Ijams 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.

EMPLOYMENT PERIOD

The INP Assistant Teacher is employed part-time for the INP school year (approx. 25-30 hours/week). This position does have the opportunity to become full-time. This position will start immediately. The Assistant Teacher is considered a probationary employee until the successful completion of 90 calendar days of employment; at that time, the employee will be given a 90-day review by the INP Administrator. Upon completion of a satisfactory 90-day review, the Assistant Teacher will be eligible to begin using the paid time off benefits. Before the 90-day probationary period, any time off requests would need to be approved by the INP Administrator and would be considered leave without pay.

HOURS OF WORK

The Assistant Teacher will work Monday-Friday from 8:30 am - 1:00 pm, occasionally needing to stay until 3:00 pm on select days, for up to 25-30 hours per week. This position does have the opportunity to move to Monday-Friday from 9:30 am - 5:30 pm for up to 40 hours per week depending on applicant and school needs. These hours may be adjusted at any point at the discretion of the INP Administrator or at the request of the Assistant Teacher with the approval of the INP Administrator. Any change in scheduled hours must be agreed upon in advance by both the Assistant Teacher and INP Administrator to prevent lapse in classroom ratio.

The Assistant Teacher will receive a copy of the INP Annual School Calendar, which will detail all school breaks, holidays, and teacher work days. In general, INP follows the Knox County Schools’ holiday calendar, but not always. The INP Administrator reserves the right to alter this schedule at any time throughout the year. A minimum of two weeks’ notice will be given upon the alteration of the set schedule.

ASSISTANT TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

The Assistant Teacher will work as part of a team along with other Lead Teachers, Assistant Teachers, the INP Administrator, and Ijams Nature Center staff to foster the social, emotional, environmental, and academic development of students at INP during the regular school year. The Assistant Teacher will be required to assist with and teach during Ijams Preschool Summer Camp in June and July each summer.

Detailed duties are as follows:

Teaching/Assisting

- Assist Lead Teachers in daily curriculum activities
- Focus on outdoor exploration and nature-based learning
- Encourage and guide children’s academic progress
- Maintain records of student progress
- Assist with guided hikes, outdoor unstructured free play, and outdoor classroom lessons

Classroom Setup
- Prepare and maintain preschool materials
- Arrange and organize classroom per Lead Teachers’ requirements
- Organize and straighten materials on shelves
- Photocopy materials
- Clean indoor classroom, outdoor classroom, and bathrooms

Maintaining Proper Learning Environment
- Assist Lead Teachers in directing children’s activities
- Model appropriate behavior
- Encourage independence and self-esteem
- Assist in correcting inappropriate behavior
- Ensure safety of students
- Assist students with snacks, lunch, and nap
- Supervise playground activities
- Maintain tidy, clean, and organized storage areas and common staff areas such as bathrooms, staff kitchen, and office

School Administration
- Assist Lead Teachers with student attendance, progress reports, weekly newsletters, and other clerical duties

The Assistant Teacher will perform other duties as deemed necessary by the INP Administrator and Lead Teachers.

QUALIFICATIONS
- Experience in a preschool setting, especially with programs that spend a great deal of time outside
- Willingness to work outside most of the day with preschoolers, during all weather conditions
- Strong customer service skills
- Experience teaching others and/or the willingness to learn teaching strategies
- Attention to detail
- Willingness to multi-task and work under pressure
- Ability to work without supervision
- Experience working with Microsoft Office, PowerPoint, Excel, Google Suite (dynamic platforms), Canva, or other electronic platforms that enhance communication and documentation
- Must be at least 18 years old
- Must be able to clear a state-required, detailed background check

ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS DESIRED
- Bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Education, Outdoor Experiential Education, Science Education, Wildlife, Biology, or other resource management program
- Ability to be creative, supportive, and enthusiastic with children
- Knowledge of Montessori and Waldorf education principles
- Experience teaching art, music, or drama to children
- CPR, First Aid, and/or other medical training

SALARY
Base entry level salary starts at $12/hour with opportunity to increase with applicant’s level of experience and training.
BENEFITS

Paid Holidays: The Assistant Teacher will receive 8 hours of holiday pay at their regular pay rate for Ijams Nature Center paid holidays off, which total 11 for the calendar year. Other school holiday breaks, such as spring break, will be considered leave without pay, unless it is a scheduled in-service work day or if the INP Administrator needs the Assistant Teacher to come in and work extra days at regular hourly pay.

Sick/Personal Days: The Assistant Teacher will receive 11 paid combined sick and personal days (at 8 hours per day for a total of 88 hours) during the contracted period. A doctor’s note may be required for two or more consecutive sick days used and is at the INP Administrator’s discretion. INP requests that personal leave not be requested during the first two weeks or last two weeks of the regular school year. INP also requests that all planned personal leave be submitted two weeks prior to the requested days off. Personal leave requests may be denied by the INP Administrator if adequate substitutes cannot be acquired. Unused sick and personal days will not be paid out or rolled over at the end of the contracted period.

Professional Development: INP is committed to furthering the development of staff. Training and certification may be provided at the expense of INP when deemed appropriate by the INP Administrator and the Education Director.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Email a cover letter, resume, and a list of three references to Jennie McGuigan, Education Director, at jmcmguigan@ijams.org. This position is open until filled. Interviews will begin ASAP and this position will be filled as soon as an exceptional candidate is identified.

ABOUT IJAMS NATURE CENTER

Ijams Nature Center is a nonprofit learning center and preserve on the southern 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 at Ijams Nature Center. These programs include 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 https://ijams.org for current program information.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Ijams Nature Center is an equal rights employer committed to diversity in staff, Board of Directors, volunteers, visitors, and program participants without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability.