



Skyline's Wild Child program aims to spark campers' life-long meaningful connection with the natural world. Campers will build their knowledge through first-hand experiences with nature and relationships with peers and adults. The camp staff will promote learning by:

- Providing a nature-rich environment that encourages play, discovery, and exploration.
- Hands-on learning activities that meet the developmental needs of all campers and encourage growth.
- Developing a sense of autonomy and resilience by providing choice within the day, developing conflict resolution skills, empowering campers to try new things, and affirming a camper's individuality.
- Engaging the whole family in nature-based activities at home.

Wild Child General Schedule and Program Details

General Schedule

You can see below the schedule of a typical day at camp. While we believe that routine is crucial for our 3 and 4-year-old campers, we will also remain flexible with the schedule as we want to take the time for the teachable moments that will arise throughout the day.

8:50-9:00	Arrival
9:00-9:30	Free Play
9:30-10:00	Morning Gathering & Snack
10:20-10:30	Trekking Time
10:30-11:30	Daily Destination
11:30-11:40	Trekking Time
11:40-11:55	Free Play
11:50-12:00	Pickup

Arrival

Campers arrive in the mornings between 8:50 am and 9:00 am. We ask the families to park in the lot next to our Dining Hall and walk to where we are checking in. Our check-in location will vary from season to season. When you arrive to check-in, you will be greeted by the Wild Child staff and sign in your camper. Once campers are signed in they can go right into free play time while we wait for everyone to arrive.

Free Play

Campers have time at the beginning and end of each day to explore, run, jump, climb, and crawl through our natural spaces at camp. This is an excellent time for building shelters, digging in the dirt, climbing up and over logs, kicking around a ball, playing catch, running around, discovering at our mud kitchen, and so much more. Our staff at this time are facilitators of play at this time and help campers explore their imaginations and learn to play together.

Morning Gathering

Our morning gathering is a time for us to come together as a group and greet each other and the day. We sing songs of welcome, read and tell stories, and get a sneak peek at where we will be heading to on our daily destination that day. This is a valuable time for us to build culture and community amongst the group and build foundational knowledge that will help campers with topics that we explore from day-to-day.

Trekking Time

Twice a day we get the opportunity to trek to our daily destination and back to the check-out area with campers. Trekking time is not about getting from place to place, but about the journey we will take

to get there. We will walk slowly, look up high, look down low, and even just stop to listen. Our campers will guide our exploration with their curiosity about what they see, hear, feel, and smell.

Daily Destinations

Each day campers hike to a destination at camp. Campers have the opportunity to use the restroom before leaving for the destination. With each activity, we incorporate a mixture of pre-literacy skills, pre-numeracy skills, communication skills, and problem-solving skills.

Daily Destinations

Music and Movement: Music and Movement is naturally woven into each day of the program. We celebrate the natural world through song, dance, and story. We sing about the brown squirrel while we wrinkle up our little noses and shake our bushy tails. We sing about the leaves as we fall, and twirl around just like the leaves do. We sing about the bears that hibernate in the winter and the wild geese that fly as winter approaches. We play games and dance to the different melodies we create. We explore rhythm with sticks, rocks, trees and more. We stretch and breathe while we act out songs and seasonal stories. On frigid days we may get out the drums or the Boomwhackers and make music indoors.

Trails: Skyline has a few different hiking trails that make our travel from place to place an exciting adventure. The trails provide us a place to play games and for us to stop and look closely at the grass, dirt, bugs, critters, plants, and trees.

Pond: Skyline's Pond is filled with creatures large and small to observe. We have fish, turtles, snails, dragonflies, birds, butterflies, backswimmers, and occasionally a muskrat or a pair of nesting geese will take residence on the shoreline. It is a beautiful area to explore and discover Skyline's native flora and fauna. When we visit the pond we have a Skyline lifeguard present.

Wildflower Hill: This is a hill at camp that we do not mow in the early Fall, Summer, and late Spring. It is full of tall grasses,

Milkweed, Compass Plant, Queen Anne's Lace, Goldenrod, Black-Eyed Susan's, Bergamot, Autumn Olive and more. It is a beautiful place full of color to learn about plant anatomy, plant identification, plant life cycles, and how plants are useful to humans. It is also a fun place to feel the warmth of the sun on your face and the wind in your hair as you run down the hill.

Wilderness: Wilderness is a special place found at the far end of camp. It is home to Skyline's very own covered wagon and our Maple Tree Forest. Campers will not only enjoy running, jumping, and playing in these woods, but they will also learn about the process of making maple syrup.

Climbing Pines: The climbing pines has become a favorite destination for our campers. It is a space that incorporates many types of play. There is a circle of pines with low growing branches that are perfect for learning the skills of tree climbing. It is near a sandy and rocky patch of trail for us to make sand creations and find our favorite rocks. Also located nearby is a grassy hill that is the perfect invitation for running and rolling down.

Wild Child's Farm and Garden Program:

Wild Child aims to foster a positive connection between campers and the natural world. People sometimes think of agriculture as separate from, or at odds with, the natural world. At Skyline, we attempt to allow the same ecological forces that drive the natural world to guide our growing practices. Rather than spraying pesticides, we plant flowers that attract beneficial insects that help control our pests. Instead of synthetic fertilizers, we turn our food, garden, and animal waste into compost that we feed to our plants. We mulch our plants with straw and leaves to help keep the soil healthy, which in turn helps the plants grow to be strong and resilient, just like our campers.

Campers will see honeybees and other pollinators visiting flowers, and then watch those same flowers transform into fruits that they will harvest and eat. We will examine how plants grow in the woods and in the fields, and compare that to the way we grow our food in the garden. We will watch the goats graze, and notice that what they take from the earth to eat, they return to the earth as fertilizer. All these things make our farm and gardens excellent places to begin to learn about ecology and the interdependence of all living things.

When we visit with the animals, we will talk about what livestock provide for us (eggs, milk, etc.). All campers will learn that we respect our animals, give them the best life possible while we have them with us, and are grateful for the nourishment that they provide.

Farm and Garden Days

We will spend at least one day per week visiting Skyline's gardens and farm animals. Over the course of a year, campers will practice their observation skills as they pay close attention to the seasonal changes that are taking place in the garden. In addition to harvesting and eating fresh vegetables, campers will explore the diversity of colors, life, smells, and sounds in the garden throughout the year,

while developing communication, listening, and problem-solving skills.

Skyline's farm animals include a small herd of friendly Nigerian Dwarf goats and a flock of laying hens. All of our livestock live near the farmhouse and main garden, so we will see and visit with them often. When working with livestock, camper safety is always our first priority. All activities involving livestock will be age-appropriate and well-supervised. At the farm, "challenge by choice," allows campers to observe until they feel comfortable fully interacting with the animals.

Campers will form relationships with the animals at their own pace while building confidence in their ability to care for them. We encourage campers to form bonds with our "forever" animals- the goats and chickens. Throughout the year campers will help care for the animals whenever possible. Examples of livestock care may include: carrying feed and water, laying down bedding, collecting eggs, brushing goats, and more.

Garden Program by Season

Fall

When campers first arrive in the fall, our gardens will be full of color and life, from potatoes ready to be dug out of the soil, to flowers in full bloom, to gentle honey bees visiting for an autumn meal. Campers will help harvest beans, pumpkins, tomatoes, and many other vegetables. During this time, many of our snacks will be harvested by campers, and some days, activities will involve preparation of snacks from our garden produce. While playing and working in the garden, we will learn about nutrition, soil, botany, and all parts of the garden ecosystem.

Winter

During the winter, we will put our gardens to bed, explore the soil for signs of life, learn about compost, and begin planning our spring gardens. We will plant, save, and sprout seeds indoors. We may also paint signs or create other works of art to brighten up the sleeping gardens. This is a time for us to visit with the animals for a longer period of time as well. We watch the goats grow an extra wooly layer to keep warm and bring the chickens our snack leftovers to enjoy on the cold winter days.

Spring

In the spring we will prepare our garden beds, spread compost, and begin planting seeds. One day we may bring a giant pile of woodchips to climb and spread in our walking areas. Another day may involve spreading straw in the animal pens and raking out old straw to keep their spaces clean. In this season we also learn about the chick incubation and hatching process first hand. Throughout the season, campers will observe the first life coming back to the garden- garlic shoots peeking out of the ground, perennial herbs growing fresh leaves, and newly planted seeds sprouting.

Snacks

Snack time might seem like a straightforward experience, but here at Wild Child we choose to take the opportunity to fill this time with intentional choices and encouragement. Instead of sticking just to food that may be traditionally considered “kid food” we choose a large variety of food to serve at snack time.

Our first guide in snack time is any of our children’s dietary needs. We do our best to provide everyone with the same or similar snack and are able to serve most dietary needs.

The second guide is the fact that it can take over 20 exposures for a child to decide to taste a new food item. We know that not everyone has the same tastes, or food exposures, but we do serve everyone the same thing. Many times, kids avoid things because they don't know what it is, or it looks weird, but in this slow introduction they get to decide how much they try or if they like something or not. With this in mind, we always include all items in their bowl so that if they decide it is time to try something new it is ready and available. We are intentional about the choices we make. We try to first introduce something they may not know or think they don't like in a simple way, typically just as the item itself, such as applesauce or blueberries or dried cranberries. Then once they have seen the item, we will change the way they get to experience it, maybe by baking with it or adding it to trail mix.

A third guide to snack time is the social experience. Snack time is a chance to sit down together over our “meal” and just spend time together face to face. Food is often a communal time, and this is no different at Wild Child. It not only gives us a chance to chat about food, but it is also a chance to practice being patient and taking turns. Taking part in a meal together boosts feelings of being cared for and in turn children are more likely to participate in activities with their peers and are more willing to try new things. At times we will also get to make our snack together. We use kid safe knives and discuss how to safely use a knife. We each take turns preparing a portion of our snack, and in the end we sit down together and enjoy our hard work.

Throughout our days at Wild Child we will get to try a variety of different foods. We will get to try fresh picked foods from our garden, such as cucamelons and tomatoes. We will make salsa together using our fresh cilantro, onions, garlic, tomatoes, and jalapenos. We will make applesauce over a fire and jam from our wild berries and apples. We will bake together and create a variety of delicious snacks, such as zucchini muffins, carrot and apple muffins, cranberry breakfast cookies, and raspberry granola bars. We are excited to see what delicious treats we will enjoy together this year.

Departure/Pickup

We will wrap up at the end of each day with a short group check in to reflect on what campers saw or learned at camp. We will have campers free play until their parents or caregivers arrive to pick them up. Please park in the lot next to our dining hall and walk to the check-out area to pick up your camper(s). You will be asked to sign out your campers when you arrive to pick up. We will keep a list of authorized grownups that can pick up campers and ask for picture identification when you sign your camper out. (This form is a part of the camper registration process.)

Health and Safety

Paperwork:

Every camper is asked to fill out a health form along with the camper application. The form will ask about campers' allergies, dietary needs, medications (if any) and overall physical health. The health form also gives us permission for what over the counter medications you camper can or cannot have. This form can be filled out by visiting your CampBrain profile. If you need any assistance with this, you can contact Erin Stokes at 810-798-8240 ext.102 or email erin@campskyline.org.

Procedures:

Erin Stokes is a certified Wilderness First Responder and is dedicated to the care of health needs and acts within the policies which are annually reviewed by a licensed physician. Erin will always keep a first aid kit with her and document any treatments given. Erin, and other staff, will communicate any injuries, illnesses, and treatments with the parent or guardian at check-out.

Skyline's Director, Matt Henry, who is also on site, is certified as a Red Cross First Aid and CPR Trainer. He will remain available should additional support be needed.

All the Wild Child staff are trained in our health and safety responsibilities.

Skyline is within about 6 minutes of EMS response; about 10 minutes to our closest Urgent Care, and about 25 minutes from large hospital emergency facilities. Our first call in serious matters will be 911, our second call(s) will be until we reach a parent/guardian.

Skyline will always attempt to reach you if:

- Your camper becomes ill and needs to go home early.
- An emergency call has been placed for your camper.

- Your camper needs to be taken (but not a 911 call) offsite to seek further medical assistance.
- Something occurs that you have requested contact about.

Skyline is accredited by the American Camp Association, and
licensed by the State of Michigan

Skyline is an independent 501©(3) non profit organization.

Skyline Camper Policies

Parents and guardians - please read and discuss this with your camper.

- Skyline is dedicated to providing a safe, caring environment where campers share all phases of camp life and are accepted as individuals. Our staff is trained to develop and maintain this atmosphere at all times.
- We believe that Skyline works in **partnership with families** in providing this wonderful camp experience, since preparation before camp and reflection after camp are both necessary to make the most of what Skyline has to offer.
- Camp is all about having fun and **trying new things**. We offer a variety of activities, and some of these may be unfamiliar to the camper. We encourage campers to try as many different and new activities as they can.
- We model **appropriate language** and believe that this contributes to the emotional safety of all our campers. We believe in affirming campers and helping them to learn how to affirm others.
- We encourage our campers to **be peacemakers**. When conflicts large and small arise, as they inevitably will, we encourage campers to remember P.E.A.C.E (Pause - Explain - Ask - Compromise - Explore), and we teach them throughout their time at camp how to practice PEACE.
- We believe that **verbal and physical violence are not ways to resolve conflict**. Wild Child staff promote the use of expressing our feelings with words and campers are encouraged to use this to communicate with each other.
- We believe **respect** is an integral part of life in community. With that in mind, all at Skyline are expected to listen and respond respectfully to what other campers and teachers have to say, as well as respect other people's property and camp property and use them only if given permission to do so.
- For reasons of safety, campers are asked **never to wander off alone**, and no camper will be without staff and other campers present at any time.
- At various times during the camp, **video tapes and photographs** of camp activities are produced for use in camp publicity. By registering, you give permission for the camper to be photographed and/or videotaped, and for his/her image

to be used in camp publicity materials; to opt out, please send a separate signed note.

- **Respect for Property:** We like to keep Skyline beautiful and thriving for all our guests, all year long. If a camper feels a need to leave a mark on this community, we ask that it be made through words and deeds by uplifting and affirming other persons.
- **Shoes** must be worn in camp at all times except when being barefoot is appropriate. This is for your protection and to help ensure that you will be able to enjoy all the camp activities.
- **Homesickness** is something that can pop up unexpectedly at camp.
 - As a parent/guardian, you can help prevent it by talking honestly about expectations for and of camp before the camper arrives. Help campers think about all the fun they will have. Set realistic goals for things that the camper wants to learn or ways that she/he wants to grow. Talk about meeting new people and how much is learned from making new friends. Help campers to remember how they have made new friends in similar situations in the past.
 - Visit the camp ahead of time, if that is convenient.
 - If a camper does get homesick, our staff will work in a caring manner to try to overcome the problem. Assure your camper that if they feel homesick, that we want them to talk to their teacher about how they are feeling. Together they can address the problem.
- If homesickness persists, we will call you (the parent/guardian) and discuss the situation **before** you talk with your camper. If either you or the camp decides that it is best for the camper to leave early for the day, we will affirm the camper for what they have already accomplished.
- **Discipline Policy:** We want camp to be an incredible experience for everyone who attends. Building community requires that everyone be willing to work together to achieve the goals of the group. Sometimes a camper, for a variety of reasons, has a difficult time behaving/speaking in an appropriate manner. Should that occur, we will take the following steps:
 - Teacher and camper will talk through the issue and try to resolve it in a positive manner. The aim of our staff is to find out why the camper is upset and resolve the root of

- the issue.
- We believe that conflict or a camper having a difficult time with behavior is a teachable moment where we can encourage campers to use P.E.A.C.E (Pause - Explain - Ask - Compromise - Explore), and we will teach them throughout their time at camp how to practice PEACE.
 - If the camper continues the inappropriate behavior/language, they may be pulled away from the activity or group. This will give the camper a place to calm down before speaking with a teacher and resolving the problem in a positive manner. **(Never Corporal Punishment.)**
 - Behavior concerns will be communicated with the parents or guardians. We believe in working alongside parents in supporting campers who are having a difficult time.

What to bring to Wild Child

General packing notes and tips

1. All medications **MUST** be in their original containers, **MUST** be prescribed to the camper, and will be administered **ONLY** according to prescribed directions. Variations will require signed doctor's authorization. Camper medications will be collected/returned daily.
2. Please keep in mind that camp is wonderfully full of paint, dirt, water, mud, wax, food etc... Don't make a special shopping trip that will make your camper/s scared to get their good/new clothes dirty.
3. Label all items with a permanent marker.
4. If your camper loses something at camp, please check with us as soon as you know; it may turn up in lost and found. Unclaimed items are given to charity. Skyline is not responsible for the loss or damage to personal items.
5. **LOST AND FOUND** items are kept only for one season before being given to charity. We display all found items at camp check-out for families to identify and claim.

All Seasons:

- Water bottle full of water
- Clothing that is good for messy outdoor play and is not restrictive
- A bag with a full change of clothes to be kept at camp
- Layers of clothing for changing weather
- Sturdy Boots, Hiking Shoes, or Tennis Shoes (Bogs, Keens, Teva, Sorel, Muck Boots, Merrell, Keen, New Balance)
- Rain Suits (Oakiwear, Frog Togs, Other)- Big enough to fit over under layers

Fall:

- Fleece Jacket and/or Puffy Vests
- Warm Hat and gloves
- Rain boots
- Rain Jacket with hood

Winter:

- Winter Jacket
- Snow Pants
- Waterproof Gloves or Mittens
- Scarf or neck cover
- Warm Hat
- Thermal under layers
- Winter Socks (Wool or Fleece)
- Winter Boots

Spring:

- Light Jacket
- Sun Hat
- Rain boots
- Rain Jacket with
- hood

**We will have sunscreen/bug spray here for campers to use, but please put them on at home before you arrive.*

Resources

Online Articles:

- Nature-based preschools, where children spend most of their day outside, are a growing trend in the United States. Wernick, A., & Bascomb, B.
<https://www.pri.org/stories/2018-02-12/nature-based-preschools-where-children-spend-most-their-day-outside-are-growing>
- The Right Brain Develops First ~ Why Play is the Foundation for Academic Learning. Gowman, V. <https://www.vincegowmon.com/the-right-brain-develops-first/>
- A new kind of classroom: Outdoor preschool allows children to get messy while they learn. Pemberton, C.
http://www.kokomotribune.com/news/local_news/a-new-kind-of-classroom-outdoor-preschool-allows-children-to/article_fd932284-c0d2-11e7-a391-f32dd2c45cb2.html
- Why our kids need forests for true learning. Åkeson McGurk, L.
<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/why-forest-kindergartens-are-the-best-schooling-for-our-kids-2017-10-06>
- Outdoor play boosts children's performance in class, says new study. Arkin, M.
<https://www.childinthecity.org/2017/10/10/outdoor-play-boosts-childrens-performance-in-class-says-new-study/>

Organizations:

- Wilder Child <https://wilderchild.com/>
- Children and Nature Network www.cnaturenet.org/
- Charter for Compassion <https://charterforcompassion.org/>
- Natural Learning Initiative <https://naturalearning.org/>
- American Camp Association <https://www.acacamps.org/>

Books:

- Balanced and Barefoot: How Unrestricted Outdoor Play Makes for Strong, Confident, and Capable Children by Angela J. Hanscom
- Last Child in the Woods by Richard Louv
- How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk by Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish
- Vitamin N: The Essential Guide to a Nature Rich Life by Richard Louv
- How to Raise a Wild Child: The Art and Science of Falling in Love with Nature by Scott D. Sampson
- The Blessing of Skinned Knee: Raising Self-Reliant Children by Wendy Mogel. Ph.D.