



Belle Vie Farm admits children of any religion, race, color, national, and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to participants in the program. Belle Vie Farm does not discriminate in regard to religion, race, color, national, and ethnic origin in administration of its educational, admissions, and scholarship programs.

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Philosophy

Belle Vie Farm Afternoon Adventures is a farm and forest school for ages 3 through 6 (potty trained) that honors children's innate sense of wonder/curiosity and their connection with the natural world and animals. Belle Vie believes that mixed-age learning serves children best in their development; therefore, all of the children work together throughout the day. We want children to have an opportunity to connect with nature on their own terms. That is why our Afternoon Adventures Class spends time romping through the forest, visiting the farm animals, gardening, planting microgreens, playing in the mud kitchen, swinging in hammocks, exploring a huge variety of art activities and more! Children may learn the names of plants and trees, but they may not! We follow their lead and support their play all throughout the day!

2024/25 Calendar

Session 1 (no camp September 27)

September 4, 2024 - October 18, 2024

Session 2 (no camp November 25-29)

October 21, 2024 - December 13, 2024

Session 3 (no camp February 17)

January 2, 2025 - February 21, 2025

Session 4 (no camp March 31-April 4)

February 24, 2025 - April 18, 2025

Session 5 (no camp June 6, 2025)

April 21, 2025 - June 5, 2025

What to Bring

You should bring the following on the first day of each session (or as soon as you are able to purchase them):

- a change of **LABELED** clothes, a pair of **LABELED** rubber rain boots and a **labeled rain suit**
- lunch if your child will not have eaten prior to joining the class plus a hearty snack

- 2 hearty snacks if your child will have already eaten when you drop off
- filled water bottle (preferably metal)
- sunscreen and bug spray (teacher will reapply at 2:30pm)

Cold-Weather Gear

The ideal cold-weather gear is the one-piece snowsuit! This reduces the number of zippers, clothing items, etc that may get lost. [Lands' End](#) has great one-piece suits. Mountain Warehouse (<https://www.mountainwarehouse.com/us/kids/toddler/snowsuits/>) has something very similar for less than \$90. LL Beans' [Kids Northwoods Boots](#) come with two sets of warm liners that can be removed to dry - this is a game-changer! The boots come in kids and toddler sizes. Polarn O. Pyret has some great [outdoor school "hacks"](#). One of my favorites is this glove combo: rain gloves on top of merino wool gloves! Also, for kids who don't like wool long underwear, they sell merino wool tights. The price is right for both - wool items last a long time!

Your child should bring the following each cold day:

- Waterproof boots
- Wool or poly socks (NO COTTON)
- One piece snow suit (waterproof)
- Base layer (***synthetic or wool long underwear to go under their clothes***)
- Fleece layer - stretchy and warm (jeans are tough to move in with all these layers)
- Hat and gloves

Warm-Weather Gear

Lightweight clothing is ideal (knitted rather than woven shirts, shorts, pants, etc). Light colors are best to keep kids cool. Shoes should be lightweight and closed toe. Please do not send your child to the farm in shoes that have excessive laces (high tops and such) or are challenging to put on. We want their shoes to be easy-on and easy-off. Save the fancy shoes for another activity.

Native Shoes (<https://www.nativeshoes.com/bestsellers-for-kids>) has some great kid's shoes similar to Croc shoes but much more stable on the feet. Canvas or cotton shoes will get wet every morning because of the ground dew. Then the children will *wail* about their wet socks and cold feet. They really will, and they will not have as much fun as they would with dry socks and happy feet.

Sun Hat

If your child will keep a sun hat on throughout most of the day outdoors, we highly recommend them. Be honest with yourself about whether or not your child will be willing to wear it, otherwise, we end up with lots of sunhats by the end of the year!

Rain Gear

When choosing rain gear, keep in mind that PVC and Gortex will offer the most protection, and anything else won't really cut it. **AVOID COTTON!** It will absorb every drop of water and make your child very cold. Cotton is not appropriate outer wear when the forecast calls for rain. Fleece does not repel rain. **Please do not use fleece as a raincoat.** Children simply cannot play well when they are wet. Raincoat and rain pants are a must! LL Bean sells some great rain buntings, rain pants and jackets. Polarn O. Pyret also sells great stuff for rainwear (<https://www.polarnopyretusa.com/child-unisex-outerwear/>) Teachers have very little time to dig through clothing left behind by previous students to find rain gear for children. Send your child to the farm prepared for the weather.

Boots

We highly recommend Croc rainboots. They stay on when kids are running, are lightweight and make playing in a wet forest lots more fun! Your child would be well-prepared in a pair of thin Smart Wool socks and some Croc rainboots. No need for any other shoe unless they insist. While I recognize the expense, if you can swing it, wool socks really are best (Smart Wool is what I wear all year round). They keep feet cool in the summer (I swear!) and keep sweaty stuff at bay. In the winter, they are great inside a wooly boot for keeping warm. Cotton socks are never fun! They get really dirty, sweaty, stretchy and gross! They are not warm in the winter, and they don't wick away moisture in the summer. Polyester socks are horrid. Imagine wearing coke bottles wrapped around your feet inside your shoes on a hot summer day. That is the feeling of polyester socks in a forest school in the summer. Items without labels will be donated.

Arrival and Departure

Afternoon Adventures begins at 12:30pm each day. Prompt arrival allows your child's class to begin the day. When you arrive with your child, please make sure to sign in. **Please help your child change into his/her outdoor play gear (boots, raincoat, rain pants, etc)** if

needed. We will spend most of the afternoon tromping around the farm/forest and exploring! Boots are essential exploring shoes!

Class ends at 4:30pm each day. Parents arriving late (after 4:35) will incur an automatic late pick-up fees as follows:

- \$20 for the first 5 minutes after 4:35
- \$15 for each subsequent 5 minutes of tardiness

Belle Vie Farm pays these late fees entirely to your child's teacher.

For your child's security and your peace of mind, we require that you indicate in writing those adults approved to pick up your child (if you plan on someone other than yourself/your spouse picking up).

Drop-off and pick-up are at Belle Vie Farm (3000 Damascus Church Road just south of the Wildflower School driveway). Your child's teacher will greet you and your child at the cover patio at the barn. Parking signs will help you know where to go on your first day. If the drop off or pick up location changes due to weather (lightning or extreme heat/cold), your child's teacher will notify you via

Communication Between Parents and Belle Vie Farm Staff

Specific Situations and How to Communicate

You need copies of required paperwork to complete before your session begins	Afternoon Adventures forms are located at https://form.jotform.com/232417454040144 .
Your child will be late, absent or, due to an emergency, you will be late picking up your child	Text 919-360-3280 with your child's full name and the information you would like his/her teacher to have (i.e. James will arrive at 1pm today).
Your family is going on vacation and your child will be absent for several days	Send Shelley an email at belleviefarmnc@gmail.com letting her know the details of your child's absence.
You have a concern you want to share with your child's teacher	If you are comfortable discussing the issue at the farm, feel free to speak with the teacher/Shelley at pick-up time. If you prefer a more private conversation, email Shelley (belleviefarmnc@gmail.com) to schedule a time.

You have a complaint or concern	Speak with your child's teacher first about your concerns, if you are comfortable and the issue is minor. Many times, issues can be resolved face-to-face, especially if they are addressed early. If you prefer to speak directly with Shelley, please email her to schedule a time to talk. If the issue requires our immediate attention, please call Shelley at 919-360-3280.
You want to know if Afternoon Adventures is canceled due to weather	We will email all families by 6am to let you know if Afternoon Adventures is canceled. We also send out a post the evening prior to a possible closing letting families know there may be a weather-related closing. We have found that this helps families plan better.
How to enroll in Summer Camp or Teacher Workday Camps	Visit https://www.belleviefarm.org

Meals

Parents should send snack, lunch and a FILLED water bottle for your child to carry to the playground and on hikes (lunch is required only if your child does not have lunch prior to arrival). **If you accidentally forget your child's water bottle, lunch or snack, please make a run to Weaver Street or Wal-Mart for a replacement.**

Meals sent to Afternoon Adventures should be healthy. **We don't allow children to eat sugary snacks during Afternoon Adventures, so you must save them for home.**

Behavior Policy

At Belle Vie, we believe that children are intellectually curious and continually seek to make sense of the world in which they live. At times, expressions of this curiosity can create behavior that is apparently unkind. However, children exhibiting these behaviors are often merely experimenting: *what happens if...?* Because we spend a great deal of time observing children's activities and conversations, we usually quickly discover the underlying question driving the behavior. We can then offer ways for the child to investigate this question -- ways that are loving to himself, others and our environment.

We do not use time outs. Instead, we seek to model patience, kindness and empathy for the children and to provide them with tools for handling their emotions and the emotions

of others. We agree with Mary Lou Casey that "what most people really need is a good listening to". Listening mindfully to children as they express their thoughts and feelings about challenging situations is critical to supporting them as they learn conflict resolution skills.

The foundation of the joyful atmosphere in our classroom is respect and value. Teachers deeply respect and value (and are valued by) each student and family. Children are guided to respect and value themselves and others. Parents are supported in their ongoing journey to respect and value their children.

Physically Aggressive or Violent Behavior

Aggressive behavior in children, when it is either recurring or intense, can be very disruptive. Aggressive behavior is defined as oppositional or destructive behavior, especially when caused by anger. It is an act or threat to act in a way that intends to harm someone. Violence is defined as emotional agitation or dysregulation that escalates to the point of physically harming or attempting to harm someone. Aggression and violence have a different quality than developmentally common anger and tantrums.

Anger/tantrums cross the line into aggression/violence when a child threatens to or actually does physically harm staff or children.

At Belle Vie, we approach each child's situation on a case-by-case basis when children engage in intense physically aggressive behavior. If the physical aggression is recurring or if a physically aggressive episode continues for more than 5-10 minutes, staff will contact a parent or guardian and request that the child be picked up. **Parents will need to schedule a conference with staff in order to develop a plan for supporting the family and child in such a way that intense aggressive and/or violent episodes do not recur.**

We feel that setting boundaries with children and consistently holding those boundaries is the most loving way of being with children. After all, children do not *really* feel good when they are unable to regulate their emotions or tolerate distress. Think of the times when you have had an emotional "whoosh" of anger or sadness. Even as adults, these moments can feel very uncontrollable. For children, these "whooshes" are frightening. We can support children's emotional regulation and distress tolerance by consistently offering them skills to practice: **words** to use in moments of conflict or anger/sadness, **actions** to take to

handle sudden urges to hit/push or otherwise physically act out, and **tools** to continue to practice working with emotions. These skills are invaluable and deeply needed/desired by children. Again, they *want* to be able to handle their feelings. As adults, we are responsible for offering them a way to do so. We take this job very seriously, as we recognize that a lifetime of joy can come from a child's confidence in his/her own ability to handle whatever comes his/her way.

Saying "no" to children is a critical part of life. We believe that children can and should be redirected initially; however, when behavior continues to threaten the child's safety or relationships, we will step in and use the word "no" in a very matter-of-fact, firm, consistent manner. Hearing "no" in a setting like ours - small, warm, loving and supportive - is a very different experience than hearing "no" in a large public-school classroom in which the teacher may not have time to assist a child in walking through the pain of hearing "no" (and it *is* painful for children to hear no). Hearing "no" in the setting of a loving and supportive home is also very different from a large classroom setting.

If your parenting approach does not align with Belle Vie's approach, you will need to meet with Shelley prior to enrolling. For example, if your family does not believe in telling your child "no" for any reason, that would be misaligned with our approach. We do not shy away from addressing children's harmful behavior - it is not loving to ignore behavior that can harm someone (either self or other).

We expect that parents who have complaints speak directly with staff. Gossiping about our staff without offering us an opportunity to effectively address your concerns harms our farm and the families enrolled here. It is a form of relational aggression that we seek to avoid. Our vision is to create a wonderful, magical, warm and loving environment for your child. Therefore, if we are falling short of that (and do not notice it), we ask that you let us know! We will be super grateful for the opportunity to improve!

Caring for Our Farm

Please keep in mind the following guidelines when you are at the farm:

- **Children must wear shoes at all times when at the farm (even once you have picked them up for the day)**
- **Children must clean up all materials prior to leaving a playground, farm or forest area**

- Children must care for our materials and art supplies in ways that show respect and kindness toward Belle Vie
- Children must always sit when eating for their safety. If a child does not want to eat, we never force him/her. Sometimes kids are just not hungry.

Sickness Policy

If your child has a temperature of 100 degrees or above, has vomited even once or has had diarrhea, we require that you keep him or her home until symptom-free for 24 hours without medication.

If your child becomes sick at the farm, we will contact you for pick up. **Your child may not return to the farm the following day.** Belle Vie is very strict about this policy. Staff and parents alike have many responsibilities. When each of us respects the sickness policy, we support a healthy group environment.

Child Abuse & Neglect

North Carolina law requires anyone who suspects child abuse or neglect to report their suspicion to the Department of Social Services of the county in which the child lives. A report is simply a request for an investigation. Anyone who makes a report in good faith is protected from civil and criminal liability. When you suspect child abuse, when a child tells you that she/he is being abused, or when another child tells you about a child being abused, please make a report. Educators and other professionals are legally required to make a report.

It is our policy that when a teacher suspects a child is suffering from child abuse or neglect:

Staff will inform the director immediately. The director and the teacher together will decide if enough information has been gathered to warrant the suspicion and if so, the director will make a report to Social Services.

Injury/Accident Policy

Accidents sometimes happen at the farm. A teacher who is certified in CPR/first aid is always available at the farm. In the event of an emergency, they will administer those

skills appropriately. We will notify you of any action taken and contact you as soon as possible.

Medication

If your child needs to be given a prescription or over-the-counter medication, please be sure to complete the **Medication Dispense Form** at the end of this handbook. The medication must be provided in the original container, or a container accompanied by the doctor's directions. All medications will be stored in a locked container and dispensed by staff. We are not able to give a child medication that is not specifically prescribed to that particular child.

If medication is to be kept at the farm for treatment of a chronic condition, please send only one month's supply at a time. **Please apply non-prescription medications such as creams, ointments, bug spray or sunscreen at home.**

Inclement weather procedures

We follow our own schedule when responding to snow/ice days. **We will email families by 6am if we intend to close** for the day due to driving conditions.

We have a policy of no outdoor time during periods of lightning. We will wait 30 minutes from the last lightning/thunder before returning outdoors. If the weather is rainy only (and not cold), we will still play outdoors! These are some of our best days!