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

Name of Center: KCE Champions LLC @ Pierce Elementary School **Enrollment:** 40 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 51884

Street: 4343 Marilyn DR NE **City:** Cedar Rapids Iowa **Zip** 52402 **County:** Linn

Mailing Address: PO Box 583, Solon, IA, 52333

Director's Name: Paul Pressler **Phone Number:** 319-488-9028

On-Site Supervisor(s): Madison Blanchett **E-Mail:** paul.pressler@discoverchampions.com

Date(s) of Visit: 01-22-2025

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: 09-21-2023

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: X Accredited NAEYC NSACA Other NA

Program Serves: Infants (0-23 mo.) 2 Years 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				50	50
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 11-01-2024 to 11-01-2026
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons **Date:** 01-24-2025

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

Not applicable.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

In 2022, KCE Champions LLC opened several licensed childcare programs in Linn County expanding into nonmetropolitan areas in 2024. Specifically, KCE Champions LLC @ Pierce Elementary School is located inside Pierce Elementary School which is part of the Cedar Rapids Community School District. The program primarily operates Monday through Friday before and after school hours 6:30am to 6:00pm. KCE Champions does have the ability to extend hours on scheduled early release days, emergency late start days, and emergency early-out days. During the summer, full days of emergency closing (example snow day), and some breaks (holiday and spring), this site has the ability to operate full days and/or combine for full days of care at another KCE Champions LLC location. KCE Champions LLC @ Pierce Elementary School serves only school-age children. Current enrollment is 40.

Senior regional director of field operations is Kymberly Norrick. Multi-site regional manager Setara Sous has a BA in criminology, has 6 years experience working within this childcare corporation, participates in child development related training and been director qualified since January 2024. Multi-site director Paul Pressler has been with Champions since fall 2023 and began to fill a multi-site director role in April 2024. Mr. Pressler has a MA degree in educational leadership, over 10 years experience working with children and continues to participate in much child development related training. On-site supervisor (OSS) since 2024 is Madison "Maddie" Blanchett. Ms. Blanchett has experience working with children and continues to participate in child development related training.

On 1/22/2025, program space was observed.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

KCE Champions LLC @ Pierce Elementary School is located inside an elementary school in a predominantly urban neighborhood. The profit program provides a variety of early learning and childcare opportunities as well as accepts many different of funding sources to help meet the needs of children and families throughout the community.

KCE Champions LLC sites have established the following website for families and the community to learn more about the program: https://www.discoverchampions.com/.

According to the family and employee handbook, the philosophy of KCE Champions LCC is that "...learning is meant to be a natural, joyful experience. Our goal is to help your child develop socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually. Children thrive when the process of discovery is lovingly encouraged and gently reinforced..." KCE Champions LCC is a division of KinderCare Education. The history of how KCE Champions LLC came to fruition and evolved to present day (including 1969 KinderCare Learning Centers founded, 1998 corporate headquarters moved from Montgomery Alabama to present-day Portland Oregon, 2003 KCE Champions LLC joins KinderCare Education, 2013 KinderCare launches its Early Foundations proprietary curriculum) is impressive. KinderCare Education serves more than 186,000 children in 40 states, and Champions specifically serves more than 40,000 of those children in 21 states and Washington, D.C. Champions partners with principals, teachers, and parents to create more than 600 before-and after-school and year-round learning environments.

In 2021, KinderCare Education earned a fifth Gallup Exceptional Workplace Award - one of only four companies worldwide to receive this aware five years in a row. Champions has made a continuous commitment to earn and re-earn Corporate Accreditation from Cognia a global leader in advancing excellence in education through accreditation

Management (e.g. senior regional director of field operations Kymberly Norrick, regional manager Setara Sous, multi-site director Mr. Pressler, OSS Ms. Blanchett) is mostly consistent. Management has systems of organization in place to help ensure administrative items are completed and maintained as required. Management is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own policies and procedures. Management has reported holding regular staff meetings to review rules, policies and procedures. Ms. Blanchett acknowledged being a consistent OSS for over a year and having good relationships with children, families and the school.

KCE Champions LLC has established and is working to maintain optimal communication between the program/staff and families. The program has a parent-staff/program information center, utilizes technological communication resources, and supports family programming activities. Prior to each school-year commencing, KCE Champions LLC sponsors a "Champions Family Night" at a local park with food and various activities including face painting to welcome new and returning families to the upcoming school-year. Summer camp enrollment begins in early January each year.

KCE Champions LCC school-age curriculum focuses on six content areas that research shows enhance school-age children's growth and development as well as help build the essential skills needed to be successful in elementary school and beyond: Character Development, Community, Creative Expression, Executive Function, Inquiry-Based Learning, and Literacy. The program provides child interest areas in creative arts, literacy, math and construction, puzzles and games, and science. Daily fitness, healthy eating, and homework assistance (as needed) are part of the program's operations. There are additional opportunities offered for enrichment clubs and Junior Counselor leadership roles for older school-age students. Summer/extended breaks curriculum is also enhanced with guest speaker events and off-site field trips. Ms. Blanchett talked about how the program has designated daily indoor access to the school stage and cafeteria only.

KCE Champions collaborates well with many community partners including the Cedar Rapids Community School District, local businesses, CCR&R, and health professionals. School custodial staff, school administration, school nurse, and school food service personnel help ensure the children's space is sanitary and hazard free each day. The school food service personnel prepare and provide all food items for the childcare program. The school kitchen is inspected at least annually by the health department. There is an AED onsite.

Each KCE Champions LLC location has emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. The program has successfully navigated through 2022 food supply and infant formula shortages, 2023 air quality alerts and 7/19/24 global technology outage.

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. The program has policies and procedures for handwashing, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting.

On the day of the monitoring visit, staff were nurturing and attentive to the children. Area of study included "puppet production". Staff were observed warmly greeting children as they arrived for childcare after school hours. Activities observed included self-selected play experiences (e.g. crafting, board games, Legos, rubber band work, imaginative play items, books) and large gross motor play (e.g. bouncy balls). Routine transitions (e.g. cleanup, restroom breaks, face-to-name checks, snack rituals) were observed. Staff were actively engaged with the children, provided positive redirection when needed and encouraged the use of social graces. Children appeared comfortable with staff and to be truly enjoying their day.

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

109.6(6)c: Record checks
- One staff file reviewed (JT hire date 1/3/2024) lacked documentation of federal record check results.

109.9(1)d: All files contain a pre-employment physical exam report completed within six months prior to hire and at least every three years. Physical exams shall be documented on form 470-5152, Child Care Provider Physical Examination Report.
- One staff file reviewed (JT hire date 1/3/2024) lacked documentation of a physical exam on required form 470-5152.

109.9(2)c: All files contain information regarding the specific health and medical needs of a child including information regarding any prescribed treatment.
For school-age programs in the child's school, all files include a statement signed by the parent that the immunization information is available in the school file.

- One child file reviewed (FK) lacked any immunization documentation.

109.8(2): Ratio maintained in center as required by age.
- On the day of the 2025 annual visit, the program was in ratio with 2 staff and 30 school-age children. When reviewing attendance documentation from recent previous days, there were times the program has been out of ratio including having 34 children with 2 staff in attendance afterschool on 1/16/2025. Licensing and staff discussed how the program is not to accept more children in than there is staff to accommodate at any given time.

109.11(3)a: Center shall ensure that: Facility and premises are sanitary, safe, and hazard free. Adequate indoor and outdoor space is provided. The outdoor area shall include safe play equipment and area of shade. Sufficient space provided for dining. Sufficient lighting shall be provided. Sufficient ventilation. Sufficient heating. Sufficient cooling. Sufficient bathroom and diapering facilities. Equipment, including kitchen appliances, are maintained so as not to result in burns, shock, or injury to children. Sanitation and safety procedures for the center are developed and implemented to reduce risk or injury or harm to children and reduce transmission of disease.
- Program carpets/rugs are stained-damaged. Replace.
- Clean out and replenish the first-aid kit.
- Open food grazing is not good curriculum. Multiple children were observed walking around and playing with toys while also eating snack (e.g. crackers, juice, home foods from backpacks). No designated clean and sanitized food tables specifically for food service were available.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Please ensure posted lesson/curriculum plan have the current week's dates rather than just a week with number(s). To have otherwise, makes it difficult to know if the posted lesson/curriculum plan is current.

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

Some children were observed displaying bad behavior (e.g. yelling, hitting other children, running away from staff, leaving the program space, failing to follow verbal redirection) during the course of the 2025 annual monitoring visit. Staff were observed being diligent, using a variety of methods to redirect the children, and using multiple verbal prompts. When asked about this, staff talked about resources the children have available during the school day including how the school provides extra one-on-one assistance for some when needed and how one-on-one staffing is not available through Champions. Ms. Blanchett discussed how management and the Champions Inclusion Services Team are aware of the behavior incidents. Licensing strongly encourages having extra staff available daily to assist with behaviors as well as reviewing policies related to discipline, incident report writing and disenrollment. Licensing also strongly encourages collaboration with the program's insurance and legal persons.

It is beneficial to note, Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) and the nurse consultant are excellent resources to access training opportunities and support in the area.

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.