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

Name of Center: Montessori School of Marion **Enrollment:** 50 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 47556

Street: 420 Colton CIR NE Suite #2 **City:** Cedar Rapids Iowa **Zip** 52402 **County:** Linn

Mailing Address: 1464 Lindenbrook LN, Marion, IA, 52302

Director's Name: Aurora Costache **Phone Number:** 319-640-9178

On-Site Supervisor(s): Aurora Costache **E-Mail:** office@montessorischoolofmarion.org

Date(s) of Visit: 10-18-2022

X **Licensing Visit** X **Unannounced Visit** **Off Year Visit** **Administrative Change**

LICENSING VISITS

New Application X **Re-Application** **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: 07-08-2021

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 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	14	2	38	6	60
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 11-01-2022 to 11-01-2024
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons **Date:** 11-17-2022

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

Not applicable.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

Montessori School of Marion (MSM) is a profit program owned and operated by Aurora Costache. MSM commenced operations in August, 2016. This program was originally located at Echo Hill Church located at 9000 C Ave NE in Marion. After the 8/10/2020 Derecho Storm, MSM had to temporarily relocate to St. Mark's Lutheran Church located at 8300 C Ave in Marion. On 7/12/2021, MSM relocated to their new current permanent home located at 420 Colton Circle NE in Cedar Rapids. MSM operates year-round Monday through Friday 8:00am to 6:00pm. MSM offers part-day and full-day programming opportunities for children age infant through 6-years-old. Current enrollment is 50.

The owner/directress Ms. Costache received a Bachelor of Applied Science in 2021and an AMS (American Montessori Society) diploma in 2005. Ms. Costache obtained a Certificate of Entrepreneurial Management and a Certificate of Leadership Studies in 2021. Ms. Costache is a current member of the American Montessori Society, has several years experience working with children, and continues to participate in much child development related training.

On 10/18/2022, program space was observed.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

MSM is a well-established program located in a residential area of a predominantly urban community. MSM offers a variety of learning opportunities, including a private alternative kindergarten and kindergarten experience, to help meet the needs of children and families throughout the community.

The mission of MSM is "...to serve our children and community with integrity to create thoughtful and independent citizens and leaders that our world needs..."

MSM has National Council for Private School Accreditation until 6/30/2028 and has Accreditation by the American Montessori Society (AMS) until 3/5/2027. MSM is the only school in Iowa to be Accredited by the AMS. AMS accreditation is the gold standard of Montessori school excellence indicating that a school meets rigorous standards of quality Montessori education and authenticity. Only about 15% of AMS member schools are AMS-accredited. As part of their AMS Accreditation, MSM submits annual reports updating their Strategic Plan in order to maintain their accreditation status. MSM additionally achieved the National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPSA). During this last reporting period, Ms. Costache talked about how MSM became recognized by DOE and has been added to their website. Ms. Costache discussed the immense efforts put forth to obtain and maintain accreditation of a quality Montessori program.

MSM has the following website for families to learn more about the program: https://www.montessorischoolofmarion.org/. MSM was featured in a past Marion Times News article entitled "Montessori School opens in Marion".

Ownership and management of MSM has remained consistent. Founding owner, school director, and lead CASA directress is Ms. Costache. Ms. Costache is currently celebrating the start of MSM's 7th school-year. Congratulations! Ms. Costache is a local entrepreneur offering a small, personal Montessori program to the local community. Ms. Costache has goals for

herself and her program. Ms. Costache has a Bachelor of Applied Science, achieved an Entrepreneurial certificate, and achieved a Leadership Certificate. Ms. Costache has an AMS diploma, an Associate Early Childhood Credential, and a certificate for Teaching Children with Learning Differences. Ms. Costache has used her Montessori training domestically in The United States as well as internationally in Canada, Japan, and Italy. Ms. Costache has a history of partnering with the Montessori Teaching Training Center in Tucson, Arizona, and hosting a training program in Iowa. Ms. Costache discussed a future goal of expanding her school to include older classrooms assisted by fundraising efforts and grants. Ms. Costache is dedicated and organized. Ms. Costache has noteworthy systems of organization in place to help ensure administrative items are completed and maintained as required. Ms. Costache is familiar with licensing rules and regulations as well as those of MSM. Ms. Costache reported being proud of how "everything" in the program is outstanding and how she feels really good about being able to offer an exceptional program with well-trained invested staff.

Since the last monitoring visit, MSM has retained a group of seasoned employees as well as hired a few new ones. Each lead directresses holds either a Bachelors, Masters, or PhD. Additionally, each directress has or is completing American Montessori Society (AMS) and Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) accredited training. Supporting teachers have all received or are completing Montessori training from the Center for Guided Montessori Studies (CGMS). The program has increased community and family volunteerism offering children additional experiences in reading. MSM is in collaboration with UNI for persons interested in early learning and the Montessori teachings. Ms. Costache discussed being proud of MSM's staff who are hard working, dependable, and help provide a great education for their students. Ms. Costache talked about future staffing goals including participation in IQ4K as well as WAGE$.

MSM has emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. The school has successfully navigated through the historic 8/10/2020 Derecho Storm and 2019 pandemic.

MSM continues efforts at optimal communication between the program/staff and families. The program has an organized parent-staff/program information center, offers regular program newsletters, utilizes technological communication resources, offers parent education classes (e.g. Montessori +Me) and Montessori training, and supports family programming activities (e.g. Moms of Club of Marion). The program hosts various family events throughout the school-year including parent teacher conferences, Grandparent's Day, individual child birthday and International Day Celebration (e.g. heritage clothing encouraged, parade, international cuisine, musical songs in Spanish and French, cultural projects).

MSM building and grounds are pristine and well-maintained. Many unique features create a warm home-like environment. Classrooms are fully equipped and specifically designed with all the Montessori materials that are hands-on, self-correcting, and multi-sensorial. Materials are arranged in a purposeful manner and easily accessible to the children. Curriculum includes the Casa Program (3 to 6-years-old), the Bambini Program (1.5 to 3-years-old), and the Nido Program (10 weeks to 1.5-years-old). Ms. Costache discussed curriculum which is enriched by the Montessori Materials that support the child's development and is divided into the following areas: practical life, sensorial, language, math, geography, art, science, foreign language, music, peace, and grace and courtesy. Ms. Costache talked about how older children are provided opportunities to be the afternoon circle leader helping led music, story reading, and dismissal routines. Ms. Costache discussed the curriculum's continued foreign language enrichments. After school programs begin at 3:15 each day and incorporate specialty clubs in the areas of dance/sports, cooking, crafts, ice skating, swimming, science, games, and continued foreign language. Summer programing includes four 2-week sessions following a different curriculum based upon the topic. On-site guest speaker events and off-site field experiences are also part of the program. Since the last review, the outdoor environment was enhanced with a new climbing structure, increased sensory/texture areas, rain/water shell exploring area, and expanded seating.

MSM collaborates well with many local partners including local business, CCR&R, health professionals, city officials, and local school districts.

Each family and child is greeted outside the main entrance as they arrive for the day's programming. A daily health check with each child is conducted 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. Staff encouraged children to "catch coughs" and "catch sneezes" in elbows. The program has policies and procedures in place for cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing.

On the day of the monitoring visit, directresses were nurturing and attentive to the children's needs. Classical music was quietly offered during work cycles. Areas of October study were clearly visible throughout the classrooms and included fall season, pumpkins, and leaves. Children had access to an array of materials. Directresses role modeled, demonstrated (e.g. primary color mixing, color block art), and observed the children (particularly during work cycles and circle lessons). Directresses presented materials in a passionate manner. Teachers utilized mindful discipline and positive redirection when needed. Routine transitions worked smoothly into the program's welcoming and cooperative learning 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:

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.