

Bluestem Hall Nature School

Governance Structure

2026-2027

Employees

Abbie Frank, Founder and Executive Director oversees all Organization Operations.

Nina Carmichael, Preschool Lead Teacher

Kim Peterson, K-1 Lead Teacher

Kyle Snyders, 2-3 Lead Teacher

Laura Gorman, Assistant Teacher

Elisabeth Clem, Office Manager

Job Descriptions

Bluestem Hall Nature School Executive Director

School mission: Bluestem Hall Nature School fosters rich learning, place-based literacy, and a deep and lifelong sense of belonging to the natural world through slowness and freedom. In modeling healthy relationships that establish trust of self, trust of others, kindness, empowerment, and body autonomy, our students will have the support to be their authentic selves.

Position: The Executive Director is in charge of overseeing a business's strategic vision and leading business decisions to drive company growth. Their duties include collaborating with a company's leadership team, implementing strategic plans for the company's development and managing relationships with donors. The Executive Director will serve as the supervisor and close collaborator of the Director of Education as well as all teaching staff.

Responsibilities:

- Showcase an authentic drive to create a physically and emotionally safe learning environment for children.
- Collaborate with the board of Directors to identify, create, and implement strategic plans to actualize business objectives.
- Identify, recruit, train and develop a talented team of employees who can lead critical departments and manage strategic business functions.
- Monitor organization operations and ensure employees and business practices comply with regulatory and legal requirements.
- Develop the organizational culture and promote transparency and collaboration throughout.
- Hold private meetings, network, and develop partnerships with organization donors.
- Identify potential risks and opportunities within the organization and its environment to protect business interests.
- Identify potential sources of revenue and organize fundraising efforts.
- Represent the company at social and corporate events in ways that strengthen the brand and communicate the organization's message.

- Take pride in your position as an advocate of community outreach and play a role in school events such as fundraisers, donor meetings, festivals, and celebrations both public or private.
- Oversee and mentor the Director of Education and all teaching staff.
- Develop relationships with prospective and enrolled families
- Work with Director of Education to complete the admissions process which may include but not limited to open house for interested families, private tours, admissions meetings to meet potential families and students, one on one meeting with students, admitted student play dates, and admitted student home visits.
- Acknowledge and respect diversity and promote inclusion of all people regardless of ethnic, cultural, linguistic backgrounds, gender identity, sexual orientation, and physical and mental disabilities.

Qualifications: The ideal candidate must possess a strong entrepreneurial drive, outstanding communication skills, strong leadership qualities, and good planning and organizational skills. The Executive Director of Bluestem Hall Nature School must showcase a sincere kinship to the philosophies and guiding principles of the organization.

- Bachelor's Degree is required
- Master's Degree is preferred
- Prior business ownership and leadership experience is required
- Understanding of finance-related performance standards
- Proven ability to develop and execute operational strategies
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Demonstrated knowledge of Nonprofit best practices
- Organization and leadership skills
- Strategic thinking and conceptual long term planning
- An understanding of the ecology, geology, botany, and zoology of our native midwestern prairie landscape or a willingness to learn is preferred.
- An understanding of our regional history is preferred.
- Prior CPR and first aid certifications, or willingness to obtain.

The Executive Director exemplifies a genuine interest in the wellbeing of children. Working with a small, tight-knit team of both colleagues and supporting staff will be crucial. Cultivating parent relationships and representing the school and nonprofit organization well through written and verbally communication will be required. The best candidate must show leadership to work independently and effectively guide the organization while maintaining the flexibility to work as a cohesive team in our small nonprofit organization.

Job Type: Full time, year round position

Start Date: 7/1/21

Contact Person: Sue Talbott and Nina Carmichael Email: school@bluestemhall.com

Address: 1401 E Old Church Road Urbana, Illinois 61802

Lead teacher

School mission: Bluestem Hall Nature School fosters rich learning, place-based literacy, and a deep and lifelong sense of belonging to the natural world through slowness and freedom. In modeling healthy relationships that establish trust of self, trust of others, kindness, empowerment, and body autonomy, our students will have the support to be their authentic selves. Please refer to our philosophy + guiding

principles pages on our website to learn more about what drives our school!
www.bluestemhall.com/home

Position: The Lead Teacher will be a highly qualified and driven educator ready to fill a position of leadership, guide the education of children 3 – 6 as a lead teacher, and develop curriculum and teaching practices for the school. This position is 40 hours a week with roughly 30 hours a week teaching and 10 hours a week for administrative tasks. A typical day for this position will include teaching at outdoor field stations on a 120-acre state protected prairie preserve as well as indoor classrooms in a restored 1963 machine shed. All staff must be prepared to spend the majority of the teaching day outside in a variety of seasons and weather conditions. The Executive Director will serve as the supervisor of the Lead Teacher and the Director of Education will serve as a close collaborator on teaching practices and curriculum.

Responsibilities:

Showcase an authentic drive to create a physically and emotionally safe learning environment for children.

Lead the early education of preschool and kindergarten mixed age students with both emergent and planned curricula, recognize and follow child-led interests, and lesson plan with play-based philosophies in mind.

Lead a classroom intentionally with open kindness, warmth, patience, and joy.

Lead/mentor the growth of supporting teachers, parent volunteers, and student teachers.

Maintain an understanding of the native species (plant, mammal, bird, insect) present in the Barnhart Prairie Preserve, as well as a basic understanding of regional forest, river, and lake flora and fauna.

Demonstrate the ability to establish healthy relationships with enrolled families including easy and clear communication in person, via email, and phone appointments. Understand the goal is to celebrate the small community and closeness our school has with all families but from a place of professional boundaries and good decision making.

Schedule and lead any additional family conferences required to meet the social/emotional/physical/cognitive needs of all students.

Establish individual relationships with all students to ensure you can recognize their unique form of learning and can foster custom opportunities for growth.

Recognize, observe, and appreciate the uniqueness of each student and support their custom needs while showcasing good judgement to loop in a student's parents/caregivers for extra support when appropriate.

Create, manage, and oversee documents needed for legal purposes (student and staff files) and professional development (curriculum and education files).

Lead the class in executing the philosophies of the school and/or unlearning the teaching practices that

do not align with the program.

Educate the enrolled families on the reason behind the school's teaching practices and answer questions, either verbal or written, to provide extra information to inquiring parents including weekly written "newsletters" and daily highlights to parents/caregivers with high points from the classroom.

Work collaboratively and showcase the strong ability to gage, interpret, and navigate social situations with colleagues that prioritize and maintain healthy relationships.

Take initiative to research, read books/articles, take seminars/training in the nature-based education industry.

Meal plan, shop for, and prepare daily lunch and snack to ensure nutritional goals are met and prepared in accordance with Champaign County Public Health requirements. Clean and sanitize the food prep area and clean all used dishware on site daily.

Obtain a Food Handler's license before the first day of work

Cleaning duties to restore all used spaces to the condition they were in before school may include but not be limited to: sweeping, mopping, vacuuming, surface cleaning and sanitization, arranging toys and objects, dusting, and general upkeep to maintain a presentable and clean school environment.

Take pride in your position as an advocate of community outreach and play a role in school events such as fundraisers, donor meetings, festivals, and celebrations both public or private, some of which may (infrequently) take place during the summer break.

Work with Executive Director when called to help complete the admissions process which may include but not limited to: open house for interested families, private tours, admissions meetings to meet potential families and students, one on one meeting with students.

Acknowledge and respect diversity and promote inclusion of all people regardless of ethnic, cultural, linguistic backgrounds, gender identity, sexual orientation, and physical and mental disabilities.

Qualifications:

Bluestem Hall Nature School is recognized by the Illinois State Board of Education as a Nonpublic School. All staff will need to meet state requirements, training, and submitted documents.

A 4 year degree in any major is required to be a Lead Teacher.

At least two years' experience working in an early childhood education setting such as a school, daycare, or camp is strongly preferred.

A familiarity with Illinois Early Childhood Standards

Must have the knowledge of principles and techniques in early childhood education and the ability to implement this knowledge through developmentally appropriate curriculum.

Experience working in Environmental Education is preferred.

An understanding of the ecology, geology, botany, and zoology of our native midwestern prairie landscape or a willingness to learn is required.

An understanding of our regional history or a willingness to learn is required.

Prior CPR and first aid certifications, or willingness to obtain.

Ability to sit, stand, crawl, lift children, hold children, and walk on uneven terrain will be essential. Reasonable accommodations for these physical requirements can be made to enable the right candidate.

All Employees must pass a background check with fingerprinting before their first day of employment

The Lead Teacher exemplifies a genuine interest in the wellbeing of children. The ability to listen, engage, teach, and communicate effectively with children of all ages and developmental levels and with the adults in their lives is necessary. Working with a small, tight-knit team of both supervisors and supporting staff will be crucial. Cultivating parent relationships and representing our program well through written and verbal communication is critical. The best candidate must show leadership to work independently and effectively guide your own students while always maintaining the flexibility to work as a cohesive team in our small nonprofit organization.

Assistant Teacher

Position: An Assistant Teacher will be an engaged, driven, and warm presence in the classroom helping support the Lead Teacher and guide the education of children Preschool – First Grade, ages 3 – 8. A typical day for this position will include assistant teaching at outdoor field stations on a 120-acre state protected prairie preserve as well as indoor classrooms in a restored 1963 machine shed. All staff must be prepared to spend the majority of the teaching day outside in a variety of seasons and weather conditions.

Responsibilities:

Showcase an authentic drive to create a physically and emotionally safe learning environment for children.

Help guide the early education of Preschool, Kindergarten, and First grade students with both emergent and planned curricula, recognize and follow child-led interests, and lesson plan with play-based philosophies in mind.

Establish individual relationships with all students to ensure you can recognize their unique form of learning and can foster custom opportunities for growth

Maintain (or develop) a thorough understanding of the native species (plant, mammal, bird, insect) present in the Barnhart Prairie Preserve, as well as a basic understanding of regional forest, river, and lake flora and fauna.

Demonstrate the ability to establish healthy relationships with enrolled families including easy and clear communication in person. Understand the goal is to celebrate the small community and closeness our school has with all families but from a place of professional boundaries and good decision making.

Support the class in executing the philosophies and guiding principles of the school and/or unlearning the teaching practices that do not align with the program.

Work collaboratively and showcase the strong ability to gage, interpret, and navigate social situations with colleagues that prioritize and maintain healthy relationships.

Take initiative to research, read books/articles, take seminars/training in the nature-based education industry.

Take pride in your position as an advocate of community outreach and play a role in school events (upon request) such as fundraisers, donor meetings, festivals, and celebrations both public or private, some of which may (infrequently) take place during the summer break.

Upon request from the Lead Teacher, attend any additional family conferences required to meet the social/emotional/physical/cognitive needs of all students.

Obtain a Food Handler's license before or shortly after the first day of work

Complete the online Mandated Reporter Training

Complete training and be certified in first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and the Heimlich maneuver

The end of the work day will include assistance in requested cleaning duties to help restore all used spaces (classroom, library, hallways and transition spaces, bathrooms, kitchen, dressing cubbies and benches, porch, playground, field stations, entry way, chalkboard, sidewalks etc) to the condition they were in before school may include but not be limited to: sweeping, mopping, vacuuming, surface cleaning and sanitization, arranging toys and objects, dusting, and general upkeep to maintain a presentable and clean school environment. Collection and replacement of trash bags daily dropping the garbage and recycling in proper receptacles on the way out.

Acknowledge and respect diversity and promote inclusion of all people regardless of ethnic, cultural, linguistic backgrounds, gender identity, sexual orientation, and physical and mental disabilities.

Qualifications:

Bluestem Hall Nature School is Recognized by the Illinois State Board as a Nonpublic School. All Employees must meet the state requirements, training, and submitted documents.

A true sense of wonderment, joy, and the ability to find the magic in life is required.

A degree in Education is preferred, but not required

Experience working in an education setting such as a school, preschool, or homeschool setting is preferred

Must have the knowledge of principles and techniques in early childhood education, or the sincere willingness to learn, and the ability to implement this knowledge through developmentally appropriate teaching.

Experience working in Environmental Education is preferred.

An understanding of the ecology, geology, botany, and zoology of our native midwestern prairie landscape or a willingness to learn is required.

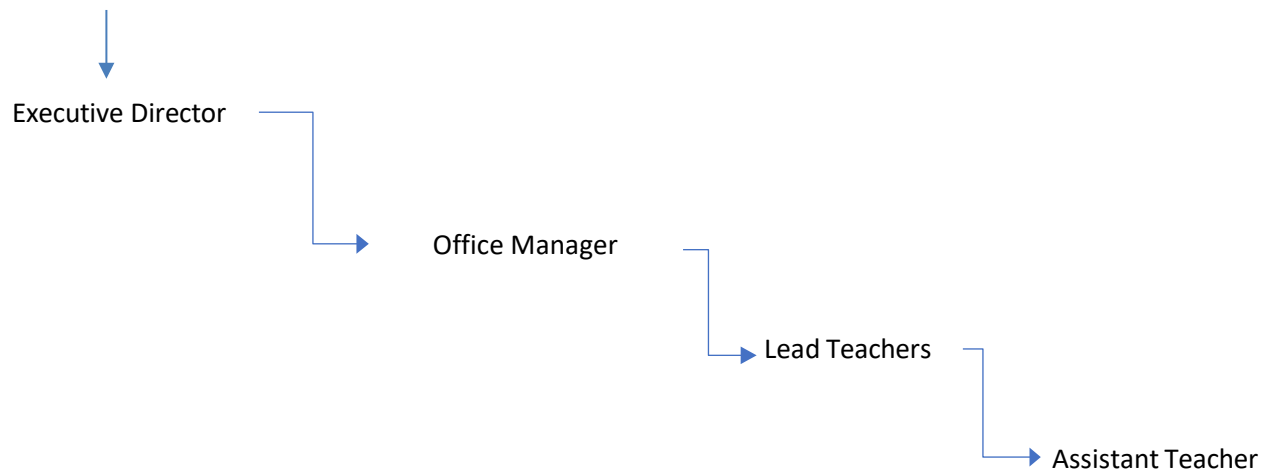
Prior CPR and first aid certifications, or willingness to obtain.

Ability to sit, stand, crawl, lift children, hold children, and walk on uneven terrain will be essential. Reasonable accommodations for these physical requirements can be made to enable the right candidate.

The Assistant Teacher exemplifies a genuine interest in the wellbeing of children. The ability to listen, engage, teach, and communicate with children of all ages and developmental levels and with the adults in their lives is necessary. Working with a small, tight-knit team of both supervisors and supporting staff will be crucial. Cultivating parent relationships and representing our program well through verbal communication will be required. The best candidate must be able to showcase the flexibility to work as a cohesive team in our small nonprofit organization.

Delegation of Authority

Bluestem Hall Nature School Board of Directors



Delegation of Authority

The Executive Director and Lead Teachers are all in leadership positions meaning they will be managing some aspects of their positions without immediate supervision. The Executive Director oversees the operation of the entire organization including the job performance of all teaching staff.

The Lead Teachers will be responsible for the mentoring, training, and overseeing of all support staff

Staffing Schedule

Executive Director
tbd
Year Round

Lead Teachers
Full Time, 730-330
Monday – Friday
School Year

Assistant Teacher
6 hours a day, 830-230
Monday – Friday
School Year

After hours and weekend work will occasionally be required by all with advance notice.

Policy Making

Anyone in the organization, staff or directors may request that an issue is added to the next available board meeting agenda for consideration. If staff would like to add to the agenda, they may request this from the Executive Director who need to approve the agenda item. If Directors would like to add the agenda item they may request this from either the Board President or Board Secretary. Once on the agenda, the item will undergo formal review from the board. A vote will take place and the policy will be approved or denied.

The Executive Director also has the authority to create, update, and eliminate policies based on the needs of the organization, staff, and licensing agent. Examples: The Health Policy and Parent Handbooks