

Part Time Early Childhood Educator- Nature Preschool AfterCare and Forest Explorers Irvine Nature Center

Overview

Irvine Nature Center is an environmental education non-profit based on over 200 acres in Owings Mills, MD. In addition to its educational programming, Irvine has an interactive exhibit hall and hiking trails. The Nature Preschool at Irvine is a MSDE licensed and NAEYC accredited childcare program for children 3-5 years old that spends almost the entire day outdoors learning foundational skills through hands-on experiences. Part of the Earth Friends Outdoors Homeschool program, Forest Explorers is an exclusively outdoors forest school program for children 4.5-7 years old. Both programs approach learning through play and exploration, centering our practice on the natural world and child-led learning.

Position Summary

We are currently hiring a new educator to join our Early Childhood Education team in a blended part-time position teaching in both The Nature Preschool and Forest Explorers. The ECE teacher will co-teach our Fern Club AfterCare five days a week and co-teach one morning of Forest Explorers. With their co-teacher, the ECE teacher will facilitate mainly outdoor classes that nurture a child's close relationship with the natural world through developmentally appropriate play, trail walks and games, stories, animal encounters, song, and art. A love of nature, a comfort with mud, and a nurturing spirit are musts! The ECE teacher will create class communities in which students feel safe to be themselves, take risks, and develop skills at their own pace.

The ideal candidate will have a variety of life experiences and skillsets in local naturalist knowledge, child development and emergent curriculum, and practical outdoor skills. This individual must also be dedicated to personal self-reflection and evaluation of their pedagogy while ECE staff continue their journey in anti-bias work to improve ourselves and programming.

Time Commitment

- 25-31.5 hours a week;
- Monday through Friday;
- August 15 through June 16 (10 months with the possibility to renew for future years)

Responsibilities

- Co-teach a group of no more than ten 3-5-year olds in Fern Club AfterCare and a group of no more than fourteen 4.5-7-year olds in a Forest Explorers class.
- Plan creative and nurturing class flows that meet the unique needs of preschool children that have already attended a full day of nature-based preschool during their 3 hours of AfterCare
- Create an environment of joy, appreciation, and wonder through word, action, and presence
- Embrace the beauty of each moment in all types of weather through vigorous outdoor play
- Approach teaching as a facilitator/guide, allowing children to take the lead
- Encourage and supervise child-led nature play
- Foster problem solving, collaboration, and imagination by providing just enough scaffolding
- Regularly observe children during all activities to inform future planning
- Document learning and activities to share in program specific manners with families

- Develop strong positive partnerships with families, students, and co-teachers
- Communicate clearly, empathetically, and regularly with other staff, families, and interns
- Collaborate with supervisors to conduct on-going risk analysis
- Maintain supplies through routine cleaning, including possible state-mandated disinfection
- Authentically reflect and evaluate self-practice and programs
- Attend and contribute to regular staff meetings
- Attend required on-going professional development courses as required by MSDE
- Contribute to/participate in special Preschool and Forest Explorers events (roughly 5 a year)

Qualifications

- Experience working with children 3-7 years old and an understanding of child development
- Experience working in an outdoor setting with children
- A college degree or pursuing a college degree in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Elementary Education, Environmental Education, or related fields
- Comfort with meeting children where they are on a given day at their pace, whether that is a slow wander or deer-like sprint
- Flexibility to deviate from a lesson plan
- Willingness to get dirty and handle live creatures (small and large)
- Strong communication and organizational skills
- Ability to work as part of a team
- Basic computer experience (i.e., Word processing, Outlook, digital photos, etc.)
- Current First Aid and CPR certification or ability to complete by mid-October 2022
- Dedication to self-reflection and a desire to continually improve your craft
- Physical ability to walk up to 2 miles a day, in all weather, and lift objects of up to 50lbs
- Your own reliable transportation
- Proof of vaccination against COVID-19 or an approved medical and religious waiver
- Available Tuesday all day and Monday through Friday 1-6pm

The ideal candidate:

- Is warm, approachable, and joyful
- Is curious, flexible, and creative
- Has a strong base knowledge of local flora and fauna or a willingness to learn
- Has completed coursework in forest schooling, nature-based education, or similar
- Has practical skills in fire-making, bushcraft, and/or similar
- Is experienced with emergent curriculum, planning loosely, and teaching “off script”
- Has a back pocket of ideas and activities for engaging students and redirecting behavior
- Approaches challenges with calm and a sense of humor

Salary: part-time hourly starting pay of \$16.50 an hour

To Apply: Send **cover letter**, resume, and three professional references to the attention of:

Katie Rooney, Director of Early Childhood Education Programs, Irvine Nature Center, 11201 Garrison Forest Road, Owings Mills, MD 21117 or email HR@ExploreNature.org

Please note, employment is contingent upon completing and passing a criminal background check and fingerprinting and submission of proof of COVID-19 vaccination or approved waiver.