



School & Nature RVA

Parent's Co-op group

Informations & Presentation

Last update : 01/15/2025

Welcome to School & Nature RVA : Where Education Meets the Outdoors

Imagine a classroom with no walls, where the sun is the ceiling and the trees are the chalkboards. At School & Nature RVA, learning happens outdoors, in our beautiful Nature Areas. From toddlers to teens, Our program is designed to nurture each child's academic, emotional, social, and personal development while fostering a love for the environment 🌿 ☀️

Join us and let your child explore : Outdoor learning helps children develop leadership, teamwork, and critical thinking : skills they'll carry with them far beyond the classroom

🌿 *Together, let's create something extraordinary for our children* ☀️

1. Our Mission and Philosophy

At School & Nature RVA, our mission is to provide a **safe outdoor environment** where children thrive under the guidance of a skilled educator. Our certified teacher leverages the natural world to teach both foundational and advanced skills, fostering:

- **Academic Growth:** Developing literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking skills through hands-on learning.
- **Social Skills:** Promoting teamwork, communication, and respect for others in a collaborative environment.
- **Emotional Regulation:** Helping children understand and manage their emotions while building resilience.
- **Personal Growth:** Encouraging independence, confidence, and a lifelong love for learning.
- **Environmental Awareness:** Teaching children to appreciate, respect, and care for the natural world.

Our philosophy centers on **education and outdoor learning**, combining structured lessons with free exploration to balance academic rigor and creativity. We believe children learn best when they are engaged with the natural world and free to explore their interests at their own pace.

2. Programs and Schedule

At School & Nature RVA, we offer programs, based on Montessori and Reggio Emilia Philosophy, tailored to meet the developmental needs of children across various age groups. Our classes emphasize hands-on, outdoor learning that fosters curiosity, creativity, and connection.

Available and Upcoming Classes				
Classroom	Ratio	Statuts	Price	Enrollment
2 Yo - Toddlers	2 teachers 8 children	Open since Mars 2025	\$34 per half-day \$68 per full day	Open
3-5 Yo - PreK	2 teachers 10 children	Open since September 2024	\$30 per half-day \$60 per full day	Open
6-8 Yo - Elementary 1	2 teachers 11 children	Open since Mars 2025	\$30 per half-day \$60 per full day	Open
9-11 Yo - Advanced Elementary	2 teachers 11 children	Open since Mars 2025	\$30 per half-day \$60 per full day	Open
12-15 Yo - Teens	TBD	Opening November 2025	TBD	Opening Nov 2025

Schedule Options

- **Morning Half-Day:** 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM

- **Afternoon Half-Day:** 1:30 PM – 4:30 PM
- **Full Day:** 9:30 AM – 4:30 PM

Flexibility

Families can choose between **half-day or full-day options** and enroll in **1 to 5 days per week**, creating a schedule that works best for them by choosing the number of days and times that suit their family's needs.

3. Learning Approach and Curriculum

Learning Approach and Curriculum

Our certified teacher uses the outdoors as a dynamic classroom to teach essential concepts across a range of disciplines, fostering both personal and academic growth. Each age group benefits from a curriculum tailored to their developmental needs and guided by an experienced, passionate educator.

Our Teachers

At School & Nature RVA, our teachers are more than instructors—they are skilled guides who inspire curiosity and foster growth in every child. With expertise in **Reggio Emilia, Montessori, Waldorf, Charlotte Mason's** and other child-centered philosophies, they use nature as the ultimate "third teacher."

- **Certified and Experienced:** Our educators are certified professionals (Master or BA degrees in education) with a deep understanding of child development and outdoor education.
- **Holistic Focus:** Teachers emphasize academics, social skills, emotional regulation, personal development, and environmental awareness.
- **Engaged and Observant:** They tailor lessons to the needs and interests of each group, ensuring every child is challenged and supported.

Curriculum by Age Group

Each classroom is designed to meet the unique developmental needs of its students while maintaining the overarching mission of outdoor, nature-based learning.

- **2-Year-Olds : Toddlers**

Curriculum Highlights:

- Developing sensory awareness through hands-on exploration of nature.
- Introducing basic social skills like sharing and taking turns during group activities.
- Encouraging early language and communication through storytelling and songs in outdoor settings.
- Supporting motor skills with activities like digging, climbing, and balancing.

- **3-5-Year-Olds : PreK**

- **Curriculum Highlights:**

- Building foundational academic skills, including early literacy, numeracy, and pattern recognition, through nature-inspired activities.
- Developing emotional regulation and social skills through cooperative play and guided problem-solving.
- Exploring science concepts like life cycles, seasons, and habitats by observing plants and animals in their environment.
- Nurturing creativity and expression through nature-based art and music projects.

- **6-8-Year-Olds : Elementary 1**

- **Curriculum Highlights:**

- Strengthening academic skills, such as reading comprehension, writing, and mathematical reasoning, with real-world applications in nature.
- Deepening environmental knowledge with focused studies on ecosystems, weather, and conservation.
- Encouraging teamwork and leadership through group projects, like building shelters or mapping trails.
- Supporting emotional growth with activities that foster empathy, resilience, and self-reflection.

- **9-11-Year-Olds : Advanced Elementary**

- **Curriculum Highlights:**

- Advanced academic exploration, including geometry, scientific experiments, and creative writing.
- Environmental stewardship projects, such as composting, gardening, and water conservation.
- Personal development through goal-setting, leadership opportunities, and reflective journaling.
- Encouraging critical thinking and problem-solving with challenges like designing and building functional outdoor tools.

- **12-15-Year-Olds : TeensOpening**

- **Curriculum Highlights:**

- Advanced environmental science topics, such as biodiversity, climate change, and sustainability.
- Preparing for future success with skills like public speaking, teamwork, and self-directed learning.
- Hands-on projects that combine academic learning with community service, such as habitat restoration or advocacy campaigns.
- Encouraging personal responsibility, independence, and collaboration in group settings.

Core Learning Areas for All Age Groups

- **Academics:** Numbers, letters, reading, writing, and problem-solving are taught through hands-on experiences like counting acorns, writing nature journals, or creating maps.

- **Social and Emotional Skills:** Activities focus on teamwork, emotional self-awareness, and communication.
- **Environmental Education:** Children explore ecosystems, life cycles, and sustainable practices through direct observation and engagement.
- **Personal Development:** We nurture confidence by helping children discover their strengths and learn how to use them effectively. Challenges in nature build resilience, independence, and a sense of accomplishment.
- **Life Skills:** Decision-making, responsibility, and practical problem-solving are integrated into daily routines.

4. Our Locations

We are proud to operate in **Dogwood Dell Park** and **Cheswick Park**, two beautiful and accessible locations in Richmond. These parks provide the ideal environment for outdoor education, offering:

Our choice to be in parks reflects our commitment to giving children the freedom to learn in an authentic, natural setting while ensuring accessibility for families.

As we grow, **we plan to expand to additional locations** to make our programs available to even more families in the Richmond area.

5. Safety and Flexibility

Outdoor Safety and Classroom Requirements

Is it safe to be outdoors?

At School & Nature RVA, safety is our top priority. While outdoor learning provides countless benefits for children, we understand the importance of maintaining a secure and well-supervised environment. Our teachers are highly trained to ensure the safety of all children during outdoor activities, equipped with the knowledge and skills to manage groups in natural settings effectively.

Key Safety Measures:

- **Trained Teachers:** Every group is supervised by at least two trained teachers who are well-versed in safety protocols and first aid. Additionally, having multiple age groups present creates a supportive and collaborative environment for everyone.
- **Classroom Requirements:** To maintain a safe group, certain requirements must be met before children can join the classroom. These include a readiness to follow basic safety instructions and an understanding of group dynamics.

- **Drop-Off Policy:** Only children who meet these safety requirements can be dropped off. This ensures that the group remains manageable and secure for all participants. Parents are encouraged to communicate with teachers about their child's readiness before starting the program.

By implementing these measures, we create a safe and nurturing environment where children can explore, learn, and thrive in the great outdoors.

Weather Preparedness:

Rain or shine, we embrace the outdoors. Students are required to wear gears adapted to the weather to stay safe and comfortable. Teachers too!

Also, Our **mobile classroom** offers a warm, safe space for indoor learning.

6. Mobile Classroom

At **School & Nature RVA**, we are proud to offer a unique learning environment with our Mobile classroom as a flexible indoor space that complements our outdoor learning philosophy.

Indoor Learning Space:

The Mobile classroom is designed to be a comfortable and welcoming space where children can continue their learning indoors when necessary, such as during extreme weather conditions. It is equipped with materials to continue our nature-inspired curriculum in a cozy and safe indoor setting.

Comfortable and Safety:

Safety and comfort are prioritized in our Mobile classroom. It is equipped with heating and cooling to ensure the children are comfortable no matter the season. Additionally, the Bus is stocked with first aid supplies and emergency equipment to ensure that all children are safe and cared for during their adventures.

7. Support for Parents

At School & Nature RVA, we understand that parents are an integral part of their child's educational journey. Our teachers are not just here for the children—they are a resource and support system for parents as well. We aim to create a collaborative community where parents feel empowered, informed, and engaged in their child's growth.

How We Support Parents:

- **Open Communication:** Teachers are always available to listen to parents' questions, concerns, and excitement about their child's progress. Whether you need advice, ideas for extending learning at home, or help understanding your child's needs, our teachers are here to guide you.

- **Adaptation Support:** Our teachers work closely with parents to implement tailored strategies that help children adapt to the outdoor learning environment. By understanding each child's unique needs, we create a seamless transition between school and home.
- **Observation Opportunities:** Parents are always welcome to stay with the classroom—whether for a short visit or an extended observation. This provides an opportunity to watch our teachers in action, learn alongside their children, and gain valuable insights into our nature-based approach.
- **A Collaborative Partnership:** We value parents' input and strive to create a supportive environment where families feel like active participants in their child's education. Together, we build a strong foundation for both the child and the community.

By fostering this partnership, we create a school that supports not only children's growth but also the well-being and confidence of their parents.

8. Parent Involvement : A Co-Op Built by Families, For Families

At School & Nature RVA, **parents are the heart of the school**. As a co-op, this is **your school**, shaped by your vision and values. Families work together to create a nurturing environment.

How Parents Participate

- **Shaping the school:** Parents collectively shape the school for their children, making decisions about policies, curriculum, and rules within the co-op's mission.
- **Teacher Selection:** Families choose the teacher, ensuring alignment with the school's philosophy and values.
- **Collaborative Effort:** Parents contribute to the school's success through volunteering, organizing activities, or providing feedback.
- **Flexible Involvement:** Assisting will always be an option to adapt to each family.

By working together, we create a school that reflects the shared values of our community and provides children with a safe, enriching environment where they can grow and thrive.

9. How to Enroll

Enrolling your child at School & Nature RVA is a simple and collaborative process. Follow these steps to get started:

1. **Reach Out:** Contact us via messenger, text, call or email to express your interest and ask any initial questions.

2. **Schedule a Discovery** (1h tour without your children) **or Trial Day** (\$25 your child experience the school with the classroom for a half day) : We encourage prospective families to schedule a trial day, to experience our program firsthand and meet the teachers.
3. **Complete the Application**: Once you decide to join, we will provide an enrollment packet, which includes the enrollment forms, information on “what to wear and bring”, school rules and guidelines, and tuition and fees information.
4. **Submit the Enrollment Deposit and enrollment fee**: Now, You are officially part of our community !
5. **Onboard with Brightwheel and Band App**: you will receive access to :

Brightwheel app : where you can stay updated on your child’s progress and communicate directly with the teacher.

Band App : where you can follow updates about the school and be connected to the other families
6. **Prepare for Adventure**: Receive a welcome packet with details about what to bring, the daily schedule, and tips for outdoor learning. We’ll work with you to ensure your child is ready for their first day!

Join the Adventure Today!

Give your child the opportunity to grow academically, socially, and emotionally while developing a deep connection to nature. 🌱 ✨

Contact Us:

- **Phone**: 804-791-8439
- **Email**: schoolnaturerva@gmail.com
- **Website**: www.schoolnaturerva.com
- **Social Media**: Follow us on Facebook for updates and photos of daily adventures.

Schedule a trial day and experience the magic of nature-based learning with a certified teacher who understands how to inspire and nurture every child’s potential. 🌈

Agreement and Signature:

- Parent /Guardian Name : _____
- Parent /Guardian Signature : _____
- Date : _____

10. The science behind outdoor learning

Learning outside has been scientifically shown to be beneficial for children in several ways, which can be attributed to various factors related to physical health, cognitive development, and emotional well-being.

1. **Enhanced Cognitive Function and Focus:** Research has shown that spending time in natural environments can improve cognitive functions such as attention, memory, and problem-solving. Nature has a calming effect that reduces mental fatigue, allowing children to focus better and for longer periods. This is supported by studies indicating that exposure to natural settings helps improve children's concentration and cognitive performance in tasks.
2. **Physical Health and Motor Skills:** Outdoor learning naturally incorporates physical activity, which is crucial for children's physical development. Activities like running, climbing, and exploring diverse terrains help develop motor skills, balance, and coordination. Regular physical activity also promotes cardiovascular health and helps prevent obesity, which can be more challenging to integrate into indoor learning environments.
3. **Reduced Stress and Improved Mental Health:** Nature exposure has been linked to lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. For children, being outside in a natural setting can provide a sense of freedom and reduce the pressure they might feel in a more structured indoor environment. The presence of natural elements like trees, water, and open spaces has been shown to decrease cortisol levels (a marker of stress) and promote overall well-being.
4. **Enhanced Social Skills and Collaboration:** Outdoor learning often involves group activities that encourage teamwork, communication, and social interaction. In an outdoor setting, children are more likely to engage in unstructured play and cooperative games, which can enhance their social skills and emotional intelligence.

5. **Connection to Nature and Environmental Stewardship:** Regular exposure to nature fosters a deeper connection to the environment, which is crucial for developing a sense of responsibility and stewardship for the natural world. This connection is harder to cultivate in indoor settings and is increasingly recognized as vital for raising environmentally conscious future generations.
6. **Improved Academic Performance:** Some studies suggest that children who engage in outdoor learning and play perform better academically. The combination of physical activity, enhanced focus, and reduced stress contributes to better learning outcomes and can make children more receptive to educational content when they return to more formal indoor settings.
7. **Sensory Engagement and Creativity:** Being outside engages all the senses—sight, sound, smell, touch—which can lead to more immersive learning experiences. This sensory engagement can stimulate creativity and imagination, as children are inspired by the changing environment and the endless possibilities of the natural world.

In summary, learning outside supports children's holistic development by enhancing cognitive function, physical health, emotional well-being, and social skills. These benefits make outdoor learning an invaluable complement to traditional indoor education.

Experiencing time away from parents is crucial for a child's development for several reasons:

1. **Independence and Self-confidence:** When children spend time away from their parents, they learn to rely on themselves and develop independence. This fosters self-confidence as they navigate new situations on their own or with peers.
2. **Social Skills Development:** Interacting with other children and adults without parental involvement helps children develop essential social skills. They learn to share, negotiate, resolve conflicts, and communicate effectively in a group setting.
3. **Emotional Resilience:** Being away from parents allows children to experience and manage a range of emotions, such as missing their parents, and learning to cope with those feelings. This builds emotional resilience, which is important for their mental well-being.
4. **Adaptability:** Experiencing different environments and routines outside of the family home helps children become more adaptable and flexible. They learn to adjust to new situations, which is a valuable skill as they grow.
5. **Learning from Other Adults:** Exposure to different caregivers or teachers provides children with a broader perspective. They can benefit from various teaching styles, ideas, and approaches, which enriches their learning experience.

6. **Development of Peer Relationships:** Spending time in settings like schools, co-ops, or playgroups helps children form friendships and understand the dynamics of peer relationships, which are important for social development.
7. **Preparation for School and Future Challenges:** Regularly spending time away from parents helps children prepare for the structure of the future. It makes the transition smoother and helps them feel more secure and ready to face future challenges independently.

Overall, these experiences contribute to well-rounded personal growth and prepare children for the broader world beyond their immediate family.