

Frequently Asked Questions

By Amy Imbody – Founder and President, Center for Redemptive Education

What is Boots & Roots?

[Boots & Roots](#) is a primarily outdoor education program for children ages 4-6. Neither a preschool nor a co-op, it is a robust support program for home schooling families offered by the Center for Redemptive Education (CRE, www.RedemptiveEducation.org), an educational non-profit featuring an approach that is Biblical, Relational, Integral and Experiential.

Play-based? Yes! Discovery based? Yes! Rich in academic content? Yes! Literacy, numeracy, science, the arts, bible – all of these are present in B & R, but are not delivered “traditionally” or “formally.” Delight-driven? Absolutely.

We embrace the “emergent curriculum” that our children so naturally pursue: *Where do the worms go? Who is making that cooing sound? What is this sparkly rock?*

Redemptive Educators invite children into joyful exploration of God’s word and His world, using a unique curriculum developed by the Center for Redemptive Education that honors and celebrates young image-bearers.

Class size averages eight students.

What is the Scent of Water Learning Community?

[Scent of Water](#) is a primarily outdoor education program for children in grades K-8th. Neither a school nor a co-op, it is a robust support program for home schooling families offered by the Center for Redemptive Education, an educational non-profit featuring an approach that is Biblical, Relational, Integral and Experiential.

Scent of Water serves students from K-8th grade. Redemptive Educators invite children into joyful exploration of God’s Word and His world, using a unique curriculum developed by the Center for Redemptive Education that honors and celebrates young image-bearers.

We invite all Scent of Water students into God’s “story” and into His work.

How does Boots & Roots differ from K/1st in Scent of Water?

Both Scent of Water and Boots & Roots are outdoor educational programs rich with learning of all kinds.

There is a purposeful overlap in the ages for Boots & Roots (4-6) and those of typical K/1st (5-7). Some children within these age ranges will continue to thrive with a shorter school day (Boots & Roots is from 9-noon) and time to mature. Other children within these age ranges are ready to tackle the full day (9-3) and incorporate slightly more structure and academic content into their day.

Often our boys benefit from a bit more Boots & Roots before launching into K/1st, and sometimes our young ladies might, as well. Parents can explore the options with us to determine best placement.

Additionally, we consider the first weeks of our program to be a time when we can confirm with parents and teachers whether or not a child is ready for Boots & Roots or for K/1st.

What qualities does a child need to demonstrate in order to participate in either Boots & Roots or Scent of Water?

Children need to be able to be independent with self-care such as use of the bathroom, and basic self-regulation of their bodies, emotions, and communication. In order for all of the children to thrive, each child needs to have had adequate practice with following adult leadership, receiving guidance from a teacher, staying with a group, and being a participant in the regular activities.

While we expect young children to have a learning curve in these departments, with the support of our teachers, it is necessary that a child arrive to our campus programs with a basic ability to function within the dynamics and parameters of the group and not require intensive individual support or intervention.

What do students study?

Students immerse in literature, history, science, math, the arts, writing, speaking, bible study. All school subjects are omnipresent in the Scent of Water curriculum, but most do not show up in a packaged curriculum, nor in an easily identified mode, nor as a complete program. They are incorporated in, and/or emerge from everything being studied.

Our integral curriculum makes it such that it is not always readily apparent when a “science” vs a “writing” vs a “math vs an “art” vs a “reading” lesson are happening! Sometimes they are all happening at once, sometimes one or two of these are being focused on, and sometimes a teacher will be maximizing the academic content that is hidden in the emergent curriculum flowing from the students, from current events, from children’s questions or observations, from the Lord bringing a certain thing to light.

We do use two published curricula – see below.

Math? Writing? Grammar?

Math is everywhere: therefore, our students do encounter it and will engage with it in their integral studies. *However, a full math program must be provided at home.*

At Scent of Water, K-3rd grades use the Logic of English phonics and reading program, while the 4th/8th grades use Writing & Rhetoric books from Classical Academic Press. Both of these published curricula incorporate language arts skills including grammar, writing, speaking, reading, and with Logic of English, spelling, as well.

How can I, as a home schooling parent, partner with teachers in my child's learning?

At the end of each program week, teachers email parents with a summary of the key topics/skills/focus of the week. They provide a sneak peek into the coming week's key topic/skills/focus points.

Most importantly, teachers share a list of "extension activities": continuations of study done at Scent of Water, suggested additional books or projects or websites or related study. Parents determine whether, and to what extent, they assign these to their home schooled children.

As students progress into the older grades, they are asked to take more responsibility for completing tasks such as the reading of certain chapters in the historical novel the class is studying, or to write the final two paragraphs of an essay begun in class, or similar. Parents are encouraged to partner with their child's teacher to determine best approach to assignments on the extension activities list.

The goal is to equip parents at home to effectively engage with their child's ongoing studies to the extent they desire.

How are classes organized?

Classes are grouped as follows: K/1st, 2nd/3rd, 4th/5th, 6th/7th/8th.

How many students are in a class?

This ranges from approximately eight in a Boots & Roots class, to an upper limit of approximately 16 in a middle school class.

What does my child need to wear?

SO IMPORTANT: Dress for the weather. Seriously. Rainsuit. Rain boots. Layers for warmth. Snow gear. Gloves. Shoes for field-tromping and log-climbing. Sunscreen and bug spray when the season requires. Sun hat. Change of clothes.

Everything should have your child's name written clearly on it in waterproof ink (like a sharpie).

What will my child DO?

Plant the garden (and harvest it, too). Eat what they grow (and do all the prep!) Read high-quality literature (and tell their own tales). Survey the forest (and graph the species!) Sing heritage hymns of the faith (and make their own "joyful noise" unto the Lord!) Listen to God's Word, and memorize it, recite it, comprehend it (and give Him thanks). Study the continents, cultures, and biomes of our planet. Dig into the history of our nation and of our world. Ask questions. Pose hypotheses. Calculate with and without a calculator. Experiment. Explore. Share. Sketch. Dig. Draw. Design. Read. Write. Laugh. Hug friends (human and "other"). Climb. Create. Collaborate. Compose. Choreograph. Work hard. Learn a lot of things. Apply that learning. Make a lot of things. Discover a lot of things. Do real work that forms self and shapes the world.

What's this about a musical?

Every year, the students plan and perform an end-of-year musical.

Two of the years feature original songs, from which students create characters, plot, setting, script, and production. Every third year the students will engage with a Shakespeare play.

They will write original music, choreograph dance, create sets, write adaptations, and tackle production in teams led by our middle school students.

What about dangerous weather?

While most of our time is spent in the great outdoors, we do have dedicated classrooms and gathering spaces in the church building. We have use of the sanctuary/auditorium as well as the kitchen, and the workroom with copy machine and similar.

We will always go indoors in dangerous weather such as thunderstorms or heavy hail or dangerously extreme temperatures.

We DO play and learn outdoors in rain, snow, wind, sunshine, and all other weather. 😊

Is Redemptive Education affiliated with a particular religion or denomination?

All programs offered by the Center for Redemptive Education are taught from the historic Christian faith, described by C. S. Lewis as “[*Mere Christianity*](#).” In other words, our teachers teach from a biblical worldview but do not represent or affiliate with any specific denomination or church.

We are tenants and happy partners with our landlord, the Calvary Church of the Nazarene.

Our families come from evangelical, or Catholic, or Protestant, or non-faith backgrounds. Families are not required to affirm or agree with our statement of faith.

However, the Center for Redemptive Education does have a [statement of faith](#), and families are required to sign that they understand that we teach from that viewpoint. All faculty do affirm their agreement with our statement of faith.

How does that work out practically?

Our “mere Christianity” approach means that in matters where people with a high view of Scripture honestly differ (i.e. infant baptism or “believers’ baptism” - Young earth/old earth/theistic evolution – Hallowe’en or All Saints Day or Reformation Sunday – wine or grape juice) the Center for Redemptive Education programs do not have a position nor promote a position. We do, however, maintain fidelity to matters that are clear in Scripture such as the sanctity of human life, and God’s good design of male and female.

Bible – Our entire program reflects deep engagement with God’s Word, and with the world He spoke into being. Students learn, memorize, sing, illustrate, apply, act out, and honor Scripture. Our daily “Welcoming” time first thing in the morning is an invitation to worship; consideration of God’s Word; consideration of His Truth, Beauty and Goodness; and a celebration of the

privilege we have in learning from the Living Word, Jesus Christ Himself. As such, our approach to Scripture is a devotional approach, rather than an academic approach. We do not offer a “Bible class,” or use a published Bible curriculum. The music we sing daily primarily features heritage hymns, which are at present a somewhat neglected treasure trove of the faith, and also original songs and hymns, generated by the worshipping minds, hearts, voices and instruments of our learning community.

Discipline – Scent of Water Learning Community embraces and employs the Redemptive Discipline principles in which our teachers are equipped. We will joyfully offer support to our parent community in Redemptive Discipline as well.

Redemptive Discipline is highly relational, rather than reliant only on external punishments or rewards, although we recognize the blessings of putting parameters in place, modeling for progress, and identifying growth goals as individuals and as a class or whole community.

We do celebrate goals achieved! We believe in the blessing of adult authority, lived out with humility and confidence, for the peaceful shepherding of children and young people.

Children are supported and guided in honoring God, one another, and the adults who lead them. We believe in discipleship. And we do desire our learning community to be a venue of *both* God’s Truth and His Grace in order to nurture a culture of honor and *shalom* – flourishing! – for all.

Are parents required to volunteer?

Our program cannot function unless many parents schedule themselves to man the office, to supervise lunch/recess along with teachers, to greet children at carpool, to help at bathroom break for Boots and Roots students (think: boots, mittens, snowsuits off; boots, mittens, snowsuits on x 8) and to serve as substitute teachers.

However, no parent is *required* to volunteer. Most are delighted for opportunities to be “in the mix,” even if only on an occasional basis.

Community is important at Boots & Roots and Scent of Water – parent volunteers love making meaningful connections with kids, teachers, and one another as they serve on our campus! Other parents love to host our monthly Dessert & Discussion Nights, where we adults gather in someone’s home to get to know one another, to engage with thought-provoking dialogue, to share informative readings both academic and literary, to tackle parenting challenges, and to eat delectables while forging friendships.