Miss Chelsea is a Lead Guide and the founder of Discovery Wilderness School. She is home-schooling momma to her four daughters (Bella-8, Autumn-6, Ruby-3 and Luna-1). Chelsea loves to be outside with her girls every day, exploring and learning alongside them. Among her favorite things are exploring in woods, swimming in the creek, camping, gardening, and foraging for wild foods with her family. Chelsea is a certified Forest School Teacher through the Eastern Region Association of Forest and Nature Schools (ERAFANS). She has 9 years' experience as a teacher in Texas and Michigan, in Public, Private and Home-School settings. She has taught Middle and High School Sciences as well as Phys Ed for grades K-12. Chelsea is bubbling over with excitement to be able to begin a new adventure with Discovery Wilderness School!



Kim Lorimer
Lead Guide

616-402-4321

kimbralorimer@gmail.com

Miss Kim is a certified Nature Preschool Teacher with 14 years' experience as a preschool teacher at Little Lakers Learning Center, Footsteps Learning Center, and St. John's Preschool. She was also the preschool coordinator for All Shores Wesleyan Church for three years. Miss Kim has coordinated student goals and objectives and bible curriculum for the Four Year Class and Young Fives Classrooms. She is married with three grown children and lives in Spring Lake, Michigan. Kim loves to camp and spend time outside along the beaches of Lake Michigan. She has lots of love and energy to share with our students.



Dana Boyd
Lead Guide

616-914-1828

dana.boyd13@gmail.com

Miss Dana has been a middle school science teacher for the past eleven years. She stepped away from full-time teaching this year after her youngest was born to focus on raising her family. Dana is mother to six children, two (now adult) foster kids and four younger kids (Anna-7, Samuel-5, Margaret-3, and Baby Isabel-1). Dana and her husband Jon love the outdoors- camping, gardening, sailing on Lake Michigan and playing in the woods. Dana's life is filled with a loud and messy house, dirty feet, love and kindness. She is thrilled to be a guide at Discovery Wilderness School. She has a passion for learning how to nourish and respect Earth and Mother Nature.



Shayla Kitson
Mentor

Miss Shayla homeschools her four amazing kids (Axel-9, Lyric-6, Bobo-3 and Adelaide-1). Shalya is a Native Alaskan and nature connection is in her blood. She was raised harvesting seaweed and cedar trees, fishing, and shelter-building. She is committed to keeping tradition alive in the way she is raising her own children, with a deep connection to the Natural World.



Daniel Ramey
Mentor

Mr. Daniel is a homeschooled high school student. He loves hiking, camping, and lots of outdoor activities. Daniel has experience caring for his three younger siblings and has also helped as a teacher's assistant for PE classes at GRACE Homeschool Association. He is an excellent leader and role model for students in our Nature Studies and Outdoor Sports Courses.



Taina Rodriguez
Mentor

Miss Taina is studying elementary special education at Grand Rapids Community College. She loves to spend time in nature and participate in outdoor activities like camping, taking her niece to the park, and cheerleading. Taina was a group leader for children's bible study at her church, an instructor for elementary kids at cheer camp, and loves to care for her niece, Abbie. Taina enjoys lending a helpful hand where ever she is needed and making others happy! We are excited to welcome Miss Taina to Discovery Wilderness School.

2019-2020 Calendar

August 26-September 4	Teacher Orientation 9:00-2:00 at Wedgewood Park
Thursday, September 5	Family Welcome Picnic 6:00 pm at Wedgewood Park
Fall Semester Monday Course Dates	Fall Semester Wednesday Course Dates
September 9 – November 18	September 11 – November 20
December 2: Make-up day, we will only have class if there was a cancelled class during fall semester.	December 4: Make-up day, we will only have class if there was a cancelled class during fall semester.
Thursday, December 5	Family Owl Prowl Night Walk and Campfire 6:00 Wedgewood Park
Monday Winter Nature Walks (optional) 10:00am-12:00pm Bring snacks and water bottle	Wednesday Winter Nature Walks (optional) 10:00am-12:00pm Bring snacks and water bottle
January 6	January 15
January 20	January 29
February 3	February 12
February 17	February 26
Spring Semester Monday Course Dates	Spring Semester Wednesday Course Dates
March 2 – May 11	March 4 – May 13
May 18: Make-up day, we will only have class if there was a cancelled class during spring semester.	May 20: Make-up day, we will only have class if there was a cancelled class during spring semester.
Thursday, April 23	Earth Day Scholarship Fundraiser Event
Thursday, May 21	Family Spring Celebration 6:00 Wedgewood Park



What to Bring to Wilderness School

This is an outdoor program. It is imperative that your child be dressed in proper clothing to ensure that she/he is protected from the elements. We will spend our entire time outside, rain or shine. If your child is warm, she/he will be happy and able to participate in the fun! We believe there is no such thing as bad weather, just inappropriate clothing.

Recommended Brands—we have listed recommended brands that make quality products. We have learned from experience that it's better to invest in good gear than to have cold, wet feet and cranky kids. You are not required to purchase the brands we suggested, but please be sure to invest in quality gear.

LAYERING is key, as your child will be very active outdoors and, at times, sitting. Whatever a child is not wearing, will be stored in her/his backpack. Base-layers (i.e.; poly-propylene or capilene, wool, or silk/wool blends) are essential as they wick moisture off of the body. Hats are required in cold weather. We suggest getting a pair of boots that is one size larger than your child's foot. This will create "dead-air space" to assist in insulating the foot. The best insulation for the feet is one or two pairs of wool socks with water-proof boots that have wiggle room.

Extra Change of Clothes

Even on dry days, we might end up wet or muddy during exploration. It is important to have a change of clothes available. Please ALWAYS have an extra full set of clothes packed in your child's backpack and send your child to Wilderness School in clothing and footwear that can get dirty. *No need to get a second snow suit or pack another set of wool under layers, just clothes.*

Resources for Finding Quality Gear








Finding quality gear takes some care, but it is critical to your child's enjoyment of nature. Make sure it really is waterproof by looking at the seams (they should be sealed). See the recommended brands on the gear list below. We highly recommend buying used items from garage sales, Goodwill, Salvation Army, facebook marketplace and Craigslist. Good deals can also be found on ebay and Poshmark.com, a used clothing website.

DISCOVERY WILDERNESS SCHOOL AMAZON STORE: For your convenience, Discovery Wilderness School has set up an Amazon List. You are not required to shop here; it just may help make shopping a bit easier.

[HERE IS THE LINK](#) to the Amazon Store.

DISCOVERY WILDERNESS SCHOOL REQUIRED GEAR LIST

Picture	Item	Recommended Brands
	rain coat and rain pants OR a one-piece rain suit	Oakiwear, LL Bean, Polarn O. Pyret, Grundens.
	Base-Layer: long underwear bottoms and top (wool, wool/silk or synthetic)	Merino, kozi kidz, smartwool, ella's wool
	Wool sweater or fleece top, warm wool or fleece pants	Ella's Wool, merino, smartwool
	Play clothes that you don't mind getting dirty in warm weather. Long sleeves and lightweight pants or leggings protect legs from scratches, bug bites and poison ivy.	Garage sales and thrift stores!
	Snow pants and winter jacket	Columbia, gusti, chlorophylle, Northface, LL Bean grow with me jackets (seam can be cut to lengthen 1.5 inches for growth spurts)
	2 or more pairs of wool socks (or wool/silk blend)	Morino, icebreaker, smartwool, Ella's Wool

	<p>Rain boots AND snow boots OR insulated rainboots (rated for cold weather), recommended one size larger to accommodate for 2 layers of socks and extra room for air insulation.</p>	<p>Bogs, Muk, kamik, croc, natives</p>
	<p>Mud/water ready shoes for warmer weather (closed toe, and closed heel)</p>	<p>Natives, keens</p>
	<p>Wool or fleece hat that covers ears plus neck warmer (no scarves please) or balaclava</p>	<p>Morino, icebreaker, smartwool, Ella's Wool</p>
	<p>2 pairs of mittens or gloves (waterproof shell plus wool mittens work well) Extra long elbow-length mittens also work great.</p>	<p>Kombi, head mittens, Gordini mittens, abeko brand Polarn O. Pyret sells a rain mitten which when paired with a woolen mitten is perfect for our climate.</p>
	<p>Full size backpack that fits your child well- needs to have space for extra set of clothes, wet gear, and lunch/water bottle</p>	<p>LL Bean</p>
	<p>Lunchbox, Child-sized water bottle, and reusable containers/bags for lunches and snacks—we strive to be a zero-waste school, so please send food items in reusable containers.</p>	
	<p>Clothing Label Stickers with your family's last name. We will do our best to return all items with names labeled.</p>	

What to Wear Gear List

Please be sure to label all clothes and gear with your family name!

If the "feels like" temperature is...

less than 30° please wear

- sunscreen applied if necessary
- base layer: wool, wool/silk or polyester
- bulk layer: warm pants, sweater
- waterproof layer: winter coat, snow pants
- wool socks
- snow boots (insulated)
- warm hat that covers ears well
- gloves or mittens (waterproof/resistant)

Please pack extra...

- wool socks
- gloves or mittens (waterproof/resistant)
- warm hat

30–50° please wear

- sunscreen and bug spray already applied
- warm under-layers
- regular clothes
- winter coat (waterproof/resistant)
- snow pants OR rain pants with a warm layer underneath
- snow boots OR rain boots with extra pair of warm socks
- warm hat
- gloves or mittens (waterproof/resistant)

Please pack extra...

- warm socks
- gloves or mittens (waterproof/resistant)
- warm hat

Above 50° please wear

- sunscreen and bug spray already applied
- layers
- long pants and sleeves to protect from bugs and plant scratches
- rain coat and pants /rain suit
- rain boots or mud-ready shoes (closed-toe, closed heal)
- sun hat (whatever kind your child likes)

In backpacks each week

- water bottle
- snack and lunch (if here for the full day)
- extra complete set of clothes seasonally appropriate
- wet bag/plastic bag for wet/dirty gear

*Personal toys should be left at home or in the car. Such items are often lost and present a problem for the children.

Water, Snacks and Lunch

Water bottles: We will encourage children to take water breaks to stay hydrated throughout our time together. Please send a reusable child-sized water bottle in your child's backpack. We will have access to water to refill if necessary. An adult size water bottle is too heavy to be carried around by young children.

NO PEANUTS PLEASE! There are participants on both Monday Classes and Wednesday classes that have anaphylactic reactions to peanuts and peanut butter. All other tree nuts are ok to pack. Please consider using a tree nut butter (like almond butter) in place of peanut butter in lunches. Thank you for helping keep all students safe!

Lunches and Snacks: A snack time is scheduled during the morning nature classes. Please pack a snack if your student is enrolled in this class. If your child will be with us over the lunch break, please pack a non-perishable peanut-free lunch. On cold days, a thermos of hot soup, tea, or hot chocolate is a good idea, too. Microwaves and refrigeration are not available at the parks. Please send food that does not need to be heated. If necessary, include an ice-pack in your child's lunchbox.

Trash: Please refrain from using disposables such as ziplock bags, tinfoil, and juice boxes, as we strive to be a zero-waste school. Any uneaten food and packaging will be sent home for recycling. Our staff will help the children during lunch to open containers.

Weather

We will be outside in almost all weather! There is no standard guideline for when it is too hot or cold to be outside. A sunny, 20 degree February day with no wind can feel much warmer than a 50 degree April day with wind and rain. Teachers will be mindful of temperature, precipitation, and wind chill, as well as of the physical and emotional state of the children. We will seek warmth from the campfire or hand-warmers when necessary.

Extreme Weather Cancellations

Because our school schedules two semesters (fall: September-November and spring: March-May), we will likely avoid most extremely cold days. At DWS, student safety is our number one priority. In the event of thunderstorms, icy roads, or extreme wind chill, classes will be cancelled. Parents will be notified of class cancellation by 7:00 am via email, text message (through the remind app), and [facebook](#) announcement. There is one weather make-up day scheduled for the end of each semester. If additional weather days occur in a semester, those classes will not be made-up.



Bathrooms and Changing Clothes

On-Site Restrooms: Wedgewood Park has a restroom with running water available to us for much of the school year. When the restrooms are closed during the winter months, a portable restroom will be available on site. Mill Race Park will have a portable restroom available. We will teach students about portable restroom use and we will make potty runs (bringing groups to use toilet) and assist your child with gentle reminders, routines, & expectations. On occasion, students might be in the forest and too far from indoor toilets. In those situations, they will be guided about bathrooming outside.

Potty-Training: We offer courses for students as young as two years old. Parents are always invited to stay with their child. If you plan to drop off your student, we require that children are completely potty-trained and comfortable using the toilet away from home. Since we are outside in all-weather with lots of layers, this can be difficult for many children ages four and younger. We are not licensed to be able to help with diapers or pull-ups.

Changing Clothes: We have both male and female teachers and believe that all teachers can help any child (male or female) change clothes if adult assistance is required and desired by the child. Please let us know if you have individual questions or concerns about your child being helped (if needed) by male or female staff with clothing changing needs.

Birthdays

Each month we will acknowledge student birthdays with a special celebration. **Please do not send treats or snacks to celebrate your child's birthday.** Treats get complicated in our short outdoor day with various class lists and for those with food restrictions. We like to celebrate students in a different way at DWS. Thank you for understanding!

Communication

Communication with families is key to the success of our program and your child's experience. Please join the Families of DWS Facebook Group. This is a platform to communicate with other families and share pictures and announcements.

We use email, text and phone and can schedule meetings with you. Please contact us with any questions or concerns regarding your child. *Wilderness Weekly* is the name of our newsletter that is emailed out each week, highlighting important information and learning objectives from that week.

Remind App

Please download the Remind App to your smart phone. The Remind App allows parents to communicate with one another, parents to communicate with teachers, as well as photo-sharing and school cancellation announcements. Once you have downloaded the Remind App on your phone, click the links below or text the specific codes to join courses.

[Monday Nature](#) Classes or text @mondaynat to the number 81010

[Monday Crafting](#) Classes or text @mondaycra to the number 81010

[Monday Sports](#) Classes or text @mondayspor to the number 81010

[Wednesday Nature](#) Classes @ceerk to the number 81010

[Wednesday Crafting](#) Classes text @ceerke to the number 81010

[Wednesday Sports](#) Classes @ceerkes to the number 81010

Intergenerational Programming

Brookcrest Nursing home is located right along the path between Mill Race Park and Wedgewood Park. We would love to form connections with the residents of Brookcrest. We are in the beginning stages of connecting with the Community Life Department to plan programs to connect our students with residents at Brookcrest and the residents with Nature. If you would like to be involved in planning, we would love your help!

Drop-off and Pick-up

See maps on the following page.

Morning Arrival for Nature courses ages 2-8, Afternoon arrival for Crafting and Sports Courses

If you plan to stay as a parent helper, pull into the parking lot, and turn left to park.

If you are dropping off your child, please turn right upon entering the parking lot, and use the turnaround drop off loop. Teachers will be present to direct traffic, greet children, and show them to the meet-up location for their course.

Morning arrival for Nature Study Course (ages 9-14)

The Nature Study Course will take place at Mill Race Park. There is only street parking here. If you are a parent helper, or plan to stay with your child for the day, please park across the street at Wedgewood Park and use the crosswalk to cross Wilson and walk the short distance to our Nature Courses. Please allow yourself 15 minutes to unload and walk to the meet-up location in the morning.

If you are dropping off a student for Nature Study Courses, please park alongside the road. There is street parking only at Mill Race Park. Teachers will be along the road to direct traffic, greet children, and show them to the meet-up location for Nature Courses. Pick up will be across the street at Wedgewood Park (see below.)

Pick up for all courses will take place at Wedgewood Park.

Please pull into the parking lot, and turn right, leading to a turnaround. Your student will be ready and waiting at this pick up location. **(map on the next page)**

Please do your best to pick up your child on time from class, and let us know if you are running late. We have courses that begin and stop at different times, and teachers need to be available to teach courses. A late pick-up fee of \$20 for every 10-minute period will apply to children who are picked up late more than one time over the program year.

Map of Wedgewood Park Pick-up and Drop-off and Parking

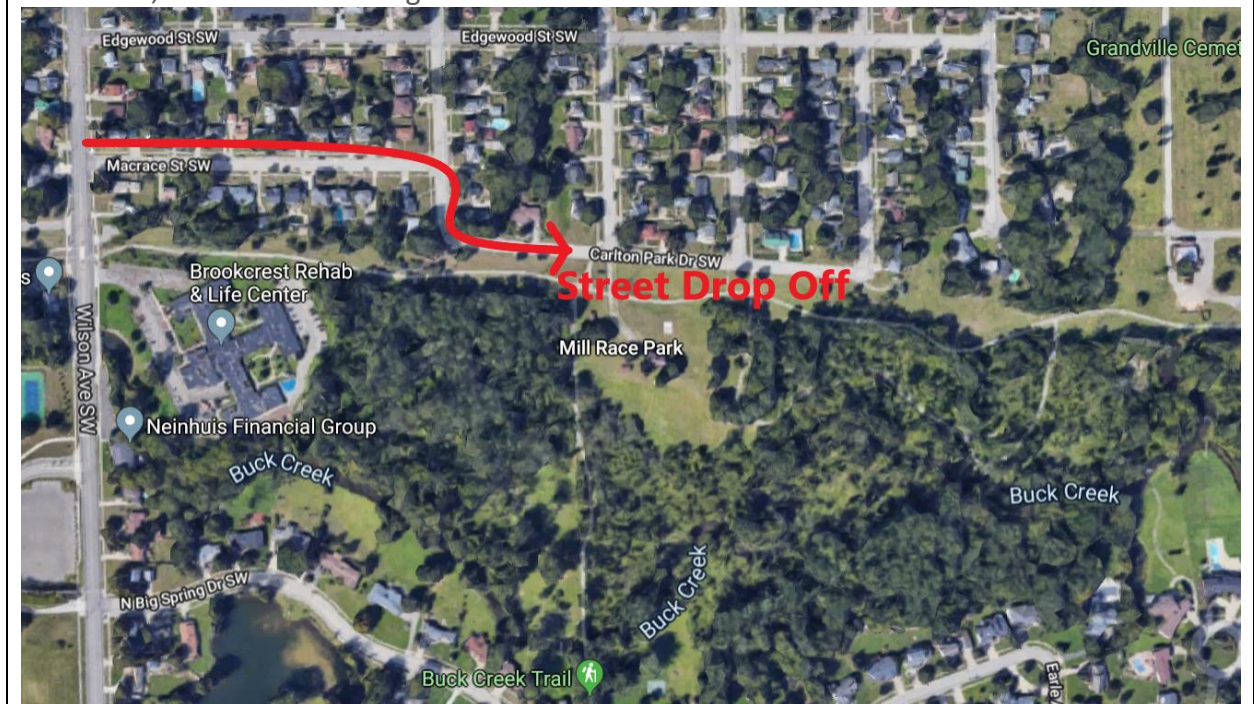
DON'T SEARCH "Wedgewood Park" in GOOGLE MAPS, instead, follow the address below:
3355 Wilson Ave. SW, Grandville, MI 49418



Map of Mill Race Park drop-off

Address: 3370 Carlton Park, Grandville, MI 49418

Only for Drop Off for the Nature Study Class, ages 9-14. No long-term parking, drop-off along the street. If you are the parent helper, please park at Wedgewood, and walk along Buck creek trail, across Wilson using the crosswalk.



Illness Policy

A sick child, or a child coming down with an illness, can have trouble maintaining their body temperature. Please do not send your child to DWS if you suspect s/he may be sick. If your child will be absent, please send an email to your child's head teacher. It is especially important to let us know if your child has something contagious, so we can let our school community know. If a child becomes ill at DWS, we will call for a parent or caregiver to come pick him or her up.

Please keep your child at home under the following conditions:

- 1) *Fever over 100° F*
- 2) *Vomiting*
- 3) *Diarrhea*
- 4) *Any illness known to be contagious (other than the sniffles).*

Please note: Any outbreak of communicable disease will be communicated to all parents.

Children with diarrhea, bad coughs, colds, fevers, heavy nasal discharges, green or yellow eye discharge or vomiting must be kept home until the symptoms disappear. If your child has been diagnosed with the flu or has flu symptoms (fever of more than 100° F accompanied by other flu symptoms such as aches, cough, sore throat, etc.), your child should be kept home for at least 24 hours after the symptoms resolve.

Should your child become ill during the day, we will contact parents immediately. If parents cannot be reached, we will call an emergency contact. During this time, the child will be cared for in a quiet, calm area.

Handwashing

We get into plenty of messes at Wilderness School! Soap and water will always be used when available, but sometimes when we are eating in the woods or on the trail we will use hand sanitizer instead.

Behavior Management Policy

We seek to accommodate individual needs, adapt programs when possible, and problem solve with children, their parents, and other teaching professionals in order to help children have an amazing experience at DWS! Children's physical and emotional safety is a priority in all programs. We understand that children may still be developing impulse control and learning about social relationships, and no child is expected to have "perfect" behavior every day. Running, being loud, being messy, physical play with others, and other similar behaviors are not labeled as "bad behavior" - they are welcomed as long as they do not disrupt the experience of others or endanger anyone.

Behavior Management Strategies

DWS staff will help prevent conflict by making sure that all children understand rules and expectations, by making it clear that staff are always willing and available to help sort out a problem, and by actively monitoring and interacting with children. When conflict or inappropriate behavior does arise, we will use the following strategies (as appropriate to the situation):

- **Redirection:** Offering an alternative behavior or choice. For example, "You cannot throw acorns here because you might hit a friend with one, but you can throw acorns over there, away from the group."
- **Reminder of Expectations:** A teacher may remind a child of program expectations – this reminder may also serve as a warning before further consequences are applied. For example, "I see that you are swinging that stick. Our program rule is that we swing sticks in open space away from our friends. I expect you to find an open space to swing your stick."
- **Verbal Intervention and Problem Solving:** A teacher may verbally intervene to stop inappropriate or hurtful behavior. For example, "It sounds like you two are arguing over this fort. Do you need help solving a problem?"
- **Logical Consequences:** A teacher may remove or restrict an object, activity, etc. to help a child understand the consequence of their behavior. This is not restriction from all activity, it is a temporary restriction from the area of conflict. For example, "I asked you to move your stick-swinging to an open space. I still see you swinging a stick near our friends. I need to take this stick away now, so everyone can be safe."
- **Taking Space:** A teacher may ask a child to step away from the group and take some space. We strive to use other behavioral interventions first, but removal may be the first step if the behavior is dangerous to self or others or significantly disruptive to the experience of others.



The purpose of taking space is to allow the child to relax and calm down in a safe space, away from peers. Children who are taking space are supervised and have the opportunity to talk to staff when they are ready to problem solve together. The child may return to the activity as soon as the child and staff person agree that he or she is ready.

An additional removal from activities within the same day may result in the child being brought to the Program Director to take space and talk together. If removal from an activity occurs two or more times in the same day, a parent may be notified at pick up time.

Persistent Inappropriate Behavior and Removal from Program

Persistent Inappropriate Behavior is any behavior that is regularly repeated after the behavioral guidance and intervention strategies above have been used. A parent will be contacted in the case of persistent inappropriate behavior, and the parent and Program Director will agree on a plan and timeline for addressing the behavior at Discovery Wilderness School. If the behavior continues (or is not steadily improving) after the behavioral intervention plan has been implemented, parents may be asked to withdraw their child.

Immediate Program Withdrawal

Certain behaviors may result in parents being asked to withdraw their child immediately, even if none of the steps above have been applied. Those behaviors may include anything that presents a significant danger to the child or others, substantial and willful property damage, or intentionally running away or trying to run away from the park.

Refund Policy

Tuition refunds are not available for days that a parent is asked to keep a child home for behavioral reasons. If DWS requests that a child be withdrawn, tuition is not refundable for the semester of withdrawal. Tuition for the future semester will be refunded in full. Children who are requested to withdraw from the program are welcome to enroll again in a future program if the parent feels the child has learned new skills to manage the behavior. We believe that children learn and grow, and children who had a tough season are always welcomed back for a fresh start.

Prohibited Methods of Discipline

Our program prohibits the use of the following:

- Physical punishment, including threats to use such methods
- Any consequence intended to embarrass or humiliate
- Restriction from food, water, bathroom, shade, warmth, or other basic needs
- Punishment for toileting accidents
- Physical restraint, except as absolutely necessary to protect a child or others from harm

Safety and Risk Assessment

One of the many benefits of allowing children to explore outdoors is that they gain in self-confidence and independence, in part by taking reasonable risks and testing their limits. We recognize that taking risks is an important part of learning and development and we want to provide a safe and encouraging environment in which students can learn about risks, challenges, and personal safety. Our goal is to allow reasonable risk taking, balanced with watchfulness for true safety hazards.

Please do NOT send children with knives, bladed tools of any kind, or any form of fire starting tools. Safe, supervised knife use and fire starting techniques may be taught to older children if appropriate, and parents will be informed about these activities. Please note that there may be **age and situationally appropriate exceptions** for many of the broad policies below. For example, certain kinds of climbing may be permissible for a 10-year-old but not for a 4-year-old.

Our teachers set the following expectations for the children:

Climbing: Children love to balance on logs and climb up trees! Children are permitted to climb as high as they are tall, and must be able to reach that height by themselves (teachers will not lift them up to a place that they cannot reach themselves).

Throwing: Children are permitted to throw sticks, acorns, and other natural objects AWAY from the group, and away from trails or other places people might be walking. Teachers will help define throwing zones when needed.

Fire: We will frequently gather at our fire circle. Children are taught to sit on the benches that surround the fire. If a child or teacher needs to move to a different spot, he or she will walk right next to the bench until s/he can exit the fire circle. Campfires are closely supervised and extinguished thoroughly when not in use.

Exploring: Children are taught to stay within the boundaries set by teachers at all times. This typically means that children are directly in sight of a teacher, but occasionally the forest topography means a child is out of sight, but within boundaries and within voice range. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that young children do not accidentally stray from the group. Children who deliberately run from or leave the group will be asked to withdraw for safety reasons.

Wildlife: Children are taught to be gentle with living things and to ask a teacher before touching or picking up any wildlife they find in the woods or on the field.

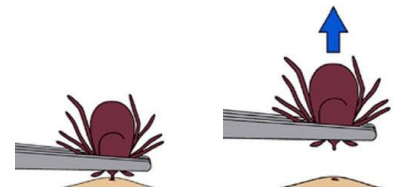
Wild Edibles: Teachers will explore some basic, easily identifiable wild edibles with children (autumn olive berries, wild grapes, wood sorrel, and white pine needles, for example). As part of this exploration, children are taught to never eat anything from nature without permission from an adult.

Sticks: Playing with sticks is part of childhood. We know that children will collect, carry, swing, dig, throw, and swordfight with sticks. Children are taught that they must carry sticks with one end in their hand and the other end pointing down. Just like with throwing, children who wish to swing sticks are directed to find a safe space away from other people. Fantasy play, including sword fighting, is generally acceptable as long as the play does not involve physical contact and the level of imaginary violence is not distressing to children who are not involved in the game. Teachers will redirect play that crosses physical or emotional safety boundaries.

Water: Our explorations will often take us to Buck Creek. Children are closely supervised at all times when playing in the water. Students are shown clear depth boundaries before entering the water. Because streams may have sharp rocks or other debris, children are required to wear rain boots, water shoes, closed toed sandals, or old sneakers for wading.

Ticks

Deer ticks (which can spread Lyme Disease) are found throughout Michigan. Staff will help prevent students from encountering ticks by keeping children out of prime tick habitat – areas of tall grass and weeds. However, the exploratory nature of the program means



that children are likely to encounter ticks and other insects. Parents can help prevent tick (and mosquito) bites by applying bug repellent to children each morning in the fall and spring. For ticks, don't forget to spray shoes and socks, as they typically climb on from ground level. Please do a full body tick check at home after each program day.

If a tick is found on a student, our teachers will properly remove the tick and inform the parents. Following a tick bite, parents should monitor their child for any rare reactions. For more information about ticks please go to the following web site: [Center for Disease Control](#)

Poison Ivy

Staff will teach children to identify poison ivy. However, we realize that many children are too young or too busy having fun to remember to look out for it. We keep the parks as free of poison ivy as possible, and staff will be mindful of poison ivy patches in the woods while adventuring. If your child develops a rash that you suspect to be poison ivy, make sure to wash the clothes and shoes they wore that day in hot soapy water right away, as poison ivy can continue to spread from oils remaining on the clothes.



Sun Safety

Our classes take place 100% outdoors. Please make sure your child has sunscreen already applied before coming to class every day; even on cloudy days they are exposed to UV. Other precautions to prevent over exposure include wearing a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses and long pants and sleeves.

Soils

Students at DWS spend their days in and around nature. This involves getting dirty. Students will be in areas where wildlife and domestic animals have been and have the potential to come in contact with fecal matter. As a precaution to minimize any chance of harm from incidental soil contact it is suggested that:

- Students will wash their hands before eating. Ingestion is the primary pathway for anything in the soil to enter the body. If your child has a condition where they are prone to such activities (such as Pica) please let the staff know. Wash thoroughly at the end of each day. This can be combined with a careful tick-check.

How we treat injuries

Scrapes, cuts, and insect stings are typical as we play and explore. Cuts and scrapes are washed with soap and water and covered with a clean bandage. If your child comes home with a band-aid on, please know that the cut may require further cleaning and inspection by a parent. Bumps and bee-stings are treated with ice. We will call and notify a parent about any significant injury so that you are aware of it before pick-up time.

All staff are certified in CPR and First Aid. In the case of a medical emergency, we will care for your child, call 911, and call a parent immediately.

Staff Training

All staff are professionals that have received a fingerprinted background check, and are certified in First Aid and CPR. We aim to provide training and support to ensure that staff and volunteers are confident and competent when following the policies and emergency procedures. Staff receive three weeks of paid training, specific to our Nature Program, before the school year begins. If parents would like a copy of the Teacher Handbook and Emergency Procedures, feel free to contact the Program Director.



Role of the Parent Helper

[Click Here for the Parent Helper Sign Up Sheet](#)

Parents and Guardians are always invited to explore with us in class. Parents are asked to specifically choose at least one day per semester to be the assigned parent helper in their student's class. We are a community of families—**as a parent helper, you may bring babies or younger siblings along too.**

Before Class: Please take time to become familiar with **DWS's Curriculum (page 5)** of this handbook), **Student Safety Expectations (page 13)** and the **Behavior Management Policy (page 21)**. As a parent helper, please arrive 20 minutes before class begins to help with set up and get situated with your child's Lead Guide. You may also be asked to help with morning drop off—helping kids from their car to the meet-up area to begin class.

If you plan to be in class often and would like more detailed instruction on the Curriculum, Art of Mentoring, or Policies or Procedures, feel free to ask for a copy of the Teacher Handbook, which explains all of this in much greater detail.

During Class: The role of the parent helper is to be an active participant in the learning process, by becoming a Nature Mentor for the day. Keep in mind the Art of Questioning (rather than answering a "What is this?" question right away, asking questions to guide a child to come up with her own answer). We also want to give children freedom to explore on their own without an adult hovering over them. When we are exploring, the Lead guide will set boundaries and ask Parent Helpers to spread around the boundaries, forming a circle around the student explorers.

After Class: Please help with organizing student pick up, motioning cars to pull forward, connecting students to the correct car. You may also be asked to help clean up materials from class, or stay with a student waiting to be picked up.

Absence on your Parent Helper Day: Life happens. Kids get sick. Cars break down. If you are unable to come on your scheduled Parent Helper Day, please do your best to find another parent that can take your place. Our DWS Family Facebook Page might be a good place for this. Also, please contact your Lead Guide and let her know about this change.

Thank You!

Thank you for choosing to partner with Discovery Wilderness School for the 2019-2020 Year. Choosing outdoor schooling as a supplement to your schooling at home speaks to your commitment to nurturing your child's relationship to the natural environment. We hope you find a community you will enjoy in the parents and children you will meet here.



Acknowledgement of Handbook Policies

I, _____, acknowledge that I have received a digital copy of Discovery Wilderness School's Handbook. I acknowledge that I have read the handbook in its entirety and will abide by the policies outlined within the document. In addition, I understand that the contents of the Handbook are subject to change. I acknowledge that the Handbook will be revised in accordance with the rules or regulations of state, federal, and accrediting entities, best practices for child care service providers, or at the discretion of the Director of Discovery Wilderness School. I recognize that it is my responsibility to contact the Director with any questions I might have about the contents of the Family Handbook now and in the future.

By initialing next to each of the bulleted points below, you signify that you have specifically paid close attention to the following sections of the Family Handbook:

- Illness Policy _____ (Initial)
- Gear Requirements _____ (Initial)
- Pick-up and Drop-off _____ (Initial)
- Tuition _____ (Initial)
- Role of the Parent Helper _____ (Initial)

Both parents / guardians, if applicable, MUST sign and date this form.

Signature Printed Name Date

Signature Printed Name Date

_____ Child Registered in Program (1)

_____ Child Registered in Program (2)

_____ Child Registered in Program (3)

_____ Child Registered in Program (4)

_____ Child Registered in Program (5)