Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Montessori School of Marion

Provider No.: 47556

Address: 420 Colton CIR NE Suite #2, Cedar Rapids, IA, 52402

County: Linn

Director's Name: Aurora Costache

On-Site Supervisor: Aurora Costache

Phone Number: 3196409178

E-Mail: office@montessorischoolofmarion.org

HHS Visit Date: 10/23/2025

Licensing Period: 11/01/2024 to 11/01/2026

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 08/18/2025

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

- [ ] PTO
- [X] Licensing Visit
- [ ] Drop In
- [ ] Administrative Change

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

- [X] Accrediation

Comments: National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPSA) until 6/30/2028; Accreditation by the American Montessori Society (AMS) until 3/5/2027; MSM is a NCPSA Accredited non-public school with the Iowa Department of Education (for grades 1-3) and is the only school in Iowa to be Accredited by the AMS.

Program Duration:

- [X] Year-Round
- [ ] School Year
- [ ] Summer Only

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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday	8:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Tuesday	8:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Wednesday	8:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Thursday	8:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Friday	8:00 AM to 6:00 PM		
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

- [X] Infant(0-<24 Months)
- [X] Toddler
- [X] PreSchool
- [X] School Age
- [X] All Ages

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General	14	2	38	6	60
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

Montessori School of Marion (MSM) is a profit program owned and operated by Aurora Costache. MSM is the only school in Iowa to be Accredited by the American Montessori Society (AMS). MSM is also an accredited nonpublic school with the Iowa Department of Education. MSM commenced operations in August of 2016.

The founding owner and director is Aurora Costache. Ms. Costache has a Bachelor of Applied Science, achieved an Entrepreneurial certificate, and achieved a Leadership Certificate. Ms. Costache has an AMS diploma, an Associate Early Childhood Credential, and a certificate for Teaching Children with Learning Differences. Ms. Costache has used her Montessori training domestically in The United States as well as internationally in Canada, Japan, and Italy. Ms. Costache has a history of partnering with the Montessori Teaching Training Center in Tucson, Arizona. Ms. Costache has a plethora of experience working with children locally and internationally and continues to participate in annual professional development.

On 10/23/2025, program space was observed to be pristine and well arranged. Primary programming occurs in 4 separate main classrooms with access to restrooms and hand washing facilities. This license includes a Nido (infant) room, Bambini (under preschool-age) room, Casa Room and designated school-age room. On the day of the monitoring visit, directresses were observed warmly greeting families and children as they arrived for the day. Individual child piano lessons were observed to be happening in the main gathering area while classical music was quietly offered throughout classrooms as children began daily activities. Areas of study were clearly visible throughout the classrooms and included the fall season. Nido room directresses were engaged in infant cares as well as a group lesson creating music with rhythm sticks. Communication with infants occurred both verbally and through sign language. In the Bambini room, work included the use of practical life tools, sensory with dry leaves, peg stacking and early puzzles. Work cycles in the Casa and school

programs included grammar lessons, math lessons, Abacus work, writing, mitten lesson, punch outs, cultural activities, English-Spanish work, transferring and pouring activities, and human body/anatomy work. Individual work mats, work trays or work tables were observed to be used to delineate a child's work area. On 10/23/2025, directresses were observed to be in ratio and actively engaged with the children in all activities including snack rituals and routine transitions. Children responded well to staff and appeared to be truly enjoying their day.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

The mission of MSM is "...to serve our children and community with integrity to create thoughtful and independent citizens and leaders that our world needs..."

MSM has the following website for families to learn more about the program: https://www.montessorischoolofmarion.org/.

MSM's combined owner and director Ms. Costache is invested in the community, has been a mentor to other programs and has helped connect families and children with various community resources and events including their own on-site "Montessori + Me" community group. Ms. Costache continues to have a system of organization in place to help ensure administrative items are completed and maintained in a secure manner. Ms. Costache remains knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as her own program's policies and procedures. On 10/23/2025, Ms. Costache acknowledged having a team of directresses that are seasoned, professional, reliable, genuine, innovative, cohesive and who very much enjoy working with children in an authentic accredited Montessori program. It shall be noted that MSM was featured in past Marion Times News articles about MSM's celebration of diverse cultures as well as in an article entitled "Montessori School opens in Marion". Most recently, in August of 2025, Ms. Costache and her family were featured in a Marion Neighbors publication celebrating how she came to be a local entrepreneur offering authentic Montessori learning.

As of 10/23/2025, MSM was again found to be maintaining the required postings, maintaining parent-program information centers, utilizing technological communication resources, and offering family programming activities. Curriculum is enriched by Montessori materials that support child development in all areas including practical life, sensorial, language, math, geography, art, science, foreign language, music, peace, and grace and courtesy. Leadership opportunities for older students as well as enrichments, specialty clubs, guest speaker events, and field trip experiences are also part of MSM. Throughout various areas of the program space, notes from families celebrating gratitude towards staff and the program were observed.

MSM continues to have and update as needed policies and procedures that include those for safety, daily health checks, hand washing, diapering, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. On the day of this monitoring visit, staff discussed how they help ensure the children's space is sanitary and hazard free each day by following their current policies and procedures as well as maintaining checklists for cleaning and maintenance. Ms. Costache talked about having much continued support from her own family as to daily operations and building-grounds conditions and repairs.

MSM has emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. This program has successfully navigated through the 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 2019 health (covid-19) pandemic, 8/10/20 Derecho Storm, repeated relocation incidents, 2021 food supply issues, 2022 infant formula shortages, air quality alerts (2023, 2025), and repeated technology outages (7/19/24 global technology outage, 10/10/2025 AWS outage, 10/29/2025 Microsoft outage).

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

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

Not applicable.

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

Ongoing discussions (e.g. definition of "criblike") continue between MSM and licensing regarding rule 109.12(5). Please

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ensure MSM adheres to rule 109.12(5) which states "...A child care center serving children two weeks to two years old must provide an environment which protects the children from physical harm, but is not so restrictive as to inhibit physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development. a. Stimulation shall be provided to each child through being held, rocked, played with and talked with throughout the time care is provided. Insofar as possible, the same adult should provide complete care for the same child. b. Each infant and toddler shall be diapered in a sanitary manner as frequently as needed at a central diapering area. Diapering, sanitation, and hand-washing procedures shall be posted and implemented in every diapering area. There shall be at least one changing table for every 15 infants. c. Highchairs or hook-on seats shall be equipped with a safety strap which shall be engaged when the chair is in use and shall be constructed so the chair will not topple. d. Safe, washable toys, large enough so they cannot be swallowed and with no removable parts, shall be provided. All hard-surface toys used by children shall be sanitized daily. e. The provider shall follow safe sleep practices as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics for infants under the age of one. Requirements are as follows: (1) Infants shall always be placed on their backs for sleep. (2) Infants shall be placed on a firm mattress with a tight fitted sheet that meets U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission federal standards. (3) Infants shall not be allowed to sleep on a bed, sofa, air mattress or other soft surface. No child shall be allowed to sleep in any item not designed for sleeping including, but not limited to, an infant seat, car seat, swing, or bouncy seat. (4) No toys, soft objects, stuffed animals, pillows, bumper pads, blankets, or loose bedding shall be allowed in the sleeping area with the infant. (5) No co-sleeping shall be allowed. (6) Sleeping infants shall be actively observed by sight and sound. (7) If an alternate sleeping position is needed, a signed physician or physician assistant authorization with statement of medical reason is required. f. A crib or criblike furniture which has a waterproof mattress covering and sufficient bedding to enable a child to rest comfortably and which meets the current standards or recommendations from the Consumer Product Safety Commission or ASTM International for juvenile products shall be provided for each child under two years of age if developmentally appropriate. Crib railings shall be fully raised and secured when the child is in the crib. A crib or criblike furniture shall be provided for the number of children present at any one time. The center shall develop procedures for maintaining all cribs or criblike furniture and bedding in a clean and sanitary manner. There shall be no restraining devices of any type used in cribs.

When licensing completed this annual visit, discussion included the "Growing Iowa" grant funds designed to help support childcare in Iowa. Specifically, this program is in need of outdoor mealtime picnic table with shade replacement, increasing large gross motor riding materials (e.g. scooters), adding additional gardening items including a living garden experience, and increasing security window protection. The "Growing Iowa" funds we discussed actually ended on 9/25/2025 in our area. However, please continue to ensure your contact information is updated with CCR&R as information about replenishment of these funds, as well as new future funding opportunities, continue to be primarily communicated through CCR&R.

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The program's license remains in full status. Thank you for the visit.

Date: 11/14/2025

HHS Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons

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**.