

Wellness Policy



Eco Child Care of Charlotte, LLC
DBA A Place To Grow Three Rivers - Wingate
Effective July 27, 2026

A Place to Grow: Wellness Policy

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I. Our Philosophy & Environment

At A Place to Grow, we practice a holistic approach that nurtures the physical and mental well-being of every child. We believe that a healthy lifestyle—including nutrition, physical activity, and a safe environment—sets the foundation for learning and growth.

We recognize that our commitment to outdoor immersion is an investment in your child's future academic success. Research confirms that the skills children develop in our **Nature Explore Classroom**—such as **executive function**, focus, and problem-solving—are direct predictors of achievement in elementary school. By engaging with the natural world, children build the "academic grit" needed to tackle complex challenges, lay the groundwork for **STEAM** (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) through hands-on exploration, and develop the rich vocabulary necessary for literacy. We view the outdoors not just as a playground, but as a living laboratory that prepares the mind for a lifetime of learning.

Our Unique Learning Domain: Connections to Nature™ (CTN)

What makes A Place to Grow unique is the inclusion of an additional educational domain: **Connections to Nature™ (CTN)**. This domain addresses the intrinsic human need for regular, meaningful engagement with the natural world, including experiences that occur in, on, near, or around nature.

It encompasses a child's developing sense of wonder, curiosity, and respect for the living and non-living environment. We recognize that consistent interaction with natural settings is fundamental for fostering:

- Emotional regulation
- Physical well-being
- Cognitive development
- A deep, enduring sense of place

Indoor Environment: Eco-Healthy Certified

Our indoor spaces are certified as an **Eco-Healthy Childcare**. We prioritize reducing environmental toxins to keep children safe.

- **Non-Toxic Materials:** We use ACMI-certified non-toxic art supplies and least-toxic cleaners for sanitizing and disinfecting.
- **Sustainable Practices:** We practice recycling and composting. Dinnerware is made of glass, metal, or recycled BPA-free materials.
- **Safety:** Our flooring is easily sanitized, and we rigorously test for lead and radon to meet or exceed quality standards.

Outdoor Environment: Nature Explore® Classroom

We embrace nature on our land. Our outdoor spaces are designed to meet the expectations of a certified **Nature Explore® Classroom**. Our outdoor environment is thoughtfully designed to meet the rigorous criteria of Environment Rating Scales, offering the same high-quality learning areas found in our indoor classrooms.

We prioritize outdoor curriculum because time spent outdoors is a strong predictor of a child's overall physical activity, and research indicates that the executive function and self-regulation skills built during unstructured nature play are among the strongest predictors of long-term academic success and literacy in elementary school and beyond. Beyond recreation, playing in a natural environment is essential for holistic health and is an indicator of long-term academic success:

- **Physical Development:** Active outdoor play is crucial for developing muscle and bone strength and promoting a healthy weight.
- **Vitamin D:** Outdoor time provides sunlight exposure needed for the body to produce Vitamin D, which is vital for bone growth and immune function.
- **Skill Building:** Navigating natural landscapes fosters fine and gross motor, socio-emotional, and cognitive skills.

To support a full day of learning and living outside, our outdoor classroom includes:

- Designated areas for eating and meals.
- Shaded spaces for circle time and classroom gatherings.
- Open grassy areas for running and large motor activities.
- Climbing structures and opportunities to climb rocks and trees.
- Raised bed gardens, large sandboxes, and loose parts for building.
- Dedicated spaces for music, movement, and creating art in nature.

II. Movement, Play, and Gear

Research confirms that the single most effective way to increase a child's physical activity is simply providing more time outdoors. Unlike indoor spaces, which often require suppression of movement for safety, our outdoor environment removes physical barriers and naturally invites high-energy play. We ensure children have ample space and time to be active every day.

Activity Guidelines

- **Daily Outdoor Play:** Children play outside daily unless weather conditions pose a **significant** safety risk. This exposes them to natural sunlight for Vitamin D production and promotes a healthy weight.

- **Teacher Engagement:** Our teachers actively engage in play, modeling enthusiasm for movement and offering encouragement.
- **Infant Care:** Infants are given every opportunity to move freely to support their physical development. We ensure they spend little time in positioners or seats, unless it is during meal time or part of a specific activity.

Gear Guidelines: "There is no bad weather..."

We encourage children to play in all weather elements—rain, snow, or shine—and to "get messy" to deepen their Connection to Nature TM. To ensure your child is safe and comfortable, **families must provide the following gear:**





III. Nutrition Guidelines

We view mealtime as a social, learning experience. We utilize a family-style eating model where children sit with their peers and teachers at small tables, fostering natural inquiry and social skills. **Families will need to provide 2 snacks and 1 meal equal to ½ of the child's daily food intake and meals and snacks provided from home must meet the USDA requirements for nutrition as required by NC10A NCAC 09.1706.**

General Food Policies

- **Role Modeling & Social Learning:** Teachers actively sit and eat with children to model healthy eating habits. Research indicates that children are more likely to try new foods when they see trusted adults enjoying them. Please note that it often takes **up to ten exposures** before a child accepts a new food; we encourage patience and curiosity over pressure.
- **Nutritional Safety Net:** We understand that mornings can be busy. To ensure every child has the energy to play and learn, the center will provide a nutritious meal or snack if a family inadvertently forgets to send food or if the provided meal does not meet daily nutritional sufficiency.
- **Healthy Relationships with Food:** To foster internal self-regulation and prevent emotional eating, **food is never used as a punishment or an incentive.** We focus on nourishment rather than reward.
- **Eco-Healthy Containers:** Consistent with our Eco-Healthy certification, we encourage the use of **stainless steel, glass, or BPA-free plastic** containers.

Water Bottle & Hydration Policy

Purpose

Children must have access to clean drinking water throughout the day, per NC [15A NCAC 18A .2804](#), especially when participating in vigorous activity. To encourage healthy hydration habits, prevent the spread of germs, and ensure a safe, sanitary environment for all children, A Place To Grow-Three Rivers, Wingate has established specific guidelines for personal water bottles brought into the facility. These guidelines align with North Carolina childcare sanitation regulations to minimize cross-contamination and choking hazards.

Water Bottle Requirements

Every child must bring a reusable water bottle daily. To be permitted in the classroom, all water bottles **must** meet the following criteria:

- **No Straws:** Water bottles must **not** have built-in or removable straws. Straws and soft bite-valves are difficult to sanitize completely in a group care setting and can harbor bacteria.
- **Secure, Closing Lids:** Lids must close completely and seal tightly (e.g., screw-on, flip-top, or push-button latching lids) to prevent accidental spills, leaks, and contamination when dropped.
- **Proper Labeling:** The bottle must be clearly labeled with the child's first and last name using a waterproof label or permanent marker.
- **Material:** For safety reasons, glass bottles are strictly prohibited. Heavy-duty plastic or stainless steel is required.

Pro Tip for Parents: Look for "leak-proof" sports bottles or traditional flip-top thermoses without an internal straw mechanism.

Center Protocols & Hygiene

- **Water Only:** Bottles may only be filled with plain, unflavored water.
- **Accessibility:** Water bottles will be kept in designated, accessible areas (such as a water bottle caddy or cubby) so children can access hydration throughout the day, especially during and after outdoor play.
- **Daily Maintenance:** All water bottles must be taken home daily by parents to be thoroughly washed and sanitized.
- **Alternative Option:** If a child forgets their water bottle, the center will provide water using disposable, single-use cups or center-sanitized cups. If a bottle brought to the center features a straw or an unclosable lid, staff will politely ask the parent to take it home and will provide the child with a center-approved cup for the day.

Prohibited Items (What NOT to Pack)

Meals and snacks provided from home must meet the USDA requirements for nutrition, per NC state law [10A NCAC 09.0901](#), and as provided in the attachments. To ensure safety and health, the following are **excluded** from the center:

- **Nuts:** We are a nut-free school. Labels reading "may contain nuts" or "processed in a facility with nuts" are not permitted.
- **Choking Hazards (Under age 3):** Whole hot dogs/sausages, whole grapes, hard candy/gum, raw carrot rounds, hard pretzels/chips, popcorn, seeds, peas, and marshmallows.
- **Sugary Treats:** Cookies, cakes, candy, and sweet treats.
- **Fast Food:** Drive-through meals are not permitted as they generally do not meet nutritional guidelines.

Infant Feeding (Birth to 12 Months)

- **Breastmilk & Formula:** Feedings are personalized to the child's needs. Bottles must be finished within one hour of the feeding beginning; leftover formula is discarded, and leftover breastmilk is sent home. All infants will have an **Infant Feeding Plan** form that supports the preferred feeding choice of the family and is appropriate for the baby's developmental stage.
- **Holding Policy:** Infants younger than six months or those unable to support themselves are always held during bottle feeding.
- **Solid Foods:** Introduced no sooner than 4 months of age, based on readiness.

IV. Health & Safety Standards

Allergies & Dietary Restrictions

At A Place to Grow, we take the prevention and management of allergic reactions seriously. We work closely with families to create a safe environment for all children.

A Nut-Free School

- **Prohibited Items:** We are a strictly nut-free school. We reserve the right to designate specific classrooms or the entire center as free of other specific foods if required for the health of a child or staff member.
- **Labeling:** Labels that read "may contain nuts" or "processed in a facility with nuts" are **not permissible** in the center.

- **Lunch box Identification:** To ensure safety during mealtime, all lunch boxes for children with food allergies must be clearly marked with a **food allergen tag** identifying the specific allergen.

Documentation & Action Plans

For any child with a chronic medical condition, food allergy, or other allergy (such as bee stings) that results in a serious reaction, families must provide:

- **Written Care Plan:** Instructions regarding the specific allergen(s) and steps staff must take to avoid exposure.

Communication & Safety Protocols

- **Staff Awareness:** All staff responsible for food preparation and supervision are required to review allergy care plans to ensure no child is accidentally exposed.
- **Posting:** With parental permission, allergy care plans are posted in the classroom and food preparation areas so they are visible to all care providers.
- **Emergency Medication:** Emergency medications (such as epinephrine auto-injectors) must be available at the center, stored safely but readily accessible to staff in case of an emergency.

Illness Policy

A Place to Grow staff shall observe each child each day upon arrival and throughout the day for injuries and symptoms of illness which impair or prohibit the child's participation in the regular child care activities or require more care than child staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the ill, or injured child, or the other children in their care.

For your child to return to school following a doctor's visit, a physician's note is mandatory and must include a **clear diagnosis**. This information is essential for A Place to Grow so we may:

- Determine the appropriate return-to-school protocol.
- Identify necessary notifications to other families.
- Implement any required modifications to cleaning procedures.

Parents should consult with the center director for specific guidance. A Place to Grow adheres to recommended guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and the Department of Public Health.

If your child becomes ill while at A Place to Grow:

- A Place to Grow will **immediately** notify a child's parent or guardian if a child needs to be removed from the program due to illness.
- Families are expected to arrange for pick-up within **one hour of notification**.
- If a parent is **not immediately** available by phone or message, an emergency contact will be reached.

For the health and safety of others, children who have been sent home must remain out of care until they have been **symptom-free for a full 24 hours** without the use of medication.

Exclusion Criteria (When to stay home):

The [NC Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center](#) publishes a list of exclusion criteria for specific diseases. The symptoms of illness referenced shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

- An oral or forehead temperature of 101 degrees Fahrenheit or greater, or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or greater when taken via the armpit, accompanied by behavior changes or signs or symptoms of illness. Or if an infant younger than two months has a temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher;
- Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness such as unusual lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, irritability, persistent crying, difficult breathing, wheezing, or other unusual signs;
- Uncontrolled diarrhea, that is two or more increased number of stools, increased stool water, and/or decreased form that is not contained by the diaper, until diarrhea stops;
- Vomiting illness, including two or more episodes of vomiting in the previous 24 hours, until vomiting resolves or until healthcare provider determines illness to be non-communicable, and the child is not in danger of dehydration;
- Rash with fever or behavior change, until a healthcare provider determines that these symptoms do not indicate a communicable disease;
- Child is unable to participate in the regular childcare activities or requires more care than staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the ill, or injured child, or the other children in their care. ; or
- Child may be excluded from care for conditions that are potentially life-threatening (e.g., respiratory distress or severe allergic reactions), require specific protocols beyond the scope of staff training (e.g., lice or norovirus), or exceed the expertise of available staff.

TOO SICK FOR SCHOOL?

HERE'S HOW TO TELL

STAY HOME IF ...	SYMPTOM	GO BACK TO SCHOOL AFTER ...
Coughing, wheezing, cold symptoms	RESPIRATORY SYMPTOMS (COLD, COUGH, FLU, RSV, WHEEZING)	Fever and symptom free for 24 hours, 3 neg tests (Covid, Flu, RSV) if positive for any respiratory virus isolate for 5 days once symptom free
Eye drainage which includes yellow goop or puss which returns when wiped away	EYE DISCHARGE	Evaluate by a physician. If contagious, return 24 hours after antibiotics and symptoms improve greatly
Underarm temp of 100 ° F or greater	FEVER	fever free for 24 hours, 3 negative tests and symptoms are greatly improved
Child has vomited, diarrhea, stomach pains, or signs of constipation	VOMITING, DIARRHEA OR CONSTIPATION	symptoms are improved for 24 hours, 3 negative tests, and movements are controlled
pain which prohibits a child from participating in daily activities without additional support or intervention	PAIN OR GENERALIZED DISCOMFORT	able to participate in daily activities without additional assistance or supports including OTC medications for pain
Lethargic or unable to participate in daily activities without additional supports or intervention	RASH	Rash has dissipated and a physician has determined the illness is not contagious
Complaints of sore throat or ear pain, redness, or pus in the throat	SORE THROAT EAR PAIN	Evaluate by a physician. If contagious, return 24 hours after antibiotics and symptoms improve greatly
Lethargic or unable to participate in daily activities without additional supports or intervention	LETHARGIC	able to participate in daily activities without additional assistance or supports including OTC medications for pain

Two or more symptoms or known illness exposure within the community may require additional testing. These are general guidelines and may be modified at any time at the discretion of A Place to Grow.

Guidance document developed in alignment with CDC, AAP, and the NH Department of Public Health

Screen Time Policy

- **Under 2 Years:** No screen time is permitted.
- **Over 2 Years:** Limited strictly to educational content based on the monthly curriculum.

V. Reference: Meal Planning Guides

Infant Feeding Guidelines: Personalized Care & Safety Protocols

1 General Policies

Personalized Schedule



Feedings are personalized to each child's needs, with **NO MORE THAN 3 HOURS** between feedings.

Safety First



Infants < 6 months (or unable to support themselves) are **ALWAYS HELD** while being bottle fed.

Introduction to Solids



Solid foods introduced **NO SOONER THAN 4 MONTHS**, based on readiness.

2 The "One-Hour Rule"

Milk/formula shall **NOT** be kept/used after **ONE HOUR** from when feeding begins.



Leftover breast milk will be **SENT HOME**.



Leftover formula will be **DISCARDED**.

2 Safety First



4–6 oz breastmilk or or-fortified formula **ON DEMAND**.

3 Meal Patterns: Birth – 5 Months



4–6 oz breastmilk or iron-fortified formula **ON DEMAND**.

4 Meal Patterns: 6 – 11 Months (Transitioning to Solids)

Food Component (with icons)	Snack Portion	Lunch Portion
Breastmilk/Formula 	2–4 oz	6–8 oz
Protein 	Not typically provided at snack	Choose ONE: Cheese 0–2 oz, Cottage Cheese/Yogurt 0–4 oz Meat/Poultry/Fish 0–4 Tbsp Egg/Dry Beans 0–4 Tbsp
Vegetable/Fruit 	0–2 Tbsp	0–2 Tbsp
Whole Grain 	Choose ONE: Bread 0–½ slice, Crackers 0–2, Infant Cereal 0–4 Tbsp	Choose ONE: Bread 0–½ slice, Crackers 0–2, Infant Cereal 0–4 Tbsp



USDA CACFP Meal Pattern Guidelines for Children (Ages 1-18)



BREAKFAST

(Serve Milk, Vegetable or Fruit, Grain)



	AGES 1-2	AGES 3-5	AGES 6-18
Fluid Milk (cups)	1/2	2/3	2/4
Vegetables or Fruits (cups)	1/2	1/2	2/3
Grains (oz eq)	2 eq	2 eq	5 eq

- Meat/Meat Alternates may replace grains up to 3 times per week at breakfast

LUNCH & SUPPER

(Serve All 5 Components)



	AGES 1-2	AGES 3-5	AGES 6-18
Fluid Milk (cups)	1/2	2/3	2/4
Meat/Meat Alternates (oz eq)	0 eq	2 eq	3 eq
Vegetables (cups)	1/2	2/3	2/4
Fruits (cups)	1/2	2/3	3/4
Grains (oz eq)	5 eq	3 eq	5 eq

KEY GUIDELINES & UPDATES

Greater Variety of Vegetables & Fruits
(Separate components)

More Whole Grains
(At least one serving/day must be whole grain-rich)

Less Added Sugar
(Yogurt ≤ 23g sugar/6oz; Cereal ≤ 6g sugar/dry oz)

Fluid Milk
(Unflavored whole for age 1; Unflavored low-fat/fat-free for ages 2-5; Unflavored/flavored low-fat/fat-free for ages 6+)

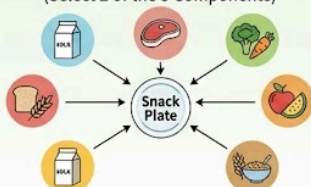
Juice Limited
(Once per day)

Special Notes:

- Grains-based desserts do not count toward grains component
- Tofu counts as meat alternate
- Ounce equivalents (oz eq) used for grains

SNACK

(Select 2 of the 5 Components)



	AGES 1-2	AGES 3-5	AGES 6-18
Fluid Milk (cups)	1/2	1/2	2/2
Meat/Meat Alternates (oz eq)	0 eq	0 eq	0 eq
Vegetables (cups)	2/2	2/2	2/2
Fruits (cups)	1/2	1/2	2/2
Grains (oz eq)	2 eq	3 eq	4 eq
Fluid Milk (noats) (cups)	1/2	3/5	3/5
More Whole Grains (oz eq)	0 eq	0 eq	0 eq

Everyday Foods & Lunchbox Ideas



Vegetables (¾ c)

Asparagus, Green peas, Avocados, Leafy Greens, Beets, Kale, Bell peppers, Spinach, Broccoli, Romaine Lettuce, Carrots, Olives, Cauliflower, Potatoes, Celery, Squash, Corn (Fresh), Sweet potatoes, Cucumbers, Tomatoes, Green beans, Zucchini



Fruits (¾ c)

Watermelon, Apples, Cantaloupe, Apricots, Strawberries, Bananas, Blueberries, Figs, Raspberries, Grapes, Lemon, Papaya, Lime, Pears, Oranges, Pineapple, Kiwi, Plums, Grapefruit, Prunes, Apples, Raisins/Dried fruit



Beans & Legumes (¼ c)

Dried peas, Beans: Black, Kidney, Lima, Garbanzo, Pinto, Lentils, Tempeh, Tofu



Grains (3-5 oz)

Barley, Pancakes, Brown rice, Waffles, Buckwheat, Muffins, Millet, Pita Bread, Oats, Dry Cereal, Quinoa, Banana Bread, Whole wheat



Poultry & Meats (2-4 oz)

Beef, grass-fed, Cod, Chicken pasture-raised, Salmon, Lamb, grass-fed, Scallops, Turkey, pasture-raised, Shrimp



Eggs & Dairy (Grass Fed) (2 Cups)

Cheese, Cow's milk, Yogurt, Eggs (pasture-raised)



Seeds (½ oz)

Flax, Pumpkin, Sesame, Sunflower