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

Name of Center: Panther Academy **Enrollment:** 99 **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: 02-28-2024

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: 12-04-2023

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

Accredition: 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

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

LICENSE CAPACITY	Infants	2 Years	Preschool	School-Age	Capacity
General			20	40	60
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 04-01-2023 to 04-01-2025
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons **Date:** 03-06-2024

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

Not applicable.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

Panther Academy operates the following two sites throughout the community: Panther Academy at Shannon Elementary (PreK through first grade) and Panther Academy at Carpenter Elementary (2nd-4th grade school-age). Specifically, this license is for Panther Academy located inside Shannon Elementary School which is part of the Monticello Community School District. The non-profit program commenced operations several years ago. Panther Academy has the ability to operate year-round, Monday through Friday from 6:30am to 6pm. This program serves preschool through school-age children. Current enrollment is 99.

Multi-site director is Tammy Helgens. Ms. Helgens is also the combined director/on-site supervisor of specifically Panther Academy at Shannon Elementary. Ms. Helgens has been the director of Panther Academy since 2015. Ms. Helgens has 2 prior years management experience, several years experience working with children and continues to participate in much child development related training.

On 2/28/2024, program space was observed.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Panther Academy is well-established in a predominantly rural area and accepts a variety of funding sources. Panther Academy currently offers childcare at two local elementary schools - Shannon Elementary School and Carpenter Elementary School.

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/.

Ownership and management (e.g. school district, board, multi-site director Ms. Helgens) of Panther Academy has remained consistent. During 2024, Ms. Helgens will be celebrating her 7th year with Panther Academy. Congratulations! Ms. Helgens is organized, and in turn, Panther Academy operates smoothly. Ms. Helgens has noteworthy systems of organization in place to help ensure administrative items are completed and maintained as required. Management is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own program's policies and procedures.

Since the last review, the program has retained seasoned staff as well as hired a few new ones. In 2024, staff will be celebrating 15 years, 4 years, 3 years and 1 year employment with Panther Academy. One staff also reported being a para/sub for the school district for over 13 years outside of childcare hours. Staff Brittney B discussed the program's consistent teams of employees as well as how much the program has grown over the years.

Panther Academy programs have emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and

updated as needed. The programs have successfully navigated through Jones County flood events, 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 2019 health (covid-19) pandemic, 8/10/20 Derecho Storm, 2021 food supply issues, and 2023 air quality alerts.

Panther Academy has a collaborative partnership with the school district. While the school owns the childcare, the childcare is also a separate entity. The program operates with the support of a board of directors. Building and grounds are well-maintained. Since the last review, the program's primary entrance/exit received a new exterior door. 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. Panther Academy has historically received summer lunch prepared by the school district. The school district also provides some transportation services to the childcare. There is an AED on-site.

Panther Academy continues efforts at optimal communication between the program/staff and families. The program has an organized parent-staff/program information center, has a place to display children's accomplishments (e.g. artwork) for families to enjoy, offers regular program newsletters, utilizes technological communication resources, and supports family programming activities. Family programming activities have included parent/program conferences when needed, off-site field trips, and successful summer camp experiences. Staff discussed how summer 2024 planning is well underway with a waitlist developing.

Curriculum supports a child's natural desire to explore, create, enjoy the outdoors and develop new skills at their own pace through a supportive and healthy environment. 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. Panther Academy has a history of incorporating on-site guest speaker events and off-site field trip experiences into the curriculum. Past field trips have included trips to a local creamery, the theatre, Creative Adventure Lab and local bowling alley.

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 handwashing, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting.

On the day of the monitoring visit, staff were nurturing and attentive to the children's needs. Staff were observed warmly greeting children as they arrived for after-school programming. Activities observed included gathering activities with attendance, daily routines (e.g. restroom/water drink breaks, clean-up) and iterative play (e.g. board games, card games, crafting, Magna Tile building, dinosaurs, imaginative play). Staff were actively engaged with the children, providing positive redirection when needed and encouraging social graces. Children appeared to be enjoying their day.

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

None noted.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Ensure children's personal items are stored separately from one another and off the floor.

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.