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

Name of Center: A to Z Learning Center & Daycare-University Ave **Enrollment:** 108 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 22647

Street: 4828 University Ave **City:** Cedar Falls Iowa **Zip** 50613 **County:** Black Hawk

Mailing Address: 4828 University Ave, Cedar Falls, IA, 50613

Director's Name: Chris York & Megan Gambell **Phone Number:** 319-266-6755

On-Site Supervisor(s): Jennifer Smith **E-Mail:** atoz@cfu.net

Date(s) of Visit: 06-02-2025

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: 07-17-2023

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	20	12	43	30	105
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 08-01-2024 to 08-01-2026
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Becky Frost **Date:** 07-10-2025

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

N/A

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

On 06/02/25 I made an unannounced off year licensing visit to A to Z Learning Center and Day Care in Cedar Falls. I met with Megan Gambell, a director. Ms. Gambell started with the center in August 2008. Jennifer Smith is an on-site supervisor and a teacher in a classroom. Ms. Smith has worked for A to Z since 2001 and she has completed many hours of child development-related training. Ms. Gambell and Ms. Smith have obtained their National Administration Credential (NAC). A to Z Corporation operates four childcare centers in the Waterloo-Cedar Falls area. Chris York is the executive director of the centers. She has been involved with childcare for many years and she has been the director of A to Z since it opened in 1991. Ms. York is also NAC certified. The center employs 22 employees.

The center is in a free-standing building. The program operates Monday through Friday from 5:30 am until 6:00 pm. It serves children who are six weeks old through twelve-years-old. There are currently 108 children enrolled.

The program utilizes the following classrooms: infants (Bear Cubs), two toddler rooms (Alligators are 8-12 months and Ducklings are 12-24 months), two two-year-old rooms (the Monkey room is for the younger two-year-olds and the Teddy Bear room is for the older two-year-olds), two three-year-old rooms (the Doodle Bug room is for the younger three-year-olds and the Jungle Friends room is for the older group), four-year-olds (Dinosaurs), the Sea Creatures room is for four and five-year-olds, and school-aged children (Clowns). An inspection of each room was completed. All rooms were in ratio the day of the visit.

Windows provide natural lighting in most rooms. The Clowns room is located downstairs and has minimal natural light, and the Doodle Bug room is located between rooms but receives natural light from the entrance. The rooms are decorated with pictures of the children, the children's art projects, and posters to assist the children with the learning process, such as the alphabet, shapes, colors and numbers. The children's birthdays were posted. There is an area for circle time in the rooms.

The centers observed on the day of the licensing visit include library, Lego/blocks/Lincoln Logs, table toys, games, puzzles, transportation, puppets, computer, art, dramatic play, listening, writing, math, science/discovery, woodworking, 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 the child's level, so they are easily accessible to the children.

The center uses a variety of other resources to develop lesson plans. The curriculum is well-balanced and provides a variety of activities to meet the physical, emotional and developmental needs of the children. Activities are based on themes. The themes are the same throughout the center for the younger children. The school-aged rooms have their own themes. Each teacher prepares lesson plans with age-appropriate activities for their class. A lesson plan was available for review in all the rooms.

There was a phone with emergency numbers and the center's address and phone number in the classrooms or shared by classrooms. Emergency fire and tornado procedures and evacuation diagrams were posted by all the main program doors

and outdoor exits throughout the center. A daily schedule was posted in each room.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. The radon test was completed in October 2024 and is good for five years. Results were within EPA guidelines. The fuel burning inspection was completed and no concerns were noted. A carbon monoxide detector was on site on each level. They are in the school-aged room on a pillar and in the storage room near the office. Outlets were protected. The fire marshal inspection occurred on 07/17/23.

The center participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Melissa Johnson is the cook. The center provides breakfast, lunch and a morning and afternoon snack. There are four rotating menus. Menus were posted. The kitchen was observed to be clean and organized. The center uses the three-step method to wash dishes by hand. Allergies are posted in the kitchen. There are two refrigerators, and two upright freezers and thermometers were present. Food items are stored according to NHSPS guidelines.

The program provides two types of formula. If the parents want a different brand, they must provide it. The center provides baby food and cereal. Bottles are returned to the kitchen to be washed and sanitized.

The center uses bleach and water to sanitize the food tables and disinfect the changing tables. I observed the teacher prepare the tables for snacks and proper procedures are followed. I observed and discussed diaper changing procedures with the staff members and proper procedures are followed in most rooms. In the Alligator room the staff member did not wash the child's hands. I explained that this was necessary and she corrected it. There was not a pattern of disregard so this will not be cited. Post handwashing procedures near the sink in the bathroom between the Monkey and Teddy Bear rooms.

I observed daily sheets in the rooms for children under the age of two years old.

In the two-year-old room the staff member sprayed sunscreen on the children inside the classroom. Aerosols cannot be used in the classroom because they can be an asthmatic trigger. I would recommend using sunscreen lotion. If you use an aerosol, it must be applied outside.

The parent information is located on a bulletin board inside the entrance near the office. The mandatory reporter, childcare consultant and the handbook availability were posted. The license was conspicuously hung. A no-smoking sign was posted at the entrance.

The outdoor play area consists of four separate fenced areas. The outdoor play area is divided into sections to serve specific age groups. Woodchips are used for surface cushioning on two of the play areas and they are replenished frequently. The area for the infants and toddlers is a grassy area with some small toys. There is a tree for shade.

The second area is for two-year-olds and three-year-olds. It has woodchips for surface cushioning, but also has a grassy area. There is climbing equipment with slides. There are picnic tables and a playhouse. The building overhang provides shade.

The third area is for preschool children. Woodchips are used as surface cushioning, but the area also has a grassy area. There are a couple pieces of climbing equipment with a tunnel, slides and monkey bars. There are also riding toys, a stationary dinosaur to climb on and dramatic play pieces. The merry-go-round is broken and must be fixed or removed. There is a concrete area to play basketball. There is a sandbox that needs to have the weeds removed. The fence near the sandbox was recently severely damaged when a tree fell on it. This needs to be fixed prior to the children playing in this area. The tree falling has eliminated the shade for the children. I would recommend adding a tarp in this area.

The school-aged area is mostly grass. There is a concrete basketball court in the area. There is a sandbox. This area has limited shade and would benefit from a tarp. A picnic table is available. I would recommend more items in this area to entertain the children while they are outside.

Staff members moved around the rooms to interact with the children and provide adequate supervision. Child friendly music was playing in several rooms. I observed staff members were nurturing to upset children. They were patient and used positive redirection when necessary. Staff members offered the children choices and were flexible with their schedule to meet the needs of the children. Staff members did crafts with children and used play to talk with the children about colors and counting. Staff members had good handwashing reminders. They counted the children to make sure they were in ratio. They provided the children with praise and sat on the floor with the children to introduce them to activities. The children appeared to enjoy their time at the center.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Ms. Gambell states they have hired several new staff members.

Ms. Gambell states the center has longevity with their core staff members.

Ms. Gambell states they work with good families and the families have been with the center for a while.

Ms. Gambell states the center has three vans and during the school year they provide transportation to the following schools: Cedar Heights, Southdale, Lincoln Cedar Falls, Hansen, North Cedar and Orchard Hill.

Administrators go to rooms frequently to make sure rooms remain in ratio.

There is an Alexa speaker in each room so that child friendly music can be played.

Ms. Gambell and Ms. Smith have worked together for many years and they have a great working relationship. They are amazing leaders for the center and they make a great team. They each bring a different skill set to the administrative team and they balance one another out.

The center has a great summer program for school-aged children. They visit several fun locations almost daily to entertain the children.

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

109.11(4)a: Center must have safe outdoor program area adjacent to the center, with sufficient square footage to accommodate at least 30 percent of the enrollment capacity at any one time at 75 spear feet per child. Outdoor space must:Be free from litter and unsafe materials and free from contamination by the drainage or ponding of sewage or storm water.Include safe play equipment and an area of shade.Include fencing to protect from bodies of water or vehicular traffic. The preschool playground has a sandbox that needs to have the weeds removed. The fence near the sandbox was recently severely damaged when a tree fell on it. This needs to be fixed prior to the children playing in this area. The tree falling has eliminated the shade for the children. I would recommend adding a tarp in this area. The school-age area has limited shade and would benefit from a tarp. I would recommend more items in this area to entertain the children while they are outside.

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.