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

Name of Center: Sonnet Montessori and Child Care **Enrollment:** 51 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 52791

Street: 1100 35th St **City:** Marion Iowa **Zip** 52302 **County:** Linn

Mailing Address: 1100 35th St, Marion, IA, 52302

Director's Name: Colette Nakielski **Phone Number:** 515-304-3929

On-Site Supervisor(s): Julie Taylor **E-Mail:** Colette@sonnetschool.com kylie@sonnetschool.com

Date(s) of Visit: 05-20-2025

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

LICENSING VISITS

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

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

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

Date Inspected: 04-21-2025

Comments :

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

Financial Type: X Profit Non-Profit NA

Accredition: X Accredited NAEYC NSACA Other NA

Program Serves: X 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	57	34	61	10	162
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 03-31-2025 to 03-31-2027
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons **Date:** 06-03-2025

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

Not applicable. This is a new program that obtained permission to open (PTO) for 120 days pending a full license inspection on 3/31/2025.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

Sonnet Montessori and Child Care (SMCC) - 52791 commenced operations on 3/31/2025 after an ownership change (formerly Guidepost Montessori at Marion - 52354; operating since 12/11/2023). SMCC operates year-round, Monday through Friday 7:00am to 6:00pm. SMCC offers a variety of programming options to children age infant through school-age. Current enrollment is 51.

Head of School Director is Colette Nakielski. Ms. Nakielski has a BA degree in theatre and music, over 5 years experience working with children, and continues to participate in much child development related training. Assistant Head of School is Julie Taylor. Ms. Taylor has a BA degree in early childhood education, over 20 years experience working with children, and continues to participate in much child development related training.

On 5/20/2025, program space was observed.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

SMCC is a newly established program located in a predominantly urban neighborhood. SMCC offers a variety of learning opportunities to help meet the needs of children and families throughout the community.

SMCC has the following website for families and the community to learn more about their programs: https://sonnetschool.com/

SMCC's mission "...is to put good humans into the world and leave the world better than we found it..."

The history of how SMCC came to fruition is impressive (e.g. beginning in 2006 in Prior Lake Minnesota, increasing enrollment, new construction adding toddler-age children in 2010, 2015 expansion into a second Minnesota school, adding infants into both schools). In 2021, new owners Jessica Johnsen and Kylie Schrader acquired SMCC. Then in 2025, Ms. Johnsen and Ms. Schrader continued to expand into a neighboring state by acquiring and opening two new SMCC locations in Iowa (Marion, Waukee). Ms. Nakielski discussed the collaboration that is occurring between the two newly acquired Iowa locations. Ms. Nakielski acknowledged how outdoor building-program signage is still in the process of being updated.

SMCC's management team (e.g. Colette Nakielski, Julie Taylor) is professional - educated and having previous experience working with children in licensed childcare. The management team has established systems of organization to help ensure administrative items are completed as required and maintained in a confidential manner. Management and staff are continuing to familiarize themselves with licensing guidelines as well as their own program's policies and procedures.

Through the ownership change, SMCC has retained as well as hired some new employees. Management discussed how all lead teachers have obtained or are in the process of obtaining Montessori certification. Management indicated lead staff have a variety of credentials, including AMS, AMI, NAMC and MACTE. Management talked about how all staff have been trained in the Montessori methods and participate in extensive onboarding that focuses on health & safety, early

childhood development, the Montessori philosophy and that defines Sonnet's new culture and values.

SMCC is a new program working towards optimal communication between the program/staff and families. The program has parent-staff/program information centers, utilizes technological communication resources (Kangarootime), and supports family programming activities (e.g. Montessori Bloom Event). Ms. Nakielski talked about a goal of building a community for families.

SMCC is located inside a property that was renovated in 2023. Building and grounds are well-maintained. Facility includes a kitchenette, washer, dryer and water softener. Furnishings and materials were observed to be new and in good repair. Classrooms are arranged in a purposeful manner and easily accessible to the children. Curriculum supports a carefully prepared environment, includes intentionally designed learning materials, supports one-on-one guidance, and allows each child the freedom to follow their own path. Curriculum also includes on-site guest speakers and seasonal celebrations. Ms. Nakielski discussed future curriculum goals related to gardening experiences and establishment of a butterfly garden.

Each child is engaged in a daily health check upon arrival for early detection of apparent illness, communicable disease, or unusual condition or behavior which may adversely affect the child or the group. The program has policies and procedures in place for hand washing, diapering, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting.

On the day of the monitoring visit, staff were nurturing and attentive to the children's needs. Activities observed were many (e.g. infant cares, individualized activities). One child in the main classroom was overheard excitedly talking about an upcoming lesson on coffee bean grinding. Routine transitions (e.g. clean-up, outdoor preparations) worked smoothly into the program's welcoming and cooperative learning environment. Staff were overheard providing children with meaningful discussion, utilizing positive redirection when needed and encouraging social graces. Children responded well to staff and appeared to be truly enjoying their day.

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

109.4(1) Required written policies.
- When the acquisition occurred in March 2025, the program's written policies and procedures were updated. Documentation of several required written policies and procedures are not found. Those not found included nutrition, unauthorized access, unlimited access, dental emergencies, various emergency plans, and incident report writing. An email was sent to the director in June 2025 noting these required written policies.

109.11(4)a Outdoor facility requirements must: (1) Be free from litter and unsafe materials and free from contamination by the drainage or ponding of sewage or storm water. (2) Include safe play equipment and an area of shade. (3) Include fencing to protect from bodies of water and vehicular traffic.
- Repair and properly secure both ends of the outdoor wooden fencing.
- Trim the playground tree's overgrowth. Remove the branches-sticks that have already unexpectedly fallen off the tree and onto the outdoor play area.
- The outdoor playground has significant areas of standing-pooling water (as much as 5-6 inches deep in areas), soil erosion, mud, holes, divots, and water covered cement riding paths increasing hazards related to child injury, insects, vermin, mold and bacteria-illness. Remedy.
- The wood chip cushion surface has been extremely water logged with areas of pooling water comprising the integrity of the cushion fall surfacing. Remedy.
- Licensing observed an unsecured oversized rug placed atop one particularly muddy outdoor downslope to help prevent anyone from slipping and falling. Such a temporary remedy could actually increase the fall-tripping hazard if the rug were to bunch or become slippery. Remedy.

109.11(4)b. The director or designated person must complete and keep a record of at least monthly inspections of the outdoor play area and equipment for the purpose of assessing and rectifying potential safety hazards. If the outdoor play area is not used for a period of time due to inclement weather conditions, the center shall document the reasons why the monthly inspection did not occur and must complete and document an inspection prior to resuming use of the area.
- Documentation of any outdoor monthly play inspection was not found prior to the monitoring visit. Since the monitoring visit, Ms. Nakielski provided documentation that an outdoor play inspection has started to be completed and documented each month as required.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Ensure dish washing 3-sink method procedures are posted at any sink dish washing occurs. A sample posting was emailed to director in May 2025.

Ensure diapering procedures are posted at every diaper station. This includes diapering procedures for changing children

standing up. A sample posting was emailed to director in May 2025.

Ensure hand washing procedures are posted at any sink hand washing occurs.

While new, the outdoor playground climbers presented as being a little rough to the touch and showed possible crack propagation. Ensure neither of the outdoor climbers present splinter hazards, possible mold issues from moisture or water intrusion into the cracks, and that the integrity of the wood is not compromised. Since the climbers are new, licensing supports reaching out to the manufacturer to ensure proper installation occurred, obtain maintenance instructions and seek warranty information.

As discussed in August 2023, given the building's open space concept and there being no evidence that the building HVAC system is not providing ventilation in the restrooms, licensing allows the restrooms to operate as are. With that being said, licensing continues to strongly support adding a functional exhaust fan in all restrooms that do not have natural ventilation.

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It shall be noted, on the day of the monitoring visit, licensing photographed the outdoor play areas needing attention and requested Ms. Nakielski also review the outdoor conditions observed that day. Within 30 days of receipt of this report, please provide a written plan (can be via email) as to how the above items were remedied and/or are in the process of being remedied with reasonable timeframe for all remedies to be complete. Failure to do so could result in a change to the status of the program's license.

A full license is issued. Thank you for the visit.

*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.