

Forest Preschool Director Job Description

About Us

North Branch Nature Center's mission is Connecting People with the Natural World. We envision a world where people of all ages learn, teach, and play together in nature, supporting healthy, resilient communities and ecosystems. More than 15,000 people visit North Branch Nature Center (NBNC) annually to be immersed in the natural world through environmental education, natural history, and community science programs. Our 28-acre preserve of forest and fields is nestled in a gentle bend of the North Branch of the Winooski River, just two miles from downtown Montpelier, Vermont, and is also popular as a year-round place to walk, ski, swim, or simply to do nothing beside the river. We are committed to making our natural areas, our organization, and our entire community a more inclusive and equitable place. Our Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion steps taken to date are detailed [here](#).

About Forest Preschool

Forest Preschool is guided by the idea that children need nature and learn with a sense of wonder and enthusiasm when they spend ample time in natural spaces. At Forest Preschool, children spend 40-100% of the school day learning and playing outside in rain, shine, or snow, except in extreme weather conditions. Our nature immersion program uses the landscape to support the development of the whole child using a combination of inquiry-based, play-based, emergent, and place-based learning. We empower children to be active in their own learning process by supporting each child's unique sense of wonder and paying careful attention to personal interest. At NBNC, we encourage respect and gentle caring for nature, ourselves, and one another.

The Position

The Forest Preschool (FPS) Director is responsible for the overall leadership of NBNC's licensed, nature-based preschool. The FPS Director guides the FPS team to facilitate child-centered play and learning with nature, promoting best practices of a nature-based early childhood program at NBNC. The FPS Director ensures that quality standards for excellence are achieved while maintaining our state license and STARS rating, and while meeting any other operational mandates. The FPS Director is a hybrid teaching and administrative position, and oversees all FPS teaching, curriculum development, risk management and safety policies, staff support, logistics, and educational philosophy. The

FPS Director also holds primary responsibility for FPS and Aftercare enrollment, family communication, parent/teacher conferences, FPS special events, and FPS representation in the broader early childhood education and nature-based early childhood education communities. A member of both the NBNC Administrative Team and the NBNC Education Team, the FPS Director also supervises the other FPS teachers and coordinates Robin's Nest (NBNC's playgroup).

Responsibilities include:

Forest Preschool Administration and Leadership

- Maintain NBNC's preschool license, STARS rating, and Act 166 qualification. Communicate with these and other regulatory entities as needed. Maintain records for billing attendance, Act 166, STARS, and licensing.
- Ensure full enrollment in FPS and FPS Aftercare through communication with interested families, a clear and welcoming enrollment and registration process, and an actively managed waitlist.
- Communicate, collaborate with, and supervise all other FPS staff.
- Lead regular debriefs and in-service days with the FPS team, focused on students, curriculum, and reflection.
- Oversee Robin's Nest Nature Playgroup. Ensure alignment with FPS teaching philosophy and position Robin's Nest as a feeder program for FPS.
- Manage the FPS materials budget, and work with other NBNC staff to set and maintain FPS tuition, Aftercare pricing, scholarships, staffing systems, and budget. When appropriate, work with other NBNC staff to apply for grants supporting FPS and Robin's Nest.
- Network with other preschool programs and directors to share professional practices and resources in nature-based early childhood education.
- Attend NBNC Education Team meetings, NBNC Administrative Team meetings, and NBNC staff meetings.
- May sit on or lead Board/staff committees.

Forest Preschool Teaching

- Guide FPS curriculum and teaching pedagogy.
- Coordinate and teach FPS lessons and activities in a full teaching schedule. Much of this teaching occurs outside in all of Vermont's weather conditions.
- Support all areas of whole-child development and promote a nature- and play-based approach to learning. Provide a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all children and families. Nurture relationships with students and their families.

- Observe, assess, and document student growth and learning using Teaching Strategies Gold and other assessment tools. Conduct parent-teacher conferences.
- Support children through transitions including dressing for outdoor play, using the bathroom and handwashing, and during drop-off and pick-up times.

Management of Risk, Spaces, and Materials

- Adhere to all NBNC safety protocols, and manage risk in an outdoor setting.
- Conduct risk benefit assessments and site assessments for frequently used outdoor learning spaces.
- Collaborate with the FPS teaching team to prepare the learning environment for the day. Clean and maintain the Swallow's Nest indoor classroom and the Nature Playscape outdoor classroom.

Qualifications

- A passion for NBNC's mission of *Connecting People with the Natural World*.
- Meets Vermont child care licensing qualifications as stated in the regulations including a BA in Early Childhood Education or Primary Education and an Early Childhood Certification in Vermont.
- Background or coursework related to nature-based early childhood education and/or environmental education.
- Knowledge of or familiarity with Vermont Center Based Childcare Licensing Regulations.
- Experience leading and teaching students aged 3 to 6 in an outdoor nature-based program in all types of weather.
- Experience with storytelling, singing, and incorporating nature-inspired lessons in daily teaching routine.
- Excellent interpersonal skills and a commitment to high professional ethical standards.
- Commitment to professional development in equity, inclusion and justice; values diversity of thought, backgrounds, and perspectives.
- Proficient in Google Suite programs.
- Experience using digital technology to communicate with families.
- Completion of Mandated Reporter Training, Vermont Preschool Orientation Training, and Medication Administration Training.
- First Aid and CPR certifications (Wilderness First Aid preferred).

Position Details

Compensation and Benefits: \$43,000 starting school year salary, paid over either 10 months or 12 months, at the employee's choosing, that includes paid holidays and paid leave. Benefits package includes health insurance, paid sick time, paid personal days, a SIMPLE IRA retirement plan, NBNC program fee waivers, and pro deals.

- **Job status:** Full-time, exempt, school year position (43 weeks, late August to mid June). Flexible start-up time to ensure smooth transition (June - late August)

Reports to: NBNC Director of Education.

Supervises: FPS Teacher, FPS Co-Teacher, FPS Aftercare Teacher