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

Name of Center: St John Preschool and Childcare Center **Enrollment:** 84 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 22902

Street: 715 College St **City:** Cedar Falls Iowa **Zip** 50613 **County:** Black Hawk

Mailing Address: 715 College St, Cedar Falls, IA, 50613

Director's Name: Kathy Thompson **Phone Number:** 319-268-0165

On-Site Supervisor(s): Kathy Thompson **E-Mail:** kathythompson@stjohncf.org

Date(s) of Visit: 03-06-2024

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: 07-18-2023

Comments :

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	0	0	80	8	88
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: Becky Frost **Date:** 03-19-2024

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

N/A

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

On 03/06/24 I made an unannounced off year licensing visit to St. John Preschool and Childcare Center in Cedar Falls. I met with Kathy Thompson, the director. Ms. Thompson began as the director of the program in July 2012. Ms. Thompson has a BA in elementary and early childhood education. She also has a M.A.E. in early childhood education and reading education. Jane Bentley-Gadow is Ms. Thompson's assistant. She started in July 2023. The center employs 33 staff members.

The preschool and childcare program is in St. John's Lutheran Church on the lower level. The childcare program operates Monday through Friday from 6:30 am until 6:00 pm. Children do not need to be enrolled in the preschool program to attend the childcare program. During the summer only they will care for children up to eight-years-old. The childcare program was added to the preschool in September 2012.

The preschool program operates Monday through Friday and offers a morning and afternoon class. The morning class is 8:50-11:20 am and the afternoon class is 12:50-3:20 pm. The three-year-old class has the option of meeting Tuesday and Thursday morning, Tuesday and Thursday afternoon or Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning. The four and five-year-old program offers a Monday through Friday class in the morning and afternoon. There is also a four and five-year-old preschool class on Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoon.

Teri Stuckey is the lead preschool teacher for the four and five-year-old Monday through Friday morning and afternoon class and Kelsey Schmitz is the associate during the morning class and Heather VanEngelenhoven is the associate during the morning and afternoon class. Ms. Stuckey has been with the program since August 2016.

Megan Lawler is the lead preschool teacher for the morning and afternoon three-year-old class and an afternoon Monday, Wednesday and Friday four and five-year-old class Sara Schares is her associate on Tuesday and Thursdays and Amy VanArkel is the associate for the Monday, Wednesday and Friday class. Ms. Lawler has been with the program since September 2012.

Valerie Kurth is the senior lead for the childcare program and the childcare lead for the younger three-year-old children. Ms. Kurth has been with the program since March 2015. Beckie Kniep is the childcare lead for the older threes and younger four-year-old children. Sandy Ferguson and Natalie Julin-McCleary are the older four and five-year-old childcare leads. There are currently 84 children enrolled in the center/preschool.

The preschool program operates out of two rooms. The childcare program operates out of six rooms and a central pod in the entrance of the childcare area. One of the rooms is used for four and five-year-old children who do not take naps to do themed activities and some of the children eat in this area. The center uses the church chapel as a childcare overflow room in the afternoon. An inspection of each room was completed. Windows provide natural lighting in some rooms and artificial lighting is used in other rooms. The rooms are decorated with multiple pictures of the children and their families, the children's art projects, and posters to assist the children with the learning process, such as the alphabet, shapes, colors and numbers. There is an area for circle time in each of the preschool rooms and two childcare rooms. The entrance of the

center is also decorated with several art projects.

The centers observed on the day of the licensing visit include library, Lego/blocks, woodworking, table toys, games, puzzles, transportation, art, dramatic play, listening, play dough, writing, math, science/discovery, sensory table and music. Centers were arranged in a manner that allowed easy movement between activities, but it also allowed for clear supervision by staff members. Materials were in good condition. The materials are located at child level, so they were easily accessible to the children.

There is a bathroom located between the two preschool rooms with two child-sized toilets and two child-sized sinks. Handwashing procedures were posted. Each preschool room has a sink and handwashing procedures were posted.

The childcare program uses two bathrooms outside the childcare area. The girl's bathroom has four toilets, and three sinks and the boy's bathroom has one toilet, two urinals and two sinks. Handwashing procedures were posted. There are also two bathrooms in the hallway of the older three and younger four-year-old children. The girl's bathroom has two toilets and one sink and the boy's bathroom has one toilet, one urinal and one sink. Handwashing procedures were posted. There is a sink in Ms. Kurth's room and procedures were posted.

The teachers meet monthly to discuss themes. The program is using the "project approach". This approach allows the children to choose what they want to learn about. The length of the theme varies depending on the children's interest level. Each teacher develops their own lesson plans. Staff members use a variety of resources to develop lesson plans and plan activities. The program is using Creative Curriculum as a basis/guide for assessments they do on each child. The program also incorporates Christian teachings and prayer. The childcare staff members and the preschool staff members meet to discuss current themes but do not necessarily have the same theme. Newsletters are provided to the parents.

There was a phone with emergency numbers in both preschool classrooms and in the central pod and one of the childcare rooms. Emergency fire and tornado procedures and evacuation diagrams were posted by the main program doors and outdoor exits throughout the center. A daily schedule was posted for preschool and childcare. Lesson plans were available for review in preschool and childcare.

The children use childcare rooms to nap. Mats are used to nap. Mats were stored appropriately. The program takes the children who do not nap to a room to participate in a themed activity. The program also uses the Faith and Life Center on the upper level for large motor activities.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. A radon test was completed in March 2023 and is good for two years. Results were within EPA guidelines. The fuel burning inspection was completed and no concerns were noted. A carbon monoxide detector was on site and is located outside Ms. Lawler's preschool classroom in the hallway. Outlets were protected. The fire marshal inspection occurred on 07/18/23.

The program does not participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) but follows the guidelines. For the preschool program, snacks are furnished by parents on a rotating basis. The preschool provides the parents with a list of appropriate snacks that meet the CACFP guidelines. The center requires the snacks to be pre-packaged. The program is prepared to supplement the snack if necessary. The preschool snacks are recorded on calendars. There is a refrigerator in Ms. Stuckey's room that both classes share. There is a thermometer present. Snacks were stored according to the NHSPS guidelines. Allergies are confidentially posted inside the cupboard.

The childcare program provides the childcare children breakfast, lunch and a morning and afternoon snack. Sandy Livingston is the cook. Ms. Livingston prepares a new menu each month and it is sent home to the families. Menus were posted. The meals are dished out on trays and served to the children. The Department of Health recommended to the program that they not use family style. The childcare and preschool children eat meals and snacks in the fellowship hall and in the additional childcare room. The program has three shifts for lunch and three shifts for snacks.

The kitchen was observed to be clean and organized. It is a licensed kitchen. The Department of Inspections and Appeals inspects the kitchen annually. There is an industrial dishwasher, and all dishes are placed through this. Plates, silverware and glasses go through twice. There are three sinks available to use the three-step method. There is also a special sink used only for vegetables and a sink for handwashing. There is an industrial refrigerator and an industrial freezer and thermometers were present. Food items were stored according to NHSPS guidelines in the pantry.

The center uses Sani-Tyze Food Contact Surface Sanitizer for food tables and Purell Professional Surface Disinfectant for toys. Staff members and children were observed washing their hands and IDPH handwashing procedures are followed. Staff member provided terrific reminders to the children to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer.

There is a fenced in playground area outside of the preschool program on the lower level for the children. There is climbing apparatus with slides and tunnels and there is also a tire swing. Wood mulch is used as the surface cushioning. There is

also a sandbox with a playhouse in the middle. There is a path for bikes around the sandbox. There are benches available. Natural shade is available.

The preschool also has use of the Faith and Life Center, which is a multi-purpose room they can use for gross motor activities.

The parent information is located on a bulletin board inside the entrance. There is also a parent board inside the childcare entryway. The mandatory reporter, childcare consultant and the handbook availability were posted. The license was conspicuously placed in the office. A no-smoking sign was posted at the entrance. Parent resources are also available in this area.

Several staff members are experienced and have worked together as a team for a long time. The day of the visit the staff members and children were dressed up for a Dr. Seuss mismatched clothes day. They have fun and creative activities for the children to help teach them learn. Staff members provide clear and easy to understand directions to the children. Staff members are enthusiastic and provide the children with praise. Staff members provided great reminders for the children to cover their coughs and to wash their hands. Staff members sang with the children while they washed their hands. They had conversations with the children about sharing. Staff members provide the children with choices and were actively engaged in activities with the children. Staff members used play to teach the children about colors and counting. Positive redirection was used when necessary. The children enjoyed their time at the center.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

The center received the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) stipend through the Department of Health and Human Services in the amount of $28,000.

The center hired a landscape architect to help with the planning of the new playground. Part of the playground would be turf and part would be poured in place surfacing. The center continues raising money for a new playground. They had a Get Out and Move Challenge Fundraiser this past year.

The center received the STEM Scale-Up Program Award Storytime STEM packs. They have applied for the “All About Balance” award.

The center has a finance resource team through the church.

The lead teachers provide detailed plans for substitutes when they are necessary.

Parents make playdough for the program.

There are a variety of centers in the rooms, with numerous activities and supplies to swap out routinely.

There are pictures of staff members in the entrance.

The entrance is filled with art projects made by the children and pictures of the children which makes the area very inviting and fun.

The program does provide care to school-age children up to the age of eight-years-old during the summer months.

The program uses the Brightwheel app to sign parents in and out, do billing, registration and communicate with parents. The center also has a Facebook page to communicate.

Ms. Thompson states they receive a lot of support from the church. The program is a ministry of St. John Lutheran Church.

The children attend “Children’s Church” twice each month.

The center has themed days during the week for the children who do not nap. They have “Messy Monday” where they do an art and craft, Music Together Tuesday, Ramp It Up-STEM Wednesday, Puzzles and Games one Thursday and Let’s Move PE the following Thursday and Movie Fridays. There is a new teacher each day.

Ms. Thompson states her core staff members have been here for multiple years which provides stability.

Ms. Thompson states the parents are engaged, proactive and they have good and open communication. Parents often make donations and are generous with their time.

Ms. Thompson is an amazing director. She is focused on best practice and always looking for ways to improve the program and provide the best experience for the children and the staff members. She is knowledgeable and great to work with. She built the program up from two preschool classrooms to the terrific preschool/childcare program that it is today. I state this every year and it is still true.

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

N/A

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

A full license is issued for the remainder of the licensing period. All DHS licensing standards and procedures must be maintained during the renewal period.

*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.