Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

Name of Center: Panther Academy

Provider No.: 36659

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

County: Jones

Director's Name: Tammy Helgens

On-Site Supervisor: Tammy Helgens

Phone Number: 3194655425

E-Mail: Tammy.Helgens@monticello.k12.ia.us

HHS Visit Date: 04/17/2026

Licensing Period: 04/01/2025 to 04/01/2027

Fire Inspection:

Date Inspected: 12/04/2023

Comments:

Report Visit Type:

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

License Type:

- [X] Full
- [ ] Provisional

Quality initiative:

- [ ] Accrediation

Program Duration:

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

Health and Human Services

Iowa Department of Health And Human Services

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

HOURS:	*Year-round*	*School-Year*	*Summer Only*
Sunday			
Monday	6:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Tuesday	6:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Wednesday	6:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Thursday	6:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Friday	6:30 AM to 6:00 PM		
Saturday			

Program Population Served:

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

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

1. Basic Overview

This annual inspection visit and report pertain to Panther Academy - 36659. Panther Academy is located inside Shannon Elementary School which is part of the Monticello Community School District. Panther Academy is a non-profit program offering licensed childcare M-F 6:30am-6:00pm as needed to preschool-age children outside of universal 4yo preschool hours and school-age children outside of school hours. Total enrolled and attending children was reported to be 85 on 4/17/2026.

Combined director/on-site supervisor of Panther Academy is Tammy Helgens. Ms. Helgens has been in the director role since 2015. Ms. Helgens has experience working with children and participates in professional development.

On 4/17/2026, program space was observed. During all hours of operation, primary programming occurs in the school cafeteria-gymnasium and classroom or school library. The program has some access to the outdoor school playground. There are sufficient restrooms and handwashing sinks to accommodate capacity. There is an AED on-site. Meals are prepared on-site in the school kitchen which is inspected by the health department. Panther Academy has areas for storage of the program's snack food items. Since the last review, the program has established individual child hooks for storage of personal items. On 4/17/2026, staff were observed warmly greeting families and children as they arrived for morning childcare. Activities observed included crafting, board games, magna tile building, K'nex creating, and dramatic play options. Discussions among staff and children included child-initiated mini lessons on how to snap and how to whistle! Curriculum on the day of the monitoring visit was observed to allow for a variety of play experiences that piqued child interest as well as encouraged social emotional growth, innovation and child choice. On 4/17/2026, staff were observed to be in ratio and actively engaged with the children providing encouragement and positive redirection when needed. Routine transitions (e.g. clean-up, breakfast rituals) went well. Prior to transitioning to their school day, children felt comfortable

sharing with staff and their peers various exciting things that had recently happened to them including obtaining a fire dragon for their sister, spraying and combing their own hair that morning, and how they got some new shoes! On the day of this monitoring visit, children appeared to be overall comfortable with staff and to be enjoying their childcare experiences.

2. Identify Observed Strengths of the program

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 learn more about their program: https://www.monticello.k12.ia.us/pantheracademy/.

As of 4/17/2026, ownership and management (e.g. school district, board, multi-site director Ms. Helgens) of Panther Academy has remained consistent. The management team has noteworthy systems of organization to help ensure administrative items are completed as required and secured in a confidential manner. The management team is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own program's policies and procedures. Ms. Helgens expressed much gratitude towards having a reliable, seasoned team of staff who are receptive to change and willing to assist in various capacities as needed. Many staff are celebrating longevity with the program.

On the day of this monitoring visit, Panther Academy was again found to be maintaining required postings, maintaining a parent program information center, utilizing technological communication resources, and offering family programming activities. Curriculum continues to support 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. Summer 2026 program planning is well underway. Summer and extended break curriculum historically includes swimming experiences, individual reading time, cooking projects, dress-up days, guest speaker events, movie days and field trips (e.g. Creative Adventure Lab, Old Creamery Theater, Cedar Rapids Kernels, National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium, Niabi Zoo, Collins Road Theaters, Skate Country, Legacy Lanes, Whispering Pines, local public library, local aquatic center, Indian Creek for syruping adventure). Ms. Helgens discussed the positive family feedback the program continues to receive.

As of 4/17/2026, Panther Academy continues to have and update as needed policies and procedures that include those for safety, daily child contact, hand washing, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. On the day of this monitoring visit, staff and management were able to verbalize how they help ensure the children's space is sanitary and hazard free each day by following their current policies and procedures as well as maintaining checklists for cleaning and maintenance. On 4/17/2026, management and staff discussed how they have continued supports from the school district including from school administrative, school food service personnel, the school board and the school custodians as to daily building and grounds conditions and repairs.

Panther Academy has emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. Panther Academy has successfully navigated through Jones County flooding events, 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 2019 health (covid-19) pandemic, 8/10/20 Derecho Storm, 2021 food supply issues, 2022 infant formula shortages, air quality alerts (2023, 2025), and repeated technology outages (7/19/24 global technology outage, 10/10/2025 AWS outage, 10/29/2025 Microsoft outage).

3. Identify the aspects that fall below the standard

None noted.

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

Not applicable.

5. Special Notes/Recommendations

Please send licensing (via email) the current annual all fuel burning appliance inspection report upon receipt.

Please forward documentation (via email or upload into ipower) that NN completed mandatory reporter training. Also,

CHILD CARE CENTER ANNUAL EVALUATION

ensure NN's physical exam with TB screening is documented on required form 470-5152 and that NN's federal record check results are filed upon receipt.

Ensure the program's carbon monoxide meets UL Standard 2034 (electric with battery back-up). One per floor is required.

Continue to collaborate with the school district regarding maintenance of the outdoor playground (e.g. sufficient cushion surface, chipping/rusting equipment, power washing of outdoor equipment). If any area of the outdoor play space becomes unsatisfactory, the childcare shall refrain from accessing those areas until remedies are made.

Upon completion of the newly constructed school building, this childcare will have an opportunity to relocate. Prior to relocating to a new building, please provide licensing with a new floor plan and fire marshal certificate.

The program's license remains in full status. Thank you for the visit.

Date: 05/14/2026

HHS Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons

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**.