**Iowa Department of Human Services**
**CHILD CARE CENTER EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE**

**Name of Center:** South Winneshiek Early Childhood Program **Enrollment:** 48 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 18232

**Street:** 208 E Brooks ST **City:** Ossian Iowa **Zip** 52161 **County:** Winneshiek

**Mailing Address:** PO Box 298, Ossian, IA, 52161

**Director's Name:** Donna Blong **Phone Number:** 563-532-9365

**On-Site Supervisor(s):** Lisa Nelson **E-Mail:** dblong@swinn.k12.ia.us

**Date(s) of Visit:** 01-07-2025

X **Licensing Visit** X **Unannounced Visit** **Off Year Visit** **Administrative Change**

**LICENSING VISITS**

**New Application** X **Re-Application** **NA**

**Signed Application (470-0722) Received** X **Yes** **No** **NA** **Date Signed:** 12-03-2024

**FIRE INSPECTION** X **State** **Local** **NA** **Is Fire Inspection Approved?** X **Yes** **No** **NA**

**Date Inspected:** 01-25-2023

**Comments :**

**LICENSE TYPE:** X **Child Care** **Preschool (ages 3-5 meets three hours or less per day)**

**Financial Type:** Profit X Non-Profit NA

**Accredition:** Accredited NAEYC NSACA Other X NA

**Program Serves:** Infants (0-23 mo.) 2 Years X Preschool-Age School-Age

Get-Well Evening Care Special Needs

**SCHEDULE:** Year-round X School-Year Summer Only

| **HOURS:** | *Year-round* | *School-Year* | *Summer Only* |
|---|---|---|---|

| LICENSE CAPACITY | Infants | 2 Years | Preschool | School-Age | Capacity |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| General | 0 | 0 | 88 | 0 | 88 |
| Summer | | | | | 0 |

**QRS Rating:** 4

| RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE: | |
|---|---|
| X | **FULL** license from 02-01-2025 to 02-01-2027 |
| | **PROVISIONAL** license from |
| | **DENIAL** of initial application |
| | **SUSPENSION** of license |
| | **REVOCATION** of license |

**Licensing Consultant:** Becky Frost **Date:** 01-14-2025

**I. IF CURRENT LICENSE IS PROVISIONAL, IDENTIFY THE CORRECTIVE ACTIONS**

N/A

**II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:**

On 01/07/25 I made an unannounced licensing visit to South Winneshiek Early Childhood in Ossian. I met with Donna Blong, the lead teacher in the three-year-old room and director. She has been with the program since August 1997 and has her paraeducator certificate, a diploma in early childhood and her CDA. Lisa Nelson is an assistant in Ms. Blong's room and the on-site supervisor. She has an AA in early childhood and an AA in education and her paraeducator certificate. She has previous experience working in childcare. She has been with the program since August 2015.

Gretchen Wenthold is the lead teacher in the Jumpstart 1 room and Ashley Izer is her assistant. Ms. Izer has her paraeducator certificate. Carrie Hovey is a para in Jumpstart 1 that works one on one with a student. Emily Kullen is the lead teacher in the Jumpstart 2 room. Jordan Reisner is the assistant in the room and she has her paraeducator certificate. Victoria Young is the para in the Jumpstart 2 room that works one on one with a student. Both Jumpstart rooms are under the voluntary four-year-old preschool grant. Ms. Wenthold and Ms. Kullen has a BA in early childhood education.

The program is in South Winneshiek Elementary. Visitors must sign in at the office. The program operates from 7:40 am until 3:05 pm Monday through Thursday. The program serves children who are three through five-years-old. The program has an IQ4K level 4 that expires on 09/30/25. There are currently 48 children enrolled.

The program operates out of three classrooms. Windows provide natural lighting. The rooms are decorated with pictures of the children and their families, the children's art projects, and posters to assist the children with the learning process, such as the alphabet, shapes, colors and numbers. The children's birthdays were posted. There is an area for circle time in each room.

The centers observed on the day of the licensing visit include library, Lego/blocks, table toys, games, puzzles, transportation, Ipads, art, dramatic play, listening, writing, math, science/discovery, woodworking, sensory table and music. Centers were arranged in a manner that allowed easy movement between activities, but it also allowed for clear supervision by staff members. Materials were in good condition. The materials are located at child level, so they were easily accessible to the children.

There are two bathrooms located off the early childhood classroom and two bathrooms in a space between the two Jumpstart classrooms. This is also the area where the children's cubbies are located. Each bathroom has one sink and one toilet. There is also a sink located in each of the classrooms. Handwashing procedures were posted in all locations. There is a Koala Kare changing table attached to the wall in one of the bathrooms and diaper changing procedures were posted. There are additional bathrooms in the school.

Cots are used to nap in the early childhood classroom and mats are used to nap in the two Jumpstart classrooms.

The early childhood room uses a variety of resources to develop lesson plans. Ms. Blong primarily uses Creative Curriculum, and she completes the GOLD assessments. She also uses Jolly Phonics, Handwriting Without Tears and Heggerty Phonemic Awareness tools. The Jumpstart classrooms use Creative Curriculum and GOLD assessments are

completed on all the children. They use Heggerty Phonemic Awareness and other phonemic tools. Activities are planned around studies. The length of the study depends on the topic and the children's interest level. All the rooms use the Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) program in their classrooms. The program partners with Keystone AEA to work with identified children. The children also participate in four specials each week. The specials are the school library, gym, music teacher and guidance counselor. A smart projector is in each room.

There was a phone with emergency numbers posted in the early childhood and Jumpstart 2 classrooms. The emergency numbers could were not in the Jumpstart 1 classroom. I made Ms. Wenthold aware of this and she was going to get a posting. Emergency fire and tornado procedures and evacuation diagrams were posted by all the main program doors and outdoor exits in all three rooms. A daily schedule was posted for each room and lesson plans were available for review in each classroom.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. A radon test was completed in December 2024 and is good for two years. Results were within EPA guidelines. The fuel burning inspection was completed and no concerns were noted. A carbon monoxide detector is located near the doors in all three rooms. Outlets were protected. The fire marshal inspection occurred on 01/25/23.

The program participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and Child and Adult Care Food Program guidelines are followed. The children receive breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. Breakfast and lunch are purchased through the school or children can bring their own lunch. The early childhood children eat breakfast in the cafeteria and lunch and snack in their classroom. The Jumpstart children eat breakfast and lunch in the cafeteria and snack in the classroom. Lunch is delivered to the early childhood room and staff members serve the children in already dished out trays. Dishes are returned to the cafeteria to be washed. The afternoon snack is provided by parents in all three classrooms. The parents buy milk tickets. Disposable products are used for snack. Snacks are recorded on a calendar in each room. Menus are posted in the rooms. Food items were stored according to NHSPS guidelines.

Bleach and water are used to sanitize the food tables in the rooms. The bleach and water bottles were clearly labeled.

There is a first aid kit in each classroom.

There is a fenced in playground for the children and rubber tiles are used for surface cushioning. There is climbing equipment as well as other activities for the children to play on. The children also use the large grassy space for the children. The day of my visit they were playing on a large pile of snow on the grassy area.

The parent information is located on a bulletin board inside each classroom. The mandatory reporter, childcare consultant and the handbook availability were posted. The license was conspicuously hung. A no-smoking sign was posted at the entrance.

Staff and children files were reviewed at the time of the licensing visit. I reviewed twelve children files. They were in great condition.

I reviewed four staff files. They were in great condition.

I reviewed policy and procedures, staff and parent handbooks. The necessary written emergency procedures and policies were present. Emergency Preparedness Plans have been completed.

Staff members had terrific interaction with the children in each room. They made the learning environment fun and inviting. Staff members are enthusiastic and it came across in how they taught and interacted with the children. They interacted with the children at their level and offered them choices. They were flexible but maintained a routine for the children. Staff members had great teamwork. They each have jobs and roles within the classroom and know what to expect from one another. They provided the children with praise and used positive redirection when necessary. Staff members change out centers routinely so that children do not get bored. Staff members modeled good manners for the children. They used timers in the room so children could take equal time playing at popular centers. They included children in activities and encouraged them to use their imaginations. Children appeared to enjoy their time at the program.

**III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:**

The program has an IQ4K level 4 that expires on 09/30/25.

The Jumpstart 1 and 2 rooms are both part of the voluntary four-year-old preschool grant. These two rooms use the Seesaw app to communicate with families. All the rooms send parents emails as needed, prepare weekly newsletters and monthly activity calendars. Staff members talk with parents at the end of the school day. Parents are notified of any changes.

Ms. Blong states there is good communication between all the rooms and they have good communication with the families they serve.

The program offers parent/teacher conferences in November and February. Ms. Blong and Ms. Wenthold completes Gold Assessments on the children.

The teachers have implemented Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) training techniques in their classroom. This is evident in how they work with the children.

The children can ride the school bus to and from preschool if they reside on the bus route.

The children have use of the school library, gym, and the music teacher and guidance counselor.

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM:
The program maintained an IQ4K level 4 and they are fundraising/gran writing to move the playground. New handrails were ordered in December 2024 to make the current structure safer.
STRENGTHS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM:
Working as a team and making sure both teachers are included in making classroom decisions. They are consistent and the boys and girls know what to expect from them. They are committed to their students and want them to have a positive start to their education.

They identified a weakness as continuing to be cooking in the classroom. It is tricky to coordinate when we make something with the kitchen staff's ability to fit it in the oven.

SUCCESS STORY:
They had a cry little boy who cried each day when he got off the bus and had to separate from his sister. He would only use the bathroom in the classroom and had to be undressed from the waist down. He would not undress himself and waited for teachers to do it. The mother reported at orientation he did not like public bathrooms. Teachers gave him time to feel comfortable with the teachers and classroom routine. They slowly worked on this until he started using the bathroom by himself without being naked. After about one month he started using the larger school bathroom. He came out smiling and Ms. Blong told him she was proud of him and she could not wait to tell Ms. Nelson. After he washed his hands, they gave high fives and hugs. They informed the mother and he started doing this at home also.

JUMPSTART 1:
For accomplishments they noted that students are more responsible and independent when completing tasks now than at the beginning of the year. They walk to the classroom on their own in the morning to do their jobs instead of waiting for the entire class. Problem solving skills have increased. They can solve problems and take care of needs with less assistance from teachers. Most students can dress themselves for recess. Students can sit and listen to stories and lessons on the carpet better than at the beginning of the year.

STRENGTHS OF JUMPSTART 1:
Teachers work and plan as a team. Communication is open between teachers. The schedule is consistent and meets all the required times of the day (large group, small group, quiet activities, large motor activities). A special education student has a 1:1 paraeducator who can help her meet her needs throughout the day so the teacher and para are able to support the rest of the class during large group lessons and activities.

They identified a weakness as not finding a strategy yet that works well for teaching a child who requires a lot of redirection throughout the day to calm down and use less redirection. They are continually trying new things. Also, they noted they want to help their special ed student use speech throughout the day. They are working with her speech therapist to try new things like an IPad.

SUCCESS STORY:
They had a special ed student who came to school unable to participate in group time and the child would thrown themselves down during meal time. The child cried and struggled to transition throughout the day. By midyear, the student is attending carpet time and sitting on the floor like the peers. She also walks in line and waits in line with peers for lunch. She occasionally has meltdowns but they occur less frequently. Clear, consistent, picture schedule, peer support and modeling and para support has helped her succeed. She is completing her morning routine mostly independently.

JUMPSTART 2:
Ms. Kullen has committed to getting her master's degree in GR K-12 Inst Strategist ll BD/LD. She has almost completed her first semester and she is excited to learn new ways to accommodate and modify lessons for all different types of students.

STRENGTHS:
Creating and maintaining an environment that is structed, consistent and well planned and prepared.

An identified weakness is fitting in an explicit math group. She has been successful in implementing literacy each day but she would like to make a plan to implement more math activities throughout the week.

SUCCESS STORY:
A student came in with limited vocabulary. After implementing sentence starters throughout the day and using peer models, the child is currently hitting his goal of ten three word phrases in 15 minutes. She is so proud of him and his increase in language skills.

**IV. IDENTIFY THE ASPECTS OF OPERATION THAT FALL BELOW THE STANDARDS REVIEWED:**

N/A

**V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:**

A full license is issued. All DHS licensing standards and procedures must be maintained during the renewal period.

*Note: If you are the Child Care Center Director and you feel something is unclear or unjustly cited, please contact your DHS Licensing Consultant to discuss the issue. The child care director may also send a response which will be placed in the licensing file.

*Note: If you are a member of the general public, there may be additional information contained in the public file. You may contact the DHS Licensing Consultant to inquire.