





## **JENISON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

### **2024-2025 Wilderness Academy**

### **Kindergarten Admission Procedures**

- Jenison Public Schools will provide a fair and open process for enrolling students into the Jenison Wilderness Academy Kindergarten program.
- The number of kindergarten students admitted each year is determined by the Superintendent.
- To qualify as an applicant, parents/guardians must complete an official application for their child.
  - Applications must be received no later than Monday, March 4, 2024, at 4:00 pm.
  - Applications must be submitted to the Administration Office located at the JPS Center for the Arts, 8375 20th Ave, Jenison, fax 616-457-8898, or email [Registrar@jpsonline.org](mailto:Registrar@jpsonline.org).
- Student applicants must participate in the school district's Kindergarten Screening Program with a recommendation by the screener that kindergarten is an appropriate placement. Current JPS Transitional Kindergarten students will be assessed in their classrooms.
- All qualifying applications will be placed in a lottery based on residency - JPS resident or School of Choice. The lottery drawing will take place on Wednesday, March 6, 2024, at 4:00 pm at the Jenison Center for the Arts, 8375 20th Ave, Jenison, 49428. Applications will be drawn from each group - 2 resident applications will be drawn for each School of Choice application drawn.
- Families of students admitted to the Wilderness Academy will be notified by email (or mail if necessary) no later than Thursday, March 7, 2024. Families must accept placement by Monday, March 14, 2024.
- Applications with siblings currently enrolled in the Nature program or in the outdoor preschool, Cat Tracks, will be given priority placement in the program, provided the student qualifies through the JPS screening process. Should there be more applicants than available slots for the program, the remaining applicants will be drawn and put on a waiting list in the order drawn. This waiting list with contact information will be maintained by the Student Registrar. Program applicants will be notified of their waiting list status and will be assigned to a regular kindergarten classroom in the district. If a space becomes available during the summer or school year, the next family on the waiting list will be contacted and will be given the opportunity to enroll in the program.



## Wilderness Academy FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Where will the students' learning take place?** Student learning will take place in a variety of settings. Their inside classroom is in a brand new 1300 sq. ft room on our Fairhaven campus. Outdoor kindergarteners learn in the nature center here at Kids First, Ottawa County parks, the woods at Chapel Pointe, and Outdoor Discovery Center. Weekly off-campus learning and investigations are key components for our integrated science, reading, writing, and math instruction.

**How much time will students spend outdoors?** Michigan provides us with many opportunities to take advantage of all seasons. Most days, more than half of their learning will be in a natural setting. In the cold of winter, 2-3 hours of outdoor learning will be our minimum goal.

**Will my child learn the same things as a traditional kindergartener?** Nature-based learning is built from content and grade-level standards first. District and building goals also provide a framework for our lessons. We will use the district phonics and math curriculum, however, the delivery of the remaining standards will be project-based and in off-site investigations.

**Off-site investigations? Where will those be?** We will be utilizing JPS bus transport to Ottawa County Parks several times a week. Partnering with Outdoor Discovery Center and Grand Valley State provides our students with the best opportunities to investigate the environment in which they live and learn how to be good stewards of our resources.

**What kind of gear or supplies do I need?** Students are most comfortable with layers. We help them gain independence and evaluate what they need based on current weather and our purpose outdoors. Oaki suits are available to borrow. They are waterproof. Rain/muck boots are great for wandering the majority of the year. We also plan for two pairs of mittens to swap out if something becomes too wet.

**What about lunch and specials?** Students will learn and practice school life in a traditional building when they come inside Kids First for lunch and specials. Depending on the weather, students may eat their lunch inside. Every day, they will also have specials in the main building: PE, Art, Music, and STEM.

**What about sunscreen and bug spray?** If you would like your child to have either of those products, you will need to send those to school with your child's name on them. Each child will have their own to use (with help) as the weather warrants. We encourage hats year-round.

**What if my child or family isn't "outdoorsy" yet but I think this is a great place to start?** Nature-based learning is not targeted at outdoorsy type children only. If your child is inquisitive and loves to lead their learning through discovery and investigations, this may be the place for them. Fostering curiosity and high-order thinking skills through project-based learning also partners with teamwork and problem-solving skills.