



Health and
Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Nature Explorers

Provider No.: 52923

Address: 214 W 2nd Ave N, Estherville, IA, 51334

County: Emmet

Director's Name: April Breck

On-Site Supervisor:

Phone Number: 7122092965

E-Mail: michellehowing@yahoo.com
lirpa89@hotmail.com

HHS Visit Date: 08/12/2025

Licensing Period: 08/01/2025 to 08/01/2027

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected:

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

- ☐ PTO
- ☐ Licensing Visit
- ☐ Drop In
- ☐ Administrative Change

License Type:

- ☒ Full
- ☐ Provisional

Quality initiative:

- ☐ Accrediation

Program Duration:

- ☒ Year-Round
- ☐ School Year
- ☐ Summer Only



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Program Population Served:

- ☒ Infant(0-<24 Months)
☒ Toddler
☒ PreSchool
☒ School Age
☐ All Ages

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General	28	25	54	64	171
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

This is the initial licensing visit for this program however the center has been in continual operation as a previously licensed center under a different name and ownership of Little Wranglers. The transition of the program was made so that there was no disruption to the services provided to the families attending the center. The program is now operated as a non-profit daycare overseen by a board of directors. April Breck was the director of the center under the previous ownership since 2019 and will continue as the director under the new organization. April is well qualified for the position based on her experience and on-going training. In addition to April remaining as the director the classroom teachers also continued in their their positions with the transition. The program is located in the old McKinley elementary school in Estherville. The center will continue to provide care to infants through school age children. The purchase of this program was done as an expansion to the Tiny Treasures center also located in Estherville which will have a focus of providing infant care and moving the preschool and school age children to this location. All aspects of the center subject to licensing standards were reviewed during the visit with the exception of administrative records which were reviewed previously in the year.

The layout of the center has children divided by age groups making use of 4 distinct classrooms, and the school age children in a larger commons area that was previously the cafeteria space of the building. The building has a split level design with the preschool age children located on the upper level, and the school age children and the infants on the lower level. The infant area and school age age are have direct exits to the exterior. The preschool rooms make use of evacuation windows on the west side of the building, and a connecting door of the administrative offices for the 4 year old children. All exits were maintained so that they were clear of obstruction. Each classroom with the exception of the school age space has large banks of windows that provide ample natural light, a view of the outdoors, and ventilation. The issues that had been identified regarding excessive hot water temperatures in the prior visit had been corrected and were measured to be 105 deg. F. at the spigot on the day of the visit. No other maintenance issues were noted. Restroom facilities are located directly accessible from each classroom with the exception of the school age room which use restrooms located off the main corridors. Staff were observed to accompany children to the restrooms as needed to ensure that supervision is provided at all times as required. Activity centers are created through the placement of furniture and play structures and are arranged so as not to create any blind areas. The center does have a full kitchen and meals are prepared on-site. The center has two outdoor playground areas.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

The center does have good health and safety policies and practices in place. During the visit staff were observed to use good hygiene practices. I was able to observe a diaper change and the staff did follow the posted procedures for cleaning the child, washing the infant's and employee's hands afterward, and effectively cleaning the changing station. The center does use an approved disinfectant and the staff did follow the label directions when using that product. All staff also



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ensured that the children washed their hands prior to meal service.

The center does have established schedules and curriculum plans for each classroom. The curriculum uses a general focus theme, and the staff then identify specific activities that will be completed which are reflective and supportive of that focus. All staff appeared to be very energetic and positive during the visit and were actively engaged with the children. This included activities such as reading to groups of children, playing with them in individual center play, or sitting with children and helping to soothe them during nap time. When speaking with children all staff used calm tones, and positive and encouraging word choices. Positive behavior management techniques were used during the time of the visit with the staff using routines, reminders, and redirection to encourage positive behavior choices.

Each classroom has a good variety of toys and materials in the classrooms which were appropriate to the ages of the children present in the room. The materials were observed to be in good repair. The center does provide cots and cribs for children that nap. Good safe sleep practices were observed for children under 1 year of age.

As noted the center has a full kitchen and good food handling and service practices were observed. Food items were properly stored for both dry pantry and refrigerated food items. A menu was present which identified a good variety of nutritious meal options. Staff were observed to use food service gloves when preparing and serving meals. Staff did assist with cutting food items in smaller pieces for younger children to reduce the risk of choking. While the teachers did not eat with the children they did sit at the tables to provide supervision.

The center does have ample outdoor space with two playground areas. One is a more traditional space with climbing structures that make use of foam tiles for fall surfacing. The other is a larger more open natural space with grass, several mature trees, and a small climbing structure that uses rubber mulch for fall surfacing. The equipment was observed to be in good repair in both areas though there was a residential grade climbing structure which was identified as being past its useful life which was not in use and was intended to be removed.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

109.11(2)b: Program space must meet the following conditions: Room must be arranged so as not to obstruct the direct observation of children by staff. Individual covered mats, bed, or cots and appropriate bedding will be provided for all children who nap. Equipment and materials are maintained in a sanitary manner. Sufficient spacing must be maintained. The center will have sufficient toilet articles for each child for hand washing.

-- The center does need to acquire bedding for cots that include cot covers which can be removed and laundered as needed. Personal belongings such as purses and diaper bags that may contain items that could pose a safety risk to children need to be stored where they are not accessible to children.

4. Any corrective action plans, provisional license, and safety plans-steps to get into compliance

The center had corrected issues identified in the prior visit earlier in the year. During the visit the teacher that had left a purse out in an area that was accessible to the children did remove it to a cabinet.

The center is aware of the need to provide bedding for cots and will explore options of either acquiring bedding, or having parents provide bedding options such as a second blanket for each child.

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

A full license is recommended at this time. At least one visit will be made to the center during the next year.

Date: 08/28/2025

HHS Licensing Consultant: Raymond Salsbury, DHHS Licensing
Consultant



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Non-compliance with any of the mandated regulatory requirements listed above may lead to the cancellation or revocation of your Child Care License. Please take steps necessary to completely address each of the violations noted above.

Child Care Resource and Referral is an excellent resource for providers to access training options and support in your area. You can reach Child Care Resource and Referral at <https://iowaccrr.org>.