

New Canaan Nature Center

Director of the Beginners Nature Program

Job Description

Department: Education

Reports to: Director of Education

Status: Salary/Exempt

Hours: Monday to Friday, with weekends and evenings as required (6 weeks vacation)

The New Canaan Nature Center's Beginner's Nature Program (BNP) is a unique, nature-focused preschool offering classes for 3, 4, and 5-year-olds. With classes running September through May, environmental education is integrated into a curriculum which addresses each child's individual needs: social, emotional, physical, creative, and cognitive. Based on seasonal changes, the curriculum makes extensive use of the Nature Center's grounds and emphasizes exploration and interaction with the natural world. The Beginner's Nature Program is fully licensed by the State Department of Public Health under Connecticut Day Care regulations and accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Position summary

Under the management of the Director of Education, the Director of the Beginners Nature Program (BNP) will provide overall leadership and administration of the BNP, including budget, management, teacher contracts/assignments & pay rates, curriculum development, safety and certification procedures, and all aspects of staff management.

Responsibilities

Leadership Duties

- Strategic planning – Participating in the review and development of the organization's strategic plan and directing the BNP team to insure that all activities contribute to the organization's strategic goals and outcomes.
- Cross-team working – Working with the Administrative Team, including the Executive Director, Director of Development, Director of Marketing, Director of Finance and Operations, and Office Manager to achieve the organization's short- and long-term strategic goals and objectives, including fund raising and special events.
- Cross-organization communication – Working with the Communication and Operations Team to ensure that all departments are informed about the work and plans of the BNP team and that the team is informed about operations and activities happening outside the BNP.
- Representing the organization – Participating in a range of internal and external meetings and events, and representing the breadth and depth of the organization's work with accuracy and enthusiasm.

BNP Director Duties

- Publicity and marketing – Work with the Director of Marketing and Program Directors to develop a strategic approach to publicity and marketing that optimizes the success of the BNP programs and events.
- Staff and volunteer training and team-building – Write and deliver training for staff and volunteers, including weekly team-building and on-going staff development activities.
- Licensing – Ensure that all aspects of the BNP are in compliance with licensing requirements.
- Managing compliance with health and safety protocols – Understand all emergency procedures and protocols and ensure that all staff have a working knowledge of these by practicing them as recommended by the NCNC Safety and Evacuation plan.
- Observing and coaching – Routinely observe other BNP staff members while they teach, offer feedback based on the framework for professional practice, and work with individuals to build their capacity for structured self-reflection (first person action research).

Teaching Duties

- Serve as a substitute - Serve as a substitute teacher for all BNP, Nurturing Nature and Environmental Education Programs.
- Special events – Work with the all NCNC staff on special events and special environmental education, community development and fund raising events.

Administrative duties

- Scheduling – Work with the Reservations Manager and the Program Directors to develop a program calendar and staffing schedule to ensure successful program delivery and effective use of staff time.
- Staffing – Recruit and hire staff as required by approved business plans; maintain HR files as required, assist the Director of Finance and Executive Director in fulfilling their HR duties.
- Performance review – Set clear expectations for BNP teachers, in compliance with job descriptions and employment contracts, and conduct performance reviews.
- Work practices – Establish and manage procedures for daily routines, periodic meetings, facility maintenance, and Education office use in compliance with NCNC policies and procedures.
- NCNC policy – Insure that all activities conducted under the auspices of the BNP are in compliance with NCNC policies and procedures.

Budgetary duties

- Budget development and management – Write annual budgets, with support from the Finance Director and Director of Education, projecting monthly spreads of revenue and expenses; oversee spending within the budget within the NCNC budgeting and accounting procedures, and account for all discrepancies.

- Employment contract administration – Ensure that staff expectations and performance are in compliance with employment contracts and that staff are properly inducted.
- Material and supply management – Ensure that materials expenses are made according to budget, that there is no waste, and that purchasing is in alignment with the NCNC Sustainability Policy.
- Space utilization – Ensure that indoor and outdoor spaces are utilized in compliance with their intended use, with health and safety policies, and that no spaces are intentionally damaged through their routine or exceptional uses.

Skills, Knowledge and Abilities

Leadership

Strategic perception

- Understand and communicate the strategic priorities of NCNC; translate long-term strategic priorities into tangible clear objectives for the BNP team and program; contribute to the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the strategic plan; serve as in-house expert on early childhood environmental education, and serve an active and similar role for the education profession within the Nature Center’s service area.

Innovation

- Understand change and apply social change models associated with cultivating new behaviors that contribute to sustainability; demonstrate an open-mind and willingness to try new ideas or new ways of doing things to improve effectiveness or efficiency; think outside the box and take qualified risks to stimulate creativity and innovation in others.

Team building

- Create a strong, effective, and efficient team, both within the BNP and the larger NCNC staff and help identify, understand, and plan for change,

Educational leadership

- Create an environment for learning and apply current best practices in pedagogy and assessment.

Communications

Writing

- Demonstrate excellent written and verbal skills, including public speaking, and some technical writing while applying common sense, coherence, and logic skills.
- Maintain accurate written records.

Management

Self-management

- Perform a variety of duties that may change regularly while following established procedures.
- Proven ability to work under pressure or against deadlines and prioritize tasks to reflect their relative importance.

- Complete assignments on time with minimal direction and be able to manage ambiguity and take action where answers are not apparent

Managing others

- Foster a stimulating, trusting, and accepting learning environment while encouraging and caring for the needs of individuals within the BNP team.
- Organize individuals and teams to optimize efficiency and innovation, including schedule planning, establishing milestones and goals, and delegate responsibility when appropriate.
- Mediate between contending parties, act diplomatically in challenging situations and administer necessary discipline in compliance with NCNC policies.

Qualifications

- Masters degree in Early Childhood Education preferred; will consider bachelors degree dependant on experience.
- At least 3 – 5 years experience in teaching, early childhood education, or related field.
- Active interest in the natural world.

How to Apply

- Please send cover letter and resume to:
- Laura Heckman, lheckman@newcanaannature.org
- For more information on the New Canaan Nature Center, please visit our website at www.newcanaannature.org.