



EARLY EDUCATION AND YOUTH RECREATION

PARENT HANDBOOK 2025-2026



Growing Places Main Office: 603-868-1335 (located at our Lee site)

Growing Places Pinkham Road: 603-868-1160

Growing Places Woodside: 603-868-5674

Growing Places School Age Program: 603-969-8677

Growing Places Leadership Team

Amanda Toupin, Executive Director: amandatoupin@growingplacesnh.org

Sarah Nason, Assistant Executive Director: sarahnason@growingplacesnh.org

Melissa Tucker, Program Director-Pinkham Road: pinkham@growingplacesnh.org

Becca Kelly, Program Director- Woodside: woodside@growingplacesnh.org

Erin Evans, Program Director: moharimet@growingplacesnh.org



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Dear Families,

Welcome to Growing Places!

At Growing Places your child will have the opportunity to participate in enriching activities, and learn through playing with other children and staff. We pride ourselves in the use of our outside space as an extension to the growth and learning that happens inside in the classroom, and our gentle use of natural colors, toys and activities to encourage exploration without overwhelming the senses. Growing Places' curriculum focuses on the whole child and encourages children to discover and learn through the process instead of the product.

We encourage your family to participate in our programs at any time and to always ask questions, make comments, and offer suggestions. Our goal is to provide a quality child care experience for each family who enrolls in any of our programs. We place great emphasis on the development of partnerships with families, the surrounding communities, and other child care professionals where ideas, information, education and support are shared to create a positive child care experience for all people involved.

Our organization holds a number of family friendly events through the year, including but not limited to a fall picnic/potluck to welcome families, our annual Coppal House Farm Fundraiser that is held in October, breakfast with families mid-winter, our annual Art Show in March, Durham Day Dash and 5K in June, and an end of year celebration in June.

This handbook is designed to be a guide. These policies are reviewed annually by board and staff members. Please call with any questions.

Best,

Amanda Toupin M.Ed.
Executive Director

Getting to Know Us

Growing Places Early Education and Youth Recreation is a private, non-profit 501(c)3 early education and youth recreation organization governed by a Board of Directors and licensed by the State of New Hampshire's Bureau of Child Care Standards and Licensing. Growing Places currently serves approximately 200 families in the seacoast area. Our organization has programs for children ages 6 weeks through 12 years at three different sites.

Growing Places was founded in 1996 when the Durham Children's Center, the Durham Infant Center and Forest Park Child Care Center merged to become one organization. Each of these three former organizations were founded in the 1970's. The three directors of these centers began working together in 1994 on long range planning and resource development.



Our Programs

Early Childhood Education in Lee on Pinkham Road – 56 Pinkham Road, 868-1160

Ages 6 weeks - 6 years

Early Childhood Education in Durham at Woodside Community Building – 60 Strafford Ave, 868-5674

Ages 2 - 6 years

“Our Time” Before and After School Program - Moharimet Elementary School, Madbury, 969-8677

Ages 5 - 12 years

Our Mission Statement: Growing Places provides early education programs that foster development of the whole child.

Our Vision Statement: Our vision for the future is to be a leader in early childhood education.

What We Value

The number one sign of an excellent early education program is the quality of the teaching staff. Growing Places work culture is designed to support excellence in early childhood teaching. Our teachers provide a loving, responsive and rich environment. They plan open-ended, emergent and developmentally appropriate curriculum giving children the opportunity to investigate and explore. We are deeply committed to children and to early childhood education.

Growing Places provides loving, safe and engaging indoor and outdoor environments for children to explore through play in the company of responsive and interactive adults. Knowing that children learn at different rates, teachers intentionally plan curriculum based on individual observations and assessments. A wide variety of enriching opportunities are designed to support children's cognitive, social-emotional, language and physical development. Teachers extend children's learning by asking open-ended, thought provoking questions. Children's development is documented through child assessments twice a year and continuous portfolio work.

Teachers in all early childhood classrooms use sign language as a means to promote early literacy skills. Outside play in our natural environment, loose parts for imaginative play and exploration, music, dramatic play and storytelling are also cornerstones of our program. We value the importance of unstructured outside play in our large wooded area and on our playgrounds. Teachers also provide a balance of more structured activities that promote physical development, curiosity, and investigation of the natural environment.

Our Philosophy

Growing Places fosters learning situations that are flexible, developmentally appropriate, child centered and mindful of differences and individuality. As educators we:

- Provide programming based on cognitive, language, social/emotional and physical goals for each child's development,
- Provide stimulating, hands on experiences that promote a love of learning,
- Believe meaningful learning occurs through play,
- Encourage exploration of the natural environment,
- Support and guide children in problem solving and conflict resolution
- Model and encourage the development of healthy, trusting relationships between and amongst children and adults and the world around them, and
- Build partnerships with families to meet children's individual goals.



Volunteer Opportunities

Growing Places is a non-profit child care and educational organization that depends on volunteer support from family members and from the community to ensure top quality programs for children. The following are ways that you can volunteer during the year:

Event Planning prep for fall and/or spring events
Yardwork/Cleanup
Fundraising/Development Committee
Classroom Volunteers during UNH's Winter Break
Classroom Volunteers during UNH's Spring Break

General Maintenance Projects
Playground Improvement Projects
Art Show Preparation
Board of Directors Member
Community Sponsor Networking

Parents are welcome and encouraged to share their time, talents and/or hobbies in any of our programs at anytime during the year. Please see your child's Program Director to arrange a time.

Parent's concerns, opinions, and suggestions are encouraged to be shared with our staff. All feedback helps our programs grow. Our name *Growing Places* was chosen because all of us are life-long learners. We welcome and encourage your feedback!

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of Growing Places is charged with the role of ensuring that the mission of the organization is carried out while also overseeing the management and strategic planning of the organization. The Board is responsible for planning and policy decisions, for financial stability and the development of adequate resources for the organization, and for the ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the work of the organization.

Please email or call Executive Director Amanda Toupin at amandatoupin@growingplacesnh.org or 868-1335 for more information.

Enrollment and Terminating Care Procedures

Admission Policy

Generally, spaces for new children become available in late June and early September as our oldest children move on to summer camps and Kindergarten. Once a space is available the next family on our waiting list will be contacted to tour our classrooms and meet with the program director. Families then have 48 hours to accept the spot by paying the non-refundable registration fee and two-week tuition deposit (see tuition and fees for more details). Should the family decline the space the next family on the list will be contacted. Families may choose to remain on the waiting list after declining but will be moved to the enrollment cycle for the following school year. Occasionally we do have children that move on from Growing Places through out the year but please note this is rare.

Note Regarding Infant Admission

Infants must be at least 6 weeks of age and have a completed health form to attend Growing Places. While we understand a space may be offered before an infant may be ready to start, the same admission policy applies. This may mean that a family will need to pay for a space that they are not yet utilizing as Growing Places will not hold open spaces.

Part-time Schedules

Growing Places offers the following three options for part-time schedules:

Tuesday, Thursday **OR** Monday, Wednesday, Friday **OR** Any four days

The same admission policy applies to part-time schedules.

Enrolling your Child

We strongly encourage every family to have an enrollment interview and tour before their child(ren) attends. Visiting with your child(ren) prior to enrollment is encouraged and can often help with their transition. This can be arranged with the Program Director any time.

- Families pay a non-refundable registration fee of \$175.00 per child, as well as the two-week deposit to secure their spot.
- Before attending any of our programs a registration form completed by the child's parent or guardian must be returned to your child's program location.
- Upon enrollment a weekly schedule is contracted with Growing Places based on classroom availability. Your Program Director will work with you as best he/she can to meet the needs of your family. A minimum of two blocks of time must be contracted for each child.
- A health form and up to date immunization record, completed by a physician, is to be returned to us within thirty (30) days of enrollment. This health form will need to be updated regularly as

immunizations are given for children attending our Early Education Programs and every 2 years for children over 6 years of age who are attending the School Age Program.

- A child's enrollment is official **after** the registration fee and tuition deposit are paid in full.

Terminating Care

A two-week written notice must be given when withdrawing from any of our programs. If a two-week written notice is not given, you will be billed for two weeks and your deposit may be applied to those two weeks.

Family Partnership Policy

Growing Places strives to maintain a positive, respectful, and supportive atmosphere as it is critical to the success of every child. Cooperation and professional behavior between parents, teachers, and administrators is essential in achieving this. Any parent or family member that behaves outside the boundaries of acceptable behavior, on or off school property, including social media platforms, via written or verbal communication, during school hours or not, may be asked to modify that behavior, be limited in how they may interact with the Growing Places community, or be terminated from our programs.

Emergency Operations Procedure

We will make every effort to keep strong lines of communication open during an Emergency, your child's safety and well-being is our first priority. If an emergency should occur in or around our program we will notify you by calling/texting your emergency contact number. If we need to Evacuate the building to an offsite location we can be found at: Lee-NH DOT, Pinkham Road, Durham-Hamel Recreation Center, Madbury-Moharimet Sugar Shack. Our full Emergency Operations Procedure can be found on our website, and resources are available upon request if a family would like information on creating their own Emergency Procedure at home.

Transitions between classrooms and programs

Classroom transitions

Generally transitions are done once per year, either at the beginning or end of the summer as space allows. In our younger classrooms moving to the next classroom is determined not just by their age but what is developmentally appropriate. For example, in order for an infant to move into the infant/toddler room they need to have transitioned to one nap per day, able to self-feed and preferably walking. In our older classrooms a transition to the next room is based upon their grade level age using the cut off set by the NH Department of Education. Since many of our children attend the same school district this allows them to develop friendships that they can transition with into Kindergarten. Any consideration for an exception to this would need to be discussed with the Program Director.

PreK children transitioning to Camp Cowabunga at Moharimet

Children enrolled in our PreK program that are 5 years old by the start of our summer camp program will graduate to Camp Cowabunga. Children with July and August birthdays will remain at our ECE programs for the summer. Children under the age of 5 years old are not eligible to attend Camp Cowabunga.

Transitions between Early Childhood Sites

Families that would like to move their child(ren) between early childhood sites need to make the request with the Program Director at their current site. Requests must be made at least two weeks prior to the requested move date. Due to the high demand of enrollment at all our sites often we are not able to transition children between sites until the summer months, however, in-house family requests for enrollment do take priority.

Financial Policy Agreement

Tuition Payment Schedule: Tuition payments are due on the first day your child attends each week. Monthly prepayments are welcome, and you are responsible to pay weekly even if you do not receive a bill. Tuition fees are not based on attendance, but are weekly contractual fees. There will be no reductions in fees or refunds given if your child is absent (sickness, vacation, emergency, unforeseen circumstance or other absence). If tuition is not paid on time and according to this contract, we reserve the right to terminate child care unless Operations Manager Sarah Nason (603) 868-1335 has been contacted to create a payment plan. A late payment of \$10/week will be applied to your account for balances (2) or more weeks behind. *Weekly bills are sent to your family's primary email and a copy can be printed and filed in in your child's parent pocket each Friday upon request.*

Registration Fee/Two Week Tuition Deposit: For Early Childhood Sites and "Our Time" School Age program a \$175 non-refundable annual registration fee is required at the time of enrollment for your child. This is a fee that will be charged annually while your child is attending our programs. This registration fee covers the cost of liability insurance for each child. When a new child is enrolled **after March 1st, the registration fee for Early Childhood Sites and "Our Time" School Age program is reduced to \$125** (which covers 3/1-8/30). Summer only enrollment as well as Camp Cowabunga requires a non-refundable registration fee of \$75. Each child's last 2 weeks tuition is required at time of registration to secure your child's spot. Your child is not officially enrolled in our program until both registration fee and tuition deposit has been made. If your school age child enrolls for the 2023/2024 school year, your two-week deposit will carry over to the following year if enrolled by May 15. Families receiving child care reimbursement from the state are exempt from the tuition deposit.

Withdrawal/Change in Contracted Days: If you decide to withdraw your child from any of our programs, or change contracted days attending, you **MUST** give a two (2) week notice, in writing, prior to the withdrawal/change date. If you do not give two weeks written notice, you will be charged two weeks beyond the date notice was given. No exceptions will be made.

Fees:

Late Pick-Up Fee: If you are unable to arrive on time, you **MUST** call your child's site so that both your child(ren) and the Director can be prepared for the delay. **If you are late to pick up your child(ren) you will be charged an additional \$20 per occurrence plus \$5 per minute after the first ten minutes. If late pick-ups continue to occur your Program Director may have a conversation with you about the fit of our program for your family.**

Returned Check Fees: In the event a check payment is returned for insufficient funds, you will be charged \$35.00 for each returned check. If paying through Electronic Funds Transfer, in the event of insufficient funds you will be charged \$5.00 per transaction. Growing Places has the right to ask a family to pay his/her child's tuition with Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) or money orders after receiving three returned checks for a child's tuition during the course of one year (12) months.

Attendance Requirements:

Extra Days: Your child may attend an additional day upon request and if space permits. Such attendance **MUST** be pre-arranged with the Program Director and will be billed to you in your next bill. Growing Places reserves the right to deny permission for your child to attend an Extra Day if you have a past due balance.

Teacher Workshop & School Vacation Registration: Enrollment for Teacher Workshops and school vacation weeks is a separate enrollment process.

Field Trip/Special Events: You will be notified if a special event or field trip is offered. Field Trips and Special Events may be an additional fee.

Approved and Extreme Weather Closures: If one of the above approved closures falls on a day of the week your child is contracted to attend Growing Places you are responsible for his/her daily tuition fee. The only exception is the Holiday Vacation and Early Childhood August Shut-down week, where you will be charged 50% of your daily tuition fee. In the event of a change to list of Approved Closures, Growing Places will provide advanced notice. Additionally, you are responsible to pay your daily tuition fee if Growing Places closes due to weather, emergency or unforeseen circumstances on a day that your child is registered to attend.

Please make all checks payable to Growing Places.

Tuition and Fees

Families contract for a specific weekly schedule as completed on the *Enrollment Agreement* Form. Payment for this contracted schedule is required every week year-round whether or not your child attends; this enables us to pay teachers a stable salary every week all year. No credits are given for sick or vacation days, holidays, staff training closure or closure due to inclement weather, infectious disease (except as noted below) or unforeseen events including, but not limited to, a public health emergency, pandemic, weather-related or environmental emergency.

If we are prevented from operating, after 2 weeks closure families shall pay **50%** of their weekly tuition to retain their spot in the early childhood program. Payment of your tuition allows us to retain staff, pay operating expenses, and hold open your child's spot for when we are safely able to reopen.

Growing Places may, in its sole discretion, decide whether credit may be given for serious illnesses, injury, or other unplanned occurrences. In the unfortunate event of an enrolled child being hospitalized or absent due to a serious contagious disease, serious illness or injury a credit may be issued. A written doctor's note is required to receive a credit. Receiving a tuition credit would absolve a family of financial commitment, but would not retain the child's spot in the program. If an enrolled child were to be out for more than two weeks we would assume the following two weeks as meeting our "two week notice" policy and then your child would forfeit their spot in our program and placed on the waitlist.

Things to Know Day to Day

Sign-In/Sign-Out

Your child's teacher will sign them into the classroom upon your greeting and out at the end of each day. Please take the time to say hello and hear an update on your child's day!

Clothing

Please always send appropriate clothing with your child. This includes a change of clothes and outdoor clothing. We play outdoors every day, unless extreme weather permits us from safely being outdoors. Please make sure outdoor attire is appropriate for the weather. Shoes that enclose children's feet are strongly recommend for outdoor play.

Nutrition/Allergy Awareness

The desire to feed the children in our programs foods and snacks that are healthy and nutritionally rich goes hand in hand with the practice of providing quality care. We ask that you pack child a balanced lunch as well as an morning and afternoon snacks. Our teachers promote healthy eating habits and it is our goal to partner with parents to support a lifetime of good health.

Food allergies in children and the severity of reaction to certain foods are common. Effective management of food intolerances and allergies in a child care center requires a team approach which includes appropriate written policies, good communication and thoughtful planning, training and preparation. The Americans With Disabilities Act requires that we make accommodations such as modifying our menu and preventing certain foods from being in the program.

Any child with a known food allergy must have a completed Allergy Health Plan that is signed by health practitioner on site and updated yearly. This plan along with a photo of your child will be posted in the classroom. Children cannot attend until the Allergy Health Plan is on site and any needed medications, such as epi-pen or Benadryl, have been received.

Program directors will work with the family to determine the severity of the allergy. This may mean that certain foods are restricted from individual classrooms. Program directors will communicate any classroom restrictions with all families who have children within that classroom.

All professional staff at Growing Places will participate in, “Keeping Students Safe and Included”, a training presented by the Food Allergy Research and Education Organization. Teachers clean and sanitize all surfaces that come into contact with food and use appropriate hand washing procedures. Teachers will guide children in understanding food allergies and why certain precautions are taken, helping them take responsibility for others’ safety and creating a classroom community. Teachers also promote handwashing before and after eating and supervise children closely at mealtimes.

Illness Policy:

As a state licensed organization, Growing Places must follow regulations regarding the exclusion of ill children, along with our own organizational guidelines. Children’s health is of our utmost concern followed by the ability of staff to meet the needs of children who are ill while still caring for well children in our programs.

Children who are not well enough to participate fully in our programs should be kept at home to rest.

- Children with any of the following symptoms **will not** be allowed to attend our programs:
 - Fever (100.4 or higher)
 - Cough
 - Sore Throat
 - Congestion
 - Runny nose if not affiliated with change of weather or known allergies
 - Fatigue
 - Flu like symptoms
 - Shortness of breath
 - Loss of taste or smell
 - Unexplained rash
 - Diarrhea/vomiting
- Children with diarrhea, vomiting, excessive congestion or a temperature of 100.4 or higher (99.4 under the arm) may not return until they are symptom free for at least 36 hours without any fever reducing medication.
- During the day we will be evaluating each child on an individual basis by considering their ongoing health and wellbeing. If a child is showing any of the above symptoms they will be isolated, you will be contacted, and you will need to pick up your child **within 1 hour**.
- For certain contagious bacterial illnesses (e.g. strep throat) that typically require antibiotics your child will need to be excluded for a period, depending on the illness, typically 48 hours.
- Growing Places uses the DHHS Disease Handbook to determine exclusion periods as well as if other families need to be notified. Growing Places only notifies families that certain illnesses are present within the school, not which child has the illness.
- A child may also be excluded if their illness prevents them from participating comfortably and fully in our programs, or if the ill child requires more care than the staff can give, which may result in compromising care for other children. There are other less common illnesses which also require exclusion. Please contact your Program Director with questions or for more information about symptoms or length of time a child must be excluded from the program. If your child will not be attending due to illness, please call that site to inform your child’s teacher.
- Growing Places reserves the right to close a classroom should teachers become ill and/or there are not enough staff to provide safe, quality programming. It is important that you keep your child home if they are not feeling well.

Revised 5/2024

Medication

Non-prescription medication may be administered to children after the parent or legal guardian fills out the authorization form. Prescription medication may be administered to children with authorization from a parent

or legal guardian and a licensed health practitioner who has prescribed the medication for that particular child. When manufacturer's instructions are not available for a specific child's age, signed and dated written instructions from the child's parent and written approval from the child's licensed health practitioner are required.

All medication must be in its original container labeled with the child's name and the date the medication is to be administered. Expired medication may not be administered. Dosage requirements by the manufacturer or licensed health practitioner must be followed.

Child Pick-Up

The safety of all children enrolled at Growing Places is of vital importance to staff. If a person other than the parent will be picking up the child, the alternate(s) should be listed on the child registration form and must be at least 16 years of age. If the person is not listed, we require written permission from the parent or legal guardian. The alternate pick up person will also be required to show a photo identification at the time of pick up. In an emergency we will accept a telephone call from the parent or legal guardian about an alternate pick up person. The parent or guardian must speak directly to the Program Director or to their child's Teacher to inform them of this arrangement.

There have been occasions in the past when staff have been concerned that an adult arriving to pick up a child has consumed alcohol or other impairing drugs, is experiencing emotional upset or any other event that could put the child's safety at risk. We are not trained to determine what is harmful or could be too much. We cannot refuse to release a child to their parent or legal guardian, but we are liable to ensure a child's safety. If any of the above occurs, staff may take one or more of the following actions:

- Explain that they are concerned about the adult's ability to drive safely.
- Ask the adult if they are willing to secure an alternative ride for the child and themselves.
- Ask the adult to wait for the police to come and ascertain the adult's ability to drive safely.
- Call the police if the adult leaves with the child and tell the police the concern, the kind of car and the license plate number if possible.
- Inform the Program Director (who will inform the Executive Director) that day and the adult in question will be asked to meet with one of the directors about the incident.
- Document the incident including the reasons for concern.

Child Abuse/Neglect

Growing Places follows all state guidelines for reporting abuse or neglect. Any persons in New Hampshire suspecting or having knowledge that a child is being abused or neglected is required to report such to their supervisor and to the Director. The Program Director or Executive Director will assist an employee in reporting to the Division of Children and Youth Services and notes will be placed in the child's file.

Extreme Weather Policy

The organization uses UNH and the public schools as a guide in determining whether or not to open during inclement weather. Delayed openings or closings will be announced on WMUR television station and listed on the WMUR website as well. The School Age Program will not operate on days the Oyster River School District is closed.

Weapons Policy

With the exception of law enforcement, Growing Places does not allow firearms or weapons of any kind on its premises.

Inclusion Policy

Growing Places is committed to ensuring that all children attending our programs have access to a quality early childhood program that provides developmentally appropriate experiences and nurtures positive learning and

development. We will involve the child's family in our efforts to support his or her successful inclusion in our program. Growing Places will make every effort to successfully include and support children in our program. In rare circumstances the Executive Director of Growing Places, with input from appropriate staff, may make the decision that our program is not the right place for a child with challenging behaviors which may result in the termination of care. We define a challenging behavior as any behavior that makes it difficult for a young child to be successful in a group environment. Such behaviors interfere with a child's ability to positively interact with others and may disrupt the learning process or even pose health and/or safety risks which do not respond to typical behavior intervention strategies (Izen and Kalinowski, 2010).

Before terminating care staff will take steps to improve parent-teacher and teacher-child communication, to implement behavior strategies for the child, to make modifications to the environment when appropriate and to seek additional resources to try to help the child be successful in the program. If the decision is made that a child may no longer participate in our program, staff will make every effort to provide the family with two week's notice and if possible a referral to another child care facility.

Situations that may result in termination of care would include but not be limited to the following:

- Program staff are unable to meet the emotional, social or cognitive needs of the child or of other children in the program because of the child, or
- Program staff are concerned for the safety of the child or for the safety of other children or of staff in the program because of the child.

School Age Behavior Policy

Respect is the key to all of our interactions and expectations at Growing Places and at Our Time School Age Program. Respect is defined as treating people with high regard or concern. We acknowledge the merit and worth of every individual and strive to be respectful in our conduct and attitudes towards others. Staff foster an atmosphere of mutual respect by being respectful of children. We expect that the children will be respectful toward staff, other children, themselves and the environment. We believe that children learn by being held accountable for their behavior.

If a child acts disrespectfully toward a teacher or another child, Growing Places may decide to suspend the child for the day. If a child causes or with careless disregard causes harm or injury to another child by his/her actions, willfully destroys property, or behaves in such a way that staff would be concerned for the child's safety or the safety of others, Growing Places may decide to suspend the child for the day. If there is concern for the child's safety and well-being on a field trip, Growing Places may decide that the child not be allowed to attend the program on the day of a future field trip. Parents need to arrange care at their own expense for that day. Two suspensions from the program may result in the child being dismissed from the program.

Our Time School Age Program has adopted the Oyster River Cooperative School District's Pupil Safety and Violence Policy, which can be found here:

http://orcsd.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_538005/File/School%20Board/Policies/J/JICK_-_Pupil_Safety_-_Bullying_06_01_16.pdf

Staff Who Offer Babysitting or Other Outside Services

Often staff from Growing Places are willing to babysitting outside of their work at Growing Places. It is important for families to know that hiring a staff member to babysit for your family is separate and distinct from enrolling a child at Growing Places. Growing Places is not responsible for anything that occurs when a family hires a staff member for services outside of the organization.

