



# Early Learning Programs Manager

**Department:** Education

**Supervisor:** Jennie McGuigan, Education Director

**Position:** Full time; Exempt

- Schedule: Monday - Friday (some weekend family programs and evening fundraisers/open houses)

## Summary

Ljams Nature Preschool (INP) provides a hands-on, experiential approach to learning that is based on the needs and curiosity of young children. Its mission is to inspire children, families, and educators to connect more deeply with the world around them. Through INP research and programs, children and families develop a profound engagement with the natural world, where nature is an integral part of daily learning. All of these efforts focus on safety, customer service, and effective educational methods in a supportive environment.

Ljams Nature Center is seeking a dynamic, curious, and professionally organized educator/leader to lead and manage Ljams early learning programming. This role will work closely with Ljams Education Director in its responsibilities for the daily operation of Ljams' nature-based early learning programs including; full time nature preschool, part-time nature preschool (Playclub), and any early learning programs or initiatives at Ljams. They will be responsible for supporting the efficient and effective organizational functioning and strategic growth of Ljams' Early Learning programs in deep and meaningful ways.

An ideal candidate enjoys being outdoors in nature year-round, is well versed in early childhood education practices, and infinitely curious about the changing social and emotional needs of preschool-aged children ages 3-5 years. Candidates must possess a strong respect for young children and families, a love of teaching young children, and a strong desire to provide meaningful and innovative learning experiences in nature for children, their caregivers, and Ljams staff. They must possess the ability to help support diverse team members in planning and facilitating daily multi-sensory, play and nature-based, anti-bias, emergent and developmentally appropriate curriculum, incorporating a variety of hands-on experiences as they maintain warm, professional relationships with children, their parents, and caregivers. This role will work closely with the Education Director in being responsible for the coordination and oversight of all curriculum and program development, licensing and risk management, marketing and registration, staff hiring and supervision, program evaluation, and budget management for Ljams early learning programming.

## Duties and Responsibilities

- Oversee daily operations of Ljams' early learning programs in order to support the mission of Ljams Nature Center.
- Lead, develop, and manage a cohesive early learning educational team that fosters the social, emotional, environmental, and academic development of students and families throughout the year.
- Provide programming at Ljams Nature Center that follows Ljams Education department's educational

approach to providing high quality programming in the East TN region that is relevant, impactful, and builds community through place-based, student-centered, and multi layered experiences.

- Implement and model organizational policies and procedures at all times.
- Provide administrative support to Ijams Nature Preschool, Ijams Nature Play Club, and all early learning initiatives.
- Provide teaching and leadership support to other educational programs when needed (i.e. field trips, homeschool, public programs, etc. )
- Collaborate with Office and Finance Manager to coordinate and streamline administrative systems that relate to the efficient and effective operation of early learning programming.
- Schedule and coordinate daily operations, included but not limited to:
- Assist Youth Program Manager with the administrative flow and on-site execution of Preschool Summer Camp (June -July)
- Assist the Education Director with the direction of strategic growth and development of Ijams early learning programs.

## **Desired Skills and Abilities:**

### **Knowledge**

- Understanding of early childhood development standards and benchmarks
- Understanding of outdoor experiential education standards and forest school models.
- Knowledge of educational approaches and strategies working with learners with diverse needs
- Knowledge of Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and/or Waldorf approaches to learning desired
- Knowledge and experience regarding natural and cultural history of East Tennessee desired.
- General knowledge of biology, ecology, natural science, conservation, or related fields.

### **Skills**

- Public speaking skills and the ability to work with people of all ages, especially children
- Leadership and facilitation skills, especially work with leading teams of teachers.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills including the ability to communicate through multiple media (print, TV, radio, Internet, public events, etc.).
- Strong organizational skills, with attention to detail, accuracy, and deadlines.
- The ability to multitask, prioritize, and display excellent time management skills.
- Ability to speak, read, and/or write Spanish, French, or other languages is a plus
- The ability to carry out duties and directives independently under limited supervision.
- Responsible, creative, relational, enthusiastic, flexible, self-motivated and resourceful team player.

### **Experience**

- Minimum of two years of experience leading and/or coordinating outdoor programs, camps, field trips, and/or early learning programs (ages 3-5)
- Experience and demonstrated proficiency in using Google Suite, Canva, Microsoft Excel, Word, and PowerPoint software programs.
- Experience working with audiences who are diverse in culture, age, race, gender identities, and physical abilities.

### **Education**

- Bachelor's degree in a field related to natural history, education, early childhood development, science/ecology, or environmental science. Master degree preferred.
- Two to four years of experience and/or training, or equivalent combination of education in early childhood development, outdoor education, education leadership, nonprofit management, natural history, science education, or other related field.
- First Aid/CPR certification (or the ability to obtain certification upon employment) preferred.
- Understanding of the natural history of the southern Appalachian region desired.
- Experience facilitating teacher professional development training desired.

## Other Requirements

- Must successfully complete a pre-employment, post-offer background screen, and motor vehicle (MVR) screen.
- Must successfully complete DHS background check, director's training, physical, CPR, and other required training to work as a manager at a licensed childcare facility.
- Valid Driver's license
- Access to a personal computer and internet
- The ability to work some weekend and evenings throughout the year
- Energy and desire to work with diverse audiences
- Passion for nature and the ability to deliver programs in a pleasant, tactful, and enthusiastic manner.

## Physical Requirements

- Must be able to lift and carry or otherwise move up to 50 pounds.
- Must be able to work around small children including sitting, standing, running, and climbing.
- Must be able to traverse safely over uneven or irregular terrain.
- Must be able to work in outdoor environments in all weather conditions.
- Must be able to see and respond to dangerous situations.
- Must be able to wear personal protective gear correctly most of the day.
- Must be able to use office equipment such as a computer, copier, hole punch, calculator, etc. .
- Must be in good physical condition, with the ability to stand, walk, and hike for extended periods of time without exhaustion.

## Compensation/Benefits

The salary range for this position is between \$34,000 - \$38,000 annually. The position offers health insurance including medical, dental and vision; paid vacation and sick leave; paid holidays; and a 403(b) retirement fund matching program.

## About Ijams Nature Center

Ijams Nature Center is a nonprofit nature center located on the banks of the Tennessee River near Knoxville's urban center. Its mission is to encourage stewardship of the natural world by providing an urban greenspace for people to learn about and enjoy the outdoors through engaging experiences. Ijams Nature Center manages 318 acres of land with more than 12 miles of trails, a large Visitor Center, Mead's Quarry lake, mountain biking trails, river access, gardens, and much more. People of all ages attend educational programs, including school field trips, family programs, summer camps, and adult workshops. Ijams Nature Center partners with Knox County and the City of Knoxville as well as with multiple agencies to provide outstanding educational offerings. Visit the Ijams website at [Ijams.org](http://Ijams.org) for current program information.

## Equal Opportunity Employment

Ijams Nature Center is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate against employees or job applicants on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, national origin, mental or physical disability, veteran status, or any other status or condition protected by applicable state or federal laws. These anti-discrimination policies also apply to volunteers and program recipients. Ijams Nature Center provides reasonable accommodations to all applicants and employees. Applicants with disabilities may request reasonable accommodation at any point in the employment process.

## To Apply

Send resume, cover letter, and three references (*will not be contacted without notice*) to Jennie McGuigan, Education Director, at [jmcguigan@ijams.org](mailto:jmcguigan@ijams.org). The **deadline** to apply is **March 1st, 2024**.