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

Name of Center: Northeast Iowa Montessori School Inc **Enrollment:** 25 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 28692

Street: 604 South Ave **City:** Decorah Iowa **Zip** 52101 **County:** Winneshiek

Mailing Address: 418 W Water ST, Decorah, IA, 52101

Director's Name: Rachael Buresh **Phone Number:** 563-382-6491

On-Site Supervisor(s): Jane Busch **E-Mail:** neimontessori@gmail.com

Date(s) of Visit: 09-18-2023

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

LICENSING VISITS

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

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

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

Date Inspected: 10-13-2023

Comments : Compliance on 10/18/23

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.) X 2 Years X Preschool-Age X School-Age

Get-Well Evening Care Special Needs

SCHEDULE: X Year-round School-Year Summer Only

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

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Age	Capacity
General	0	2	20	8	30
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 10-01-2022 to 10-01-2024
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Becky Frost **Date:** 10-19-2023

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

N/A

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

On 09/18/23 I made an unannounced off year licensing visit to Northeast Iowa Montessori School in Decorah. I met with Rachel Buresh, the director and Head of the School. Ms. Buresh has a BA in a non-child related field and completed the Montessori Fundamentals Administrative training at the Center for Guided Montessori Studies in Minnesota. She has been the director since 08/17/17. Ms. Buresh is a Youth and Mental Health Credential Fundamentals graduate. She has returned to school to get ten more credits in early childhood education. She is ECERS-3 certified and has thirty plus years of business administration experience. Ms. Buresh has received her National Administrator Credential (NAC).

Heather Vilardo is the lead guide in the classroom. Ms. Vilardo has a BA in elementary education and a MA in special education. She has obtained the early childhood credential for leads through the Center for Guided Montessori Studies. Christine Gowdy-Jaehnig is the former lead guide in the classroom and she is currently mentoring in the classroom on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Ms. Gowdy-Jaehnig has the American Montessori Society early childhood credential and completed training through St. Catherine's University in Minnesota. She has a BA from St. John's College in Annapolis, MD. Jenny Lenehan is an assistant guide and the lead teacher for the voluntary preschool program. Ms. Lenehan received her BA in Elementary Education with early childhood and reading endorsements from Upper Iowa University. She completed the Children's House assistant's course through Association Montessori International (A.M.I.). Claire Tebbenhoff is an assistant guide and the lunch and rest time supervisor. She is also the after-school care supervisor. She has a BA in elementary education with an endorsement in early childhood and special education from Luther College. She also has a BA in history. Ms. Tebbenhoff has completed the Children's House assistant's course through Association Montessori International (A.M.I.). Faith Robinson has a BA in art education and she is working as an extra guide and she is an assistant in the after-school care program.

The center operates out of a free-standing building. It operates during the school year, Monday through Friday from 7:45 am until 5:30 pm. The program serves children ages two through six-years-old. The program offers a morning program (8:15-11:30 am) and a full day program (8:15 am to 3:00 pm). A latchkey program is also offered after school for children up to eight-years-old. They currently have 25 children enrolled between the Children's House classroom and the after-school program. The program also has a school-aged program (E1) for children ages six through nine-years-old. This program is regulated through the Department of Education and is located on the lower level. Jane Busch is the lead guide for this program. Ms. Busch is also an on-site supervisor for the licensed program. Ms. Busch has a BA in elementary education with a middle school endorsement. She has a MA in Montessori Education and has completed the Association Montessori International (A.M.I.) elementary training. Ms. Busch is NAC certified. She is the founder of this Montessori school.

The program partners with the Decorah School District to provide the voluntary four-year-old preschool program. The voluntary program operates Monday through Thursday from 8:00-11:30 am.

The school operates out of one classroom. The Montessori primary environment is referred to as "Children's House". An inspection of the room was completed. Windows provide natural lighting. The NEIM handbook states the program offers a "rich educational environment, including exercises for motor development, self-mastery, and programs in language, reading,

math, culture, sensorial, practical life, geography, science, technology, music and art." The goals of Montessori for children are several: it encourages self-discipline, self-knowledge, and independence, as well as enthusiasm for learning, an organized approach to problem-solving, and intellectual and social skills.

Montessori materials are classified in six major areas: Practical Life, Sensorial Skills, Mathematics, Language, Science and Social Studies, and The Arts. Work areas are established in each of these areas and children move at their own pace and according to their individual capabilities. The work areas were arranged so there was plenty of space for the children to do various activities. There was a good variety and supply of materials to accompany the work areas.

There is a bathroom on the main level and one in a small area on a landing going to the lower level. There is one toilet and one sink in each bathroom. Handwashing procedures were posted. There is a child-sized sink in the classroom. You must post the handwashing procedures in this area. The center is environmentally friendly and uses a new washcloth each time a child's hands are washed. Cots are used to nap. Naps are offered but are not required following the Montessori philosophy.

The curriculum is based on the Montessori principals of teaching. They use Montessori Compass. The staff also completed Creative Curriculum training and incorporate 10-15 hours each week into the program as part of the voluntary preschool grant. Ms. Lenehan completes GOLD assessments on the children. The program uses Fundamentals curriculum. The program has specific presentations that serve as lesson plans. The presentations were available for review on IPads. They use the Montessori Compass app to document the information. The guides have a plan each day and specific works for the children learn.

There was a phone with emergency numbers in the Guide's office and Ms. Buresh's office. There is also a cordless phone in the classroom. Emergency fire and tornado procedures and evacuation diagrams were posted by the program doors and outdoor exits on both levels. A daily schedule was posted.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. A radon test was completed in August 2022 and is good for two years. Results were within EPA guidelines. The annual fuel burning inspection was completed and no concerns were noted. A new furnace and air conditioner were installed in July 2021. A carbon monoxide detector was on site in the storage room off the dining area. Outlets were protected. The fire marshal inspection occurred on 10/13/23, with compliance on 10/18/23.

The program does not participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) but follow the guidelines. Parents provide the lunch for their children and the lunches are reviewed to make sure they meet the CACFP guidelines. The staff members document what each child brings in a notebook under each specific food group. Parents provide the morning snack for the children and the afternoon snack for the children who stay for after school care. The program provides milk for the children. Children prepare their own snack under the supervision of leads.

There is a refrigerator and thermometers were present. Food items present at the program were stored according to NHSPS guidelines. There is a dishwasher on site. Allergies were confidentially posted.

The center uses bleach and water to sanitize the tables.

There is a fenced outdoor play area the program has developed. It is naturalistic and does not have any climbing equipment. The area has artificial turf in place of grass. There is a sidewalk that goes through the space. There is a sandbox with a pergola shade structure above it. There is a dramatic play center and a sensory table. Trees have been planted in the area and there is a log bench, picnic tables and small chairs. There is a dirt area with trucks and tree stumps. There is a caterpillar tunnel for children to crawl through. There is a soccer net in the area and a basketball hoop. The outside area has a shed for storage and plants and flowers line the fence.

The parent information is located on a bulletin board near Ms. Buresh's office. 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 members have great teamwork and terrific chemistry with one another. I observed staff members interact with the children at their level. I could see the joy the guides/teachers had as they worked with the children. I observed the guides model the behaviors they expected from the students. The guides worked one on one with children and provided them with praise and encouragement. Children are provided choices. The program provides a positive and uplifting learning environment. The children appear comfortable in the program.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Ms. Buresh states they have a solid program. They have a nice, comfortable group of students.

Ms. Buresh states the staff members are more engaged with families and they are having more communication. The parents have been coming to the program and observing more.

Ms. Buresh states the school has had dedicated staff members since the start of the program. All their guides/teachers are committed to the program and they are staying true to the Montessori method.

Ms. Buresh states the school has an active, engaged and involved board. They recognized they needed to be more involved and they do their part.

Ms. Buresh states they had a building committee and they have purchased a new building. They are painting the building and preparing to move into it. She hopes to be in the building by the new year. Ms. Buresh gave me a tour of the new location.

Ms. Buresh states the program is finally being seen in the community and people are starting to understand what Montessori is.

Ms. Buresh has received her National Administrator Credential (NAC).

Three staff members participate in the WAGES program.

The program partners with the Decorah School District to provide the voluntary preschool program.

The program has an IQ4K level 1 that expires on 06/30/25.

The program offers a unique niche in the community and offers an alternative education setting for children ages three through six-years-old. The activities are child directed. The Montessori Method is about peace, respecting one's self and others and the community. They focus on being kind. They also focus on a love of nature.

The program partners with Keystone AEA to provide services to children with identified needs.

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

N/A

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

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

There was a delay in getting the report completed because I was waiting on the fire marshal inspection. I received the report on 10/19/23.

*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.