



Wildrock ([www.wildrock.org](http://www.wildrock.org)) is nonprofit Nature Playscape and Discovery Center in rural Albemarle County offering field trips, ecotherapy services, community play days, and urban outreach programs. Since opening in April, 2017 Wildrock has partnered with the Charlottesville City Schools for innovative nature-based programs that support social and emotional learning, the health benefits of nature connection, and the developmental benefits of free play outdoors.

Currently, Wildrock offers the following programs to Charlottesville City Schools.

**Nature Friends Preschool Program:** Every Charlottesville City School preschooler visits Wildrock in the fall and in the spring to discover the beauty of the Blue Ridge foothills and the rural landscape. Trips include play-based learning on a three-acre natural playscape. Follow-up visits in schoolyard green spaces incorporate loose parts play and simple stewardship projects. Children develop a nurturing connection to plant and animal life through play, storytelling, and arts projects. This program is generously funded by the Bama Works Fund at Charlottesville Area Community Foundation.

**Nature Play Lab:** Wildrock visits kindergarten classes during recess time with a Pop Up Play installation that transforms underutilized green spaces into play zones. Teachers receive training in play facilitation to promote social and emotional skills and trauma-informed care. Materials are provided for teachers to create ongoing free-play stations.

**Teacher Retreats:** Teachers spend a day at Wildrock learning how time in natural spaces can enhance learning and the well-being of students and teachers. These highly experiential retreats emphasize researched-based skills that are easily incorporated into the school day.

**Nature Immersion Programs:** Wildrock provides year-long programming for the Lugo McGinness Academy to support students in developing a relationship with the natural world that is supportive of mental health. Students explore our area's watershed through stream studies, fishing, boating, and photography. A program for Buford Middle School students offers day retreats to promote positive leadership skills through collaborative, nature-based projects.

**Field trips and Day Retreats:** Students at all grade levels visit Wildrock for play-based learning emphasizing the wildlife of Virginia. All activities promote creative problem solving, community building, and social and emotional skills. Students experience the developmental benefits of joyful exploration in nature.