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

Name of Center: Little GEM Learning Center - North **Enrollment:** 56 **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: 01-04-2024

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 **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 08-29-2022 to 02-01-2025
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons **Date:** 01-10-2024

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 56.

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 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 1/4/2024 , 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 2023, Little GEM Learning Center celebrated their 7th year of being in business and Little GEM Learning Center- North celebrated their 1st full 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. Since the last review, Little GEM Learning Center - North obtained a new director in summer 2023. While Ms. Inglebright is new to the director role, she is educated and has over 7 years experience working in childcare. Management (e.g. Ms. Meisterling, Ms. Inglebright) is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own program's policies and procedures. Management is organized having 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 program's first license visit, the program has retained as well as hired some new staff. The cook has been with the program since opening in August 2022 and updates regularly updates menus to include new, healthy food choices. Management discussed how staff morale is up, regular staff meetings are held and how Ms. Inglebright has increased her presence in all areas of the center. Since the last review, an employee break/resource room was established. Management talked about how they are proud of their team of employees who are flexible and assist in various capacities as needed. Ms. Meisterling discussed how staff accomplishments are celebrated and how staff appreciation is part of the program's operations (e.g. notes, small treats, staff character awards, staff holiday celebration). Notes of appreciation from families were observed to be posted in various classrooms.

Little Gem Learning Center has emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. Little GEM has successfully navigated through the 2019 Polar Vortex, 2019 health (COVID-19) pandemic, 8/10/22 Derecho Storm event and 2023 outdoor poor air quality issues.

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. 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, unique staff created snowman/box toss) are nicely displayed throughout the program space. Materials are accessible to children. Curriculum includes learning through play and teacher-created ideas. Curriculum also includes on-site guest speaker events, and extra on-site enrichment opportunities (e.g. Symphony Kids, Daytime Dancers). Management talked about a future goal to create an indoor sensory path within the large gross motor room.

Little GEM Learning Center - North 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. Ms. Meisterling discussed how she does allow an area of the childcare, outside childcare hours, to be used by a local first-aid and CPR instructor to host first-aid and CPR classes at least one time a month.

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. Areas of study included artic animals and the state of Alaska. 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 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:

Ensure annual physical exam report for child file EF is placed into respective file upon receipt.

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The program's license remains in full status. 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.