

Job Title: Nature-Based Preschool Teacher

Employer: Fernbrook Farms Environmental Education Center, Chesterfield, NJ

Job Type: Permanent Full Time; 40 hr/week, Monday - Friday

Reports to: Brian Kuser, Education Director and Lauren Flesher, Saplings Director

Compensation Details: \$600-\$700/week

Start date: August 29th (academic year) or earlier (summer camp) if possible

Fernbrook Farms Environmental Education Center seeks passionate and energetic early childhood educators to join our nature-based Saplings (school year) and Pollywogs (summer camp) programs for ages 3-5. Our programs emphasize child-led learning through a balance of hands-on exploration, intentional activities, and plenty of unstructured nature play. Students are encouraged to follow their natural curiosities and develop meaningful connections with the natural world. Most of the day is spent outdoors learning and playing in the many ecosystems of our 230-acre working farm.

Through close collaboration, Saplings teachers develop daily plans for exploration and learning for our mixed-aged classes of up to 20 students. They work together to guide students in the development of physical, social-emotional, and cognitive skills. Saplings teachers set the tone for the group by modeling warmth, curiosity, enthusiasm, and playfulness. They actively participate in student-led play and exploration, but also know when to take a step back and let students organize themselves. They encourage children to ask and seek the answers to their own questions, and they encourage mistake-making as part of the learning process.

Primary Responsibilities:

- Develop flexible plans for daily learning that can be shifted as needed to accommodate the emergent interests and wellbeing of the students.
- Coordinate daily activities with the Saplings Program Director and the rest of the teaching team.
- Model engaged, enthusiastic learning to students through exploration, inquiry, observation, trial-and-error, and collaborative discussion.
- Monitor emergent interests of students and expand upon them where possible with additional learning materials (books, songs, structured activities).
- Facilitate whole group and small group play, balancing active participation with active observation.
- Mediate peer-to-peer conflict and guide students in social-emotional skill-building (including self-soothing, clear communication, conflict resolution).
- Encourage and supervise risky and immersive play while ensuring general safety in the environment and between peers.
- Maintain a positive and supportive atmosphere that respects the agency and capable thinking of children
- Model fascination with and empathy for the natural world.
- Observe students during all activities to assess growth and inform future planning.
- Document student activity and progress with written notes, photos, and content for newsletters/posts.
- Develop strong, positive, and professional partnerships with families and fellow staff.

Other duties:

- Assist students with self-help skills (changing out gear, packing up, using the restroom, etc.).
- Manage support staff and volunteers as needed.
- Follow established safety protocols, including daily cleaning.
- Plan for and lead parent conferences at least once a year.
- Assist with community events (tours, open houses) for prospective families and stakeholders.
- Participate in staff meetings and on-going professional development.
- Assist with maintenance of the property and care of the farm animals as needed.
- Assist with other Fernbrook educational programming as needed.

Qualifications:

This job description offers guidelines for the position, not hard and fast rules. If you have 75% of the qualifications listed, we encourage you to apply. Knowing the answer to every child's question is not necessary but being open to seeking out answers alongside the children and encouraging an overall love for nature and learning is. Our ideal candidate fosters a warm, inviting environment where children feel safe and excited to play and explore every day.

- Bachelor's degree in nature- or education-related field or equivalent.
- Experience working with children ages 3-5 years old:
 - Awareness of early childhood developmental stages and needs.
 - Experience creating developmentally appropriate activities for young learners.
 - Ability to engage students' attention and positively redirect behavior as needed.
- Experience teaching in an outdoor setting:
 - Experience developing hands-on and nature-based activities.
 - Experience meeting the needs of children outdoors in all seasons.
 - Passion for the natural world and an ability to foster wonder.
 - Knowledge of environmental principles and local flora and fauna, or willingness to learn.
 - Knowledge of fire-making, bushcraft, or other practical skills helpful.
- Familiarity with emergent curriculum and other progressive teaching techniques such as the art of questioning, scaffolding, loose parts play, and teaching from behind.
- High comfort working in outdoor conditions, including
 - Willingness to get down and dirty and to assist in handling critters such as insects.
 - Ability to model safe risk-taking, especially with physical challenges.
- Excellent interpersonal skills, including
 - Strong oral and written communication skills.
 - Ability to collaborate warmly with fellow staff, families, and students.
 - Experience mediating conflict, especially between children.
- Strong leadership abilities, including time-management, prioritization, and organizational skills.
- Flexible, patient, and creative approach to planning, with a strong ability to adjust plans based on the shifting needs of the group and face challenges with calm and a sense of humor.
- Ability to attend to the individualized needs of children while managing group as a whole.
- Dedication to self-reflection and a desire to continually improve your craft.
- Clearance of a criminal background check.
- Current First Aid and CPR certification or ability to complete.

Physical Demands/Work Environment:

- Spend multiple hours outdoors in all conditions (sun, rain, snow, extreme cold and heat, winds).
- Hike 1-5 miles a day on varied terrain, keeping pace with the children in your care.
- Lift up to 50 pounds (the weight of a small child).
- Be able to see, hear, and guide children at all times.
- Engage in sustained physical activity throughout the day, including frequent running, climbing, lifting, stooping, squatting, and kneeling.

Interested candidates should send cover letter and resume by email to Brian Kuser, Education Director, at brian@fernbrookfarms.com.