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

Name of Center: Growing Minds Early Learning Center **Enrollment:** 55 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 30419

Street: 608 West 4th ST **City:** Waterloo Iowa **Zip** 50702 **County:** Black Hawk

Mailing Address: 608 W 4th ST, Waterloo, IA, 50702

Director's Name: Meghan Smith & Ed Gruenwald **Phone Number:** 319-236-2063

On-Site Supervisor(s): Mary Neisen **E-Mail:** grinandgrow10@gmail.com

Date(s) of Visit: 07-18-2023

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:** 06-08-2023

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

Date Inspected: 11-22-2022

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: X Infants (0-23 mo.) X 2 Years X Preschool-Age 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	15	23	60	0	98
Summer					0

QRS Rating: 3

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 08-01-2023 to 08-01-2025
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Becky Frost **Date:** 07-24-2023

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

N/A

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

On 07/18/23 I made an unannounced licensing visit to Growing Minds Early Learning Center, previously known as Grin and Grow Ltd-West 4th Street, in Waterloo. I met with Mary Neisen, the on-site supervisor/program coordinator. She has mostly been with the program since 1995. Ms. Neisen left the center in May 2019 but returned in January 2020. Ms. Neisen has her CDA. I also briefly met with Ed Gruenwald, the co-director of the program/director of operations and development for the center. Mr. Gruenwald started with the program in October 2019 and became the co-director in January 2022. He has a MS in forest recreation resource management. Meghan Smith is the co-director. She was not present the day of my visit. Ms. Smith started with the program in January 2023. She has an AA in education and several years of experience in childcare. The center employes 21 staff members and one substitute.

The childcare center was founded in 1943 and is celebrating 80 years in the business. The center is located inside the First Congregational United Church of Christ, but the program is not affiliated with the church. The program operates Monday through Friday from 6:00 am until 6:00 pm. It serves children who are infants until they start Kindergarten. There are currently 55 children enrolled.

The program utilizes the following classrooms: infant room (Little Ducklings), toddler room (Cardinals), two-year-old room (Parrots), younger three-year-old room (Penguins), three and four-year-old room (Blue Jays) and a four and five-year-old room (Flamingos). An inspection of each room was completed. Windows provide natural lighting. The rooms are decorated with 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 the rooms for the older children.

The centers observed on the day of the licensing visit include library, Lego/blocks, table toys, games, puzzles, playdough, transportation, art, dramatic play, 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 in the hallway on the upper level that are used by the children. The boy's bathroom has one toilet, two urinals and two sinks and the girl's bathroom has two toilets and two sinks. There is also a changing table in the girl's bathroom. Handwashing and diaper changing procedures were posted. There are two bathrooms and a changing table that are shared by the Cardinals and Parrot's room and procedures were posted. There are additional bathrooms in the church.

The program uses Creative Curriculum and a variety of resources to develop their lesson plans. Activities are based on weekly themes. Each teacher prepares their own lesson plans. The preschool children receive ASQ assessments. Lesson plans were available to review in each room. The program offers free preschool for three and four-year-old children for the families who qualify through ECI-Cedar Valley Promise. This is a state grant. Free preschool is on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 9:00 am until 1:00 pm. Preschool is offered Monday through Friday for all children. The center uses Tucker Turtle "turtle techniques" to help children learn to calm themselves.

There was a phone with emergency numbers in the classrooms and the kitchen. Emergency fire and tornado procedures and evacuation diagrams were posted by all the program doors and outdoor exits throughout the center. Daily schedules were posted in each room.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. A radon test was completed in December 2022 and must be repeated in two years. The annual fuel burning inspection was completed and no concerns were noted. A carbon monoxide detector was on site in each of the classrooms. Outlets were protected. The fire marshal inspection occurred on 11/22/22.

The program is using the Brightwheel app to communicate with parents but also completing paper daily sheets.

I observed and discussed diaper changing procedures with staff members and proper procedures are followed.

The center participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The center provides breakfast, lunch and a morning and afternoon snack. Marissa Vivians is the cook but is leaving the program soon. She uses a five-week rotation of menus and the menus change for spring/summer and fall/winter. Menus are posted outside each of the classrooms on the parent board. Ms. Vivians states the program is making all homemade foods and not serving any processed food to the children. This includes homemade baby food. Family style is used for the children ages three and older. The younger children are served their food.

The center provides formula, cereal and baby food for the infants. Bottles are prepared in the class and returned to the kitchen to be cleaned and sanitized.

The kitchen was observed. The children's dietary special needs were posted. There is one refrigerator and thermometers were present. There is an additional refrigerator and upright freezer in the basement and thermometers were present. An industrial dishwasher is used to wash dishes. There are also two sinks available. The pantry is located off the Blue Jay classroom. Food items were stored according to NHSPS guidelines.

There are refrigerators in each childcare room and thermometers were present.

The center uses bleach and water to sanitize the food tables and disinfect the changing tables.

The parent information is located inside the entrance. 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.

The church has a fenced in playground area that is used by the childcare center. It is also used by the neighborhood. Woodchips are used for fall surfacing. There is a piece of climbing equipment with a slide. There is a grassy area that has a couple tunnels. Trees provide shade. There is an old sandbox that is covered and not used because it needs repaired, and it needs sand.

Staff and children files were reviewed at the time of the licensing visit. I reviewed ten children files. Files must contain emergency contact information for the doctor and dentist of each child. The doctor and dentist's name, phone number and complete street address must be provided. One file did not have adequate dental emergency contact information. There was not a pattern of disregard so this will not be cited. There were three invalid immunization certificates. Two were not on the mandated Department of Health and Human Services immunization certificate. One file had a letter from a doctor saying the parent did not want her child to receive immunizations. This is not valid. A parent must have a religious or medical exemption on the Department of Health and Human Services form for it to be valid.

I reviewed three 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. However, you must add a statement to your accident/incident policy that states minor injuries, minor changes in health status and behavioral concerns are reported to the parent the same day as the incident. Emergency Preparedness Plans have been completed.

Staff members were observed to have great interaction with the children. They were enthusiastic and provided the children with praise. They actively played with the children and encouraged them to use their imaginations. I observed staff members using fun activities and song to review colors and letters. The provided clear directions and gave the children reminders to wash their hands. Staff members greeted children and parents as they arrived for the day. They modeled good behaviors for the children. Staff members were observed to be nurturing. They held children on their laps and were rocking them when they were upset. The infant room staff member, Karla Anderson, has been with the program for 22 years. She is amazing with the children. The children appeared to enjoy themselves at the program.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Ms. Neisen states they have increased the pay of the staff members. The lead teachers make $15.25/ hour and assistants make $14.25/ hour. There is a sliding fee scale if the employee is educated.

The program is in a secured building and there are cameras in each of the rooms. The cameras can record.

Mr. Gruenwald states Ms. Neisen is amazing. She provides a lot of guidance to everyone at the center.

Ms. Neisen states the employees treat each other like family.

Ms. Neisen states the parents love the communication through the Brightwheel app.

Mr. Gruenwald states they hired his co-director, Ms. Smith, from within the center. She has respect for the teachers.

Staff members receive childcare benefits for working at the center. After one month of employment, they receive 100% discount off their oldest child, 50 % off their next oldest child and 25% off the next oldest child during the hours the employee is working or while they are on paid time off.

The center has scholarships to assist with childcare fees.

The center has a Quality Rating System (QRS) level of 3 that expires on 03/31/24.

The classrooms are set up great and they provide multiple choices in each center that are both fun and educational for the children.

The hallways are decorated with the children's art project.

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

109.9(3): Signed and dated Iowa immunization certificates are on file for each child enrolled.
Number invalid: 3
There were three invalid immunization certificates. Two were not on the mandated Department of Health and Human Services immunization certificate. One file had a letter from a doctor saying the parent did not want her child to receive immunizations. This is not valid. A parent must have a religious or medical exemption on the Department of Health and Human Services form for it to be valid.

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.