Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Dubuque Montessori School

Provider No.: 19251

Address: 2605 Pennsylvania AVE, Dubuque, IA, 52001

County: Dubuque

Director's Name: Elizabeth Duccini

On-Site Supervisor:

Phone Number: 5635006254

E-Mail: office@dubuquemontessori.org
bethduccini@dubuquemontessori.org

HHS Visit Date: 09/28/2026

Licensing Period: 12/01/2026 to 12/01/2028

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 08/20/2025

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

Quality Rating: 3

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

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

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HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday		7:30 AM to 5:30 PM	
Tuesday		7:30 AM to 5:30 PM	
Wednesday		7:30 AM to 5:30 PM	
Thursday		7:30 AM to 5:30 PM	
Friday		7:30 AM to 5:30 PM	
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

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

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Aged	Capacity
General			90		90
Summer					0

1. Basic Overview

An unannounced licensing visit was completed at this center on 9/28/26. The center director, Elizabeth Duccini, was present along with other staff. Elizabeth is qualified having the National Administrator Credential, 20 years of experience at this center, seven years as center director, and the International Montessori Teaching Diploma for Prek and Kindergarten. The Montessori school is located in a large two story re-modeled barn type structure which the center leases from the City of Dubuque during the school year. There is a main level, upper level, lower level, and a "stage" (mid) level of the building. The program is open to children age two through six and provides Kindergarten. The program offers a preschool program and extended day services for families that need or want the service to include the hours of the center's operation. The program operates on school days only during the school year only and has to move entirely out of the building at the end of each school year. The program is non-profit and is governed by a voluntary board of directors that meets monthly. This program does not participate in the Voluntary Preschool Grant program. The center director states the center's curriculum is Montessori based but also includes the Iowa Early Learning Standards. The center reports enrollment of 63 children at the time of the visit.

The four program rooms are large and provide plenty of space for the children to move about and to access the many activity centers and materials available. The opportunities for learning are presented using traditional Montessori methods, materials, and philosophy. The center is very well stocked with items that support the Montessori philosophy and curriculum. There are plenty of arts/crafts materials as well. Materials appeared to be highly organized and are well maintained. Restroom areas are adjacent to all program rooms. Hand washing sinks are located within all program rooms. A diapering station is located near the restroom area on the lower level. Required postings and child and staff files were reviewed. The licensing notebook including emergency drills, first aid supplies, playground checklist, radon testing, fuel burning appliances inspections, and policies were reviewed. All program space was observed. Staff and child interactions,

food service, hand washing, and naptime practices and procedures were observed. Health and safety practices were also reviewed including medication management, cleaning/sanitizing/disinfecting procedures, excluding ill children/staff, incident reports, and first aid kits.

Nutritional practices and food safety were observed. The center serves morning snack, lunch, and afternoon snack all prepared on site in the center's kitchen area which is also highly organized. The center does participate in the CACFP.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

The center director is qualified with experience, education, and training. The center continues to be clean, is very organized, and is well managed. The staff work well together and were again observed to be highly engaged with the children in activities and provided careful supervision. Several of the staff have been with the center for quite a number of years. The center has obtained IQ4K Level Three through 2/28/27. The children appeared to be having a good experience at the center. Program rooms are spacious and continue to offer an abundance of materials to support program needs including an excellent supply of books. The center participates in the "Bright Beginnings Book Boxes" program where books are regularly lended to the center from the local library. The teachers in each program area complete detailed weekly lesson plans which go out to each parent the week before, and teachers also keep track, daily, of what each child has worked on individually. The center's licensing documentation and staff and child files continue to be highly organized. The attention to detail in the administration of this program does not go unnoticed.

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

109.7(1): All staff (within first three months of employment):Iowa’s training for the mandatory reporting of child abuse.At least one hour of training regarding universal precautions.Certification in First Aid infant, child, and adult cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or equivalent certification approved by the Department. A valid certificate indicating the date of training and expiration date shall be maintained.Certification in infant, child, and adult first aid that uses a nationally recognized curriculum or is received from a nationally recognized training organization including the American Red Cross, American Heart Association, American Safety and Health Institute, or MEDIC First Aid or an equivalent certification approved by the Department. A valid certificate indicating the date of training and expiration date shall be maintained.Minimum health and safety trainings, (Essentials) approved by the Department. If significant changes occur to content, the Department may require the training be renewed.
1. _1_ staff file reviewed did not have evidence that the mandatory reporter or essentials trainings were completed within the first three months of employment.

109.7(2): Center directors and all staff have the required contact hours of training.
1. _1_ staff file reviewed did not have evidence of completing the required hours of annual training.

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

N/A

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

Targeted Assessment: Behavior Management
I discussed with (director) their oversight of behavior management related to helping childcare staff: 1) Understand expectations, 2) managing frustrations, 3) monitor performance.
The center director provided the following responses:
1) Respect of the child is of utmost importance and must be adhered to at all times, even difficult times. Staff are taught to respect the child's development and to understand that children who express unwanted behaviors often have no control over their impulses yet and/or do not know how to deal with emotions. Through trainings, staff development meetings/discussions and other communication, I provide information and examples of how we speak with children exhibiting behaviors (explaining why the behavior is not acceptable and giving the child time to help solve the problem themselves) We have a lot of experienced staff here that I depend on to be good role models for this to our new staff. I think seeing how behaviors are handled in an appropriate way for new staff is a great way to learn.

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2) We talk about managing your stress and realizing when you need to walk away from a situation(before you start escalating with the child). I think it helps to address this before we start the school year and have open discussions about it as it is completely normal to reach a point that you may need to take a moment, let someone else step in, or do some de-escalation exercises. I explain that doing this is a sign of great responsibility and respect, not a weakness. We also keep each other in check, so if a staff member needs help and is not realizing they do, someone steps in for them.
3) Observations in the classroom, being present during different routines (transitions, playground, lunch time, extended care), addressing any undesirable situations right away, communicate often, regular one on one meetings or just touching base with staff to make sure they are coping well, evaluations (staff do self-evaluations in November and April as well).

The center was reminded of allowable age combinations. Two year old children may not be combined with four year old children, and three year old children may not be combined with school age children (age six and older) unless under the very specific rule 109.8(2)h for the very beginning and/or end of the day with only the number of children and staff present at the center as defined by the rule. The center will need to ensure compliance.

1. Ensure staff file items such as physicals and required training re-certifications are completed timely as required.

This center will continue with a full license. The center is directed to correct the item(s) noted above in this section of the report so that corrections are obvious. This report does not require a written response. Thank you.

Date: 10/01/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Heidi Hungate

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**.