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

Name of Center: Little GEM Learning Center - North **Enrollment:** 61 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 51891

Street: 4750 42nd ST NE **City:** Cedar Rapids Iowa **Zip** 52411 **County:** Linn

Mailing Address: 4750 42nd ST NE, Cedar Rapids, IA, 52411

Director's Name: Emilie Inglebright **Phone Number:** 319-200-2999

On-Site Supervisor(s): Emilie Inglebright **E-Mail:** ksmeisterling@gmail.com

Date(s) of Visit: 01-09-2025

X **Licensing Visit** X **Unannounced Visit** **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 **State** X **Local** **NA** **Is Fire Inspection Approved?** X **Yes** **No** **NA**

Date Inspected: 07-01-2022

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: 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	32	30	48		110
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 06-01-2024 to 06-01-2026
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons **Date:** 01-31-2025

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

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

Little GEM operates the following two licensed programs in Linn County: Little GEM Learning Center (license #47824; opened 9/14/16) and Little GEM Learning Center - North (license #51891; opened 8/29/22). Specifically, this report pertains to Little GEM Learning Center - North. Little GEM Learning Center - North offers a variety of childcare options and preschool programming to meet the needs of families and children in the community. The program operates year-round Monday through Friday 6:30am to 5:30pm. The program serves infants through preschool-age children. Current enrollment is 61.

Founding multi-program owner is Katie Meisterling. Ms. Meisterling has a BA degree in elementary education and a MA degree in early childhood. Ms. Meisterling has several years experience working with young children and continues to participate in much child development related training. Combined director/on-site supervisor is Emilie Inglebright. Ms. inglebright has been in this role since summer 2023. Ms. Inglebright has a MA degree in marriage and family therapy, over 7 years working in childcare, and continues to participate in much child development related training.

On 1/9/2025 , program space was observed.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Little GEM Learning Center and Little GEM Learning Center - North offer a variety of early learning programming and childcare options to help meet the needs of children and families in the community. Both programs are located in predominantly urban areas and accept a variety of funding sources. During 2025, Little GEM Learning Center will be celebrating their 9th year of being in business and Little GEM Learning Center- North will be celebrating their 3rd year of business.

Little GEM has the following website: https://www.littlegemlearningcenter.com/. Little GEM also has a private social media page for enrolled families and current staff.

According to the family handbook, the mission of Little GEM Learning Center - North is "...to “Grow, Enrich, and Mentor” all children, staff, and families in our community in hopes that they will leave our program well equipped to achieve their full potential."

Little GEM has a history of participation in quality initiatives including local quality initiatives.

Founding original multi-site owner/director Ms. Meisterling is a local entrepreneur invested in the city of Cedar Rapids and surrounding community. In addition to childcare, Ms. Meisterling supports foster families, is a mentor for other programs, and advocates for local retail businesses. Management (e.g. Ms. Meisterling, Ms. Inglebright) is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own program's policies and procedures. Management has noteworthy systems of organization in place to help ensure administrative items are completed as required and maintained in a secure manner. As a result, the program experiences smooth daily operations. Management discussed future goals related to enrollment and staffing.

Since the last monitoring visit, the program has retained seasoned staff as well as hired a few new ones. The cook has been with the program since opening in August 2022 and regularly updates menus to include new, healthy food choices. Ms. Meisterling discussed holding regular staff meetings and how staff appreciation is part of the program's operations (e.g. notes, small treats, staff character awards, staff holiday celebration).

Each Little Gem Learning Center has emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. Little Gem programs have successfully navigated through the 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 2019 health (covid-19) pandemic, 8/10/20 Derecho Storm, 2021 food supply issues, 2022 infant formula shortages, 2023 air quality alerts and 7/19/24 global technology outage.

Little GEM Learning Center continues efforts at optimal communication between the program/staff and families. The program has organized parent-staff/program information centers, offers regular program newsletters, utilizes technological communication resources, and supports family programming activities. Family activities have historically included a Valentine's exchange, "Thanksgiving Feast", trunk-or-treat event, holiday/seasonal celebrations, Spirit Week, door decorating contests, open house, staff/family conferences, and graduation ceremony (e.g. unique food truck treats - tacos, coffee).

Building and grounds are maintained. Ms. Meisterling discussed future goals related to the outdoor playground. The kitchen is spacious, sanitary and functional. Classrooms continue to be arranged in a thoughtful manner with learning at the forefront. Children's accomplishments (e.g. artwork) are displayed throughout the program space. Materials are accessible to children. Curriculum includes learning through play and teacher-created ideas that recently incorporated a pumpkin patch, a holiday play and a Polar Express (child created carboard train cars) with cocoa and pjs. Curriculum also includes field trips, on-site guest speaker events and extra enrichment activities. Ms. Meisterling talked about how much of the field experiences have been teacher initiated.

Little GEM Learning Center partners well with those throughout the community including local school districts, early access persons, local businesses, CCR&R, City of Cedar Rapids, and health professionals.

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. Staff were observed encouraging and engaging in hand washing at all levels. The program has policies and procedures in place for cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing. Cleaning supplies as well as cleaning checklists/reminders were observed in various areas on-site.

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, center play, book reading). Children have access to an array of materials (e.g. books, imaginative play options, building materials, games, puzzles, sensory, crafts) that encourage innovative play. Staff provided a companionable presence allowing children to have many choices in their play experiences. Routine transitions (e.g. clean up activities, food service rituals) worked smoothly into the program's welcoming and cooperative play environment. Throughout the classrooms, staff were overheard providing children with meaningful discussion, offering positive redirection when needed and encouraging the use of 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:

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Any replaced toilet seat shall be sized to fit the toilet basin (e.g. big room).

Discontinue the use of unattached individual toddler potty-seats as they are a sanitation hazard (e.g. storage). Replace toilet seats with a standard one that also has a built-in attached toddler seat.

Several window screens are damaged. Either repair the window screens or leave those with damaged or missing screens closed.

Ensure each child file (EK, BA) receives an annual update.

Replenish the outdoor cushion surface on all playgrounds.

Obtain a cover for the area of open sand.

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.