



## **Environmental Educator Early Childhood Education 2026**

### **About The Ridges Sanctuary**

As a leading voice for conservation action, the mission of The Ridges Sanctuary is to promote positive environmental behaviors through impactful educational experiences, land protection and management, and ecological research. The Ridges was established in 1937 after Albert Fuller, then Curator of Botany at the Milwaukee Public Museum, began spending a significant amount of time surveying the landscape. Fuller spearheaded a grassroots movement to protect this incredibly diverse property and establish Wisconsin's oldest member-based land trust. This grassroots movement still drives the organization today. The Ridges Sanctuary now protects 1,700+ acres of the Midwest's most biologically diverse ecosystems and serves as a leading voice for conservation action in the region. Our campus features 5 miles of rustic trails, rare wildflowers, historic Range Lights, indoor exhibits, and an accessible boardwalk among more.

Joining our team means becoming part of an organization committed to creativity, teamwork, and excellence. Our goal is to foster a supportive and inclusive work culture where every team member can thrive and contribute to our ongoing success.

### **Position Summary**

The Ridges Sanctuary is seeking a passionate and creative Lead Teacher to bring Dragonfly Nature Preschool to life — an emergent, nature and play-based program for early childhood learners that reflects our core belief that time in nature is foundational to healthy child development.

Dragonfly Nature Preschool runs in partnership with the Gibraltar School District as part of the 4K Collaborative, offering a unique opportunity to shape an innovative early childhood program at the intersection of environmental education and early learning standards. Sessions are held on weekdays, with additional opportunities for family and parent engagement throughout the year.

This is a full-time, year-round position at 40 hours per week. We recognize that educators' needs vary — a traditional teaching schedule with summers off is available, or you may choose to remain engaged year-round supporting Ridges programming such as Backpack Adventure Camp and other seasonal educational experiences. We're happy to discuss what works best for you.

The Lead Teacher will report to The Ridges Sanctuary's Environmental Educator – Team Lead and will work collaboratively with our Education Team. Because Dragonfly Nature Preschool is a 4K collaborative, this role also involves periodic coordination with Gibraltar School District staff.

## **Duties & Responsibilities**

### Early Childhood Education

- Using Dragonfly Nature Preschool curriculum, along with a play-based, nature-based approach, plan and teach 4k program. (Dragonfly Nature Preschool curriculum is flexible, and is aligned with Natural Start Guidelines and Wisconsin Model of Early Learning Standards.) It is informed by emergent, play-based, nature-based approaches; the Lead Teacher will be able to develop the curriculum to reflect student interest and needs
- Collaborate with an instructional aide
- Collaborate with the Education Team to align all programming with best practices
- Facilitate discovery in both indoor and outdoor classroom setting
- Develop multi-age curriculum that integrates place-based nature education with WELS standards
- Support additional early childhood programming throughout the year and/or school year
- Participate in special events
- Other duties as needed

### Administration

- Oversee registration and attendance of Dragonfly Nature Preschool
- Ensure DCF Day Camp License requirements are fulfilled
- Communicate and collaborate with Gibraltar staff as requested
- Communicate efficiently and promptly with colleagues and parents
- Meet with staff on a regular basis to share program ideas, collaborate on programs and events, etc.
- Prepare program reports as needed
- Interact with visitors and volunteers as needed
- Support organizational operations

OTHER DUTIES AS ASSIGNED

## **Candidate Profile & Qualifications**

The ideal candidate is a passionate, people-centered educator who finds joy in helping young children discover and connect with the natural world. They bring energy and curiosity to their work, thrive in both indoor and outdoor settings, and believe that play and wonder are powerful tools for learning. They are a collaborative team player who communicates openly with colleagues, families, and community partners — and are excited to grow alongside an organization deeply committed to conservation and environmental education.

An ideal candidate will be a great fit if they have:

- A Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education, a related field, or equivalent experience
- A strong understanding of early childhood development and play-based learning approaches

- A valid Wisconsin (or reciprocating state) teaching license for early childhood education is preferred but not required – we are committed to supporting candidates in obtaining licensure upon hire
- Experience developing and delivering environmental education, nature-based, or camp programming
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to engage warmly with families
- A love of the natural world and an eagerness to deepen your knowledge of local natural history and ecology
- The ability to work comfortably outdoors across varied terrain and in all weather conditions
- Proficiency with basic technology tools for communication, documentation, and program administration
- Bilingual candidates are encouraged to apply

All candidates must pass a criminal background check prior to employment.

### **Compensation and Benefits**

This is a full-time, year-round position with a starting salary range of \$42,000 - \$50,000 commensurate with experience and qualifications. Benefits include health reimbursement plan, paid time off, 6% retirement contribution after one year of employment, professional development, and tuition support for teacher certification program if needed. Additional benefits and details will be discussed during the interview process.

### **To Apply**

Submit a cover letter and resume to Katie Krouse, Executive Director via email at [katie@ridgessanctuary.org](mailto:katie@ridgessanctuary.org) with the subject line, Environmental Educator Application. We will be accepting applications until May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2026, and will be scheduling interviews on a rolling basis.

*The Ridges Sanctuary is an equal opportunity employer and considers applicants for all positions without regard to race, color, creed, gender, national origin, age, disability, marital or veteran status, sexual orientation, or any other legally-protected status.*