

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

**Name of Center:** Panther Academy **Enrollment:** 32 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 36659

**Street:** 321 W South St **City:** Monticello **Iowa Zip:** 52310 **County:** Jones

**Mailing Address:** 321 W South St, Monticello, IA, 52310

**Director's Name:** Tammy Helgens **Phone Number:** 319-465-5425

**On-Site Supervisor(s):** Tammy Helgens **E-Mail:** Tammy.Helgens@monticello.k12.ia.us

**Date(s) of Visit:** 06-19-2020

**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:** 09-13-2017

**Comments :** Does Comply.

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

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

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

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

Get-Well Evening Care Special Needs

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

<b>HOURS:</b>	<u>Year-round</u>	<u>School-Year</u>	<u>Summer Only</u>		
<b>LICENSE CAPACITY</b>	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Age	Capacity
General			20	40	60
Summer					0

**QRS Rating:** N/A

<b>RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:</b>	
X	<b>FULL</b> license from 04-01-2019 to 04-01-2021
	<b>PROVISIONAL</b> license from
	<b>DENIAL</b> of initial application
	<b>SUSPENSION</b> of license
	<b>REVOCACTION</b> of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons

Date: 06-24-2020

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

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

Panther Academy has been in operation for several years. The non-profit program is located inside Shannon Elementary School. Panther Academy operates year-round, Monday through Friday from 6:30am to 6pm. The program serves preschool-age and school-age children. Current enrollment is 32.

Combined director/on-site supervisor is Tammy Helgens. Ms. Helgens has been the director since 2015. She has 2 years management experience as well as experience working with children. Ms. Helgens continues to participate in much child development related training.

Program space was observed on 6/19/2020.

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

Panther Academy offers full-time and part-time childcare options to help meet the needs of preschool-age and school-age children and their families in the community. Panther Academy is well-established in a predominantly rural area and accepts a variety of funding sources.

The mission of Panther Academy is "...to provide high quality, developmentally appropriate child care services for school aged children in a safe and educational environment..."

Panther Academy has the following website for persons to to learn more about their program:  
<https://www.monticello.k12.ia.us/kids-quest/>.

Panther Academy works well with community partners including local businesses, CCR&R, local nurse consultant, early access, CART program, and local school district.

Ownership and management of the program has remained consistent. This includes combined director/on-site supervisor Tammy Helgens. Ms. Helgens has been with the program for over 3 years. Ms. Helgens is organized, and in turn, the program operates smoothly. She has noteworthy systems of organization in place to help ensure administrative items are completed as required and maintained in a secure manner. Since the last monitoring visit, the program has hired some new staff who have previous experiences working with children. Ms. Helgens discussed being proud of their team of employees who have a strong work ethic and foster a positive team spirit.

Panther Academy has a collaborative partnership with the school district. Ms. Helgens discussed how the school owns the childcare while they are also a separate entity. The program operates with the support of a 5-member board.

The school building and grounds are well-maintained. School custodial staff, school administration, school nurse, and school food service personnel help ensure the children's space is sanitary and hazard free each day. The school kitchen is inspected at least annually by the health department. There is an AED on-site. The program's primary space is located in

the school's gymnasium/cafeteria. As a result, the program is able to offer regular large gross motor activities even on inclement weather days. Ms. Helgens talked favorably about her relationship with the school describing it as "excellent". One example of this is the program's access to school technology resources (including iPads). Ms. Helgens acknowledged how the school custodial staff and school kitchen staff have really been assisting their operations during the COVID-19 Pandemic in order to help them maintain exceptional sanitation including freshly cleaned/waxed floors. Ms. Helgens discussed the positive family feedback they have received regarding the additional health precautions their program has put into place as well as their ability to continue to provide childcare.

The program has an organized parent/program communication center which includes required postings and child sign-in/sign-out information. This area also includes program reminders, community resource information, and information about upcoming program events/curriculum. Curriculum supports a child's natural desire to explore, enjoy the outdoors, and develop new skills at their own pace. The program has a history of incorporating on-site guest speaker events and off-site field trip experiences (including to zoos, parks, swimming pools, Old Creamery Theater, and baseball games) into the curriculum. The current COVID-19 pandemic was discussed. Ms. Helgens talked about how their program has been cleverly planning and modifying curriculum to help ensure children's activities and learning are still happening. Increased opportunities for small group work as well as areas for individual learning have been incorporated. Ms. Helgens talked about how the children have settled into the many new routines that incorporate crafts and self-selected play experiences.

Staff were observed greeting each family and child at the main entrance as they arrived for the day's programming. Staff engaged each family and child in a health screening (health questions, temperature screening, etc.) prior to admittance. Staff were observed encouraging and engaging in hand washing at all levels. Staff encouraged children to "catch coughs" and "catch sneezes" in elbows. The program has policies and procedures in place for cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing. Ms. Helgens and staff discussed how child materials are being continuously cleaned, sanitized and disinfected to help prevent the spread of any illness. Staff were observed to be actively engaged in these health and sanitation activities at appropriate times.

On the day of the monitoring visit, staff were nurturing and attentive to the children's needs. Children had access to an array of materials (including books, imaginative play options, building materials, iPads, and crafts) that encouraged innovative play. Staff provided a companionable presence allowing children to have many choices in their play experiences. Routine transitions (including clean up activities and food service rituals) worked smoothly into the program's welcoming and cooperative play environment. Staff were overheard providing children with many words of encouragement and engaging children in much meaningful discussion. 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:**

None noted.

#### **V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The outdoor play equipment is showing signs of wear including chipping paint, cracked items (tic-tac-toe) and areas of rust (particularly noted are the single-axis swing chains). Ensure collaboration with the school district is happening so that regular repairs and maintenance of such equipment occurs.

Moving forward, ensure each staff is using the required "Child Care Provider Physical Examination Report" to document a physical exam and TB screening/testing.

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The program's license remains in full force. 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.