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

Name of Center: Northeast Iowa Montessori School Inc **Enrollment:** 20 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 28692

Street: 604 S Ave **City:** Decorah Iowa **Zip** 52101 **County:** Winneshiek

Mailing Address: 604 S Ave , Decorah, IA, 52101

Director's Name: Rachael Buresh **Phone Number:** 563-382-6491

On-Site Supervisor(s): Jane Busch **E-Mail:** neimontessori@gmail.com

Date(s) of Visit: 09-05-2024

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

LICENSING VISITS

New Application X **Re-Application** **NA**

Signed Application (470-0722) Received X **Yes** **No** **NA** **Date Signed:** 08-12-2024

FIRE INSPECTION X **State** **Local** **NA** **Is Fire Inspection Approved?** X **Yes** **No** **NA**

Date Inspected: 11-28-2023

Comments : Compliance on 01/05/24

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.) 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	0	2	20	8	30
Summer					0

QRS Rating: 1

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 10-01-2024 to 10-01-2026
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Becky Frost **Date:** 09-10-2024

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

N/A

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

On 09/05/24 I made an unannounced licensing visit to Northeast Iowa Montessori School in Decorah. I met with Rachael Buresh, the director and Head of the School. Ms. Buresh has a BA in a non-child related field and completed the Montessori Fundamentals Administrative training at the Center for Guided Montessori Studies in Minnesota. She has been the director since 08/17/17. Ms. Buresh is a Youth and Mental Health Credential Fundamentals graduate. She returned to school to get ten more credits in early childhood education. She is ECERS-3 certified and has thirty plus years of business administration experience. Ms. Buresh has received her National Administrator Credential (NAC).

Heather Vilardo is the lead guide in the classroom. Ms. Vilardo has a BA in elementary education and a MA in special education. She has obtained the early childhood credential for leads through the Center for Guided Montessori Studies. Christine Gowdy-Jaehnig is the former lead guide in the classroom and she is currently mentoring in the classroom on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Ms. Gowdy-Jaehnig has the American Montessori Society early childhood credential and completed training through St. Catherine's University in Minnesota. She has a BA from St. John's College in Annapolis, MD. Jenny Lenehan is an assistant guide and the lead teacher for the voluntary preschool program. Ms. Lenehan received her BA in Elementary Education with early childhood and reading endorsements from Upper Iowa University. She completed the Children's House assistant's course through Association Montessori International (A.M.I.). Claire Tebbenhoff is an assistant guide and the lunch and rest time supervisor. She is also the after-school care supervisor. She has a BA in elementary education with an endorsement in early childhood and special education from Luther College. She also has a BA in history. Ms. Tebbenhoff has completed the Children's House assistant's course through Association Montessori International (A.M.I.). Faith Robinson has a BA in art education and she is working as an extra guide and she is an assistant in the after-school care program.

The center operates out of a free-standing building. They started in their new location in January 2024. It operates during the school year, Monday through Friday from 7:45 am until 5:30 pm. The program serves children ages two through six-years-old. The program offers a morning program (8:15-11:30 am) and a full day program (8:15 am to 3:00 pm). A latchkey program is also offered after school for children up to eight-years-old. They currently have 20 children enrolled between the Children's House classroom and the after-school program. The program also has a school-aged program (E1) for children ages six through nine-years-old. This program is regulated through the Department of Education and is in a separate room inside the program. Jane Busch is the lead guide for this program. Ms. Busch is also an on-site supervisor for the licensed program. Ms. Busch has a BA in elementary education with a middle school endorsement. She has a MA in Montessori Education and has completed the Association Montessori International (A.M.I.) elementary training. Ms. Busch is NAC certified. She is the founder of this Montessori school.

The program partners with the Decorah School District to provide the voluntary four-year-old preschool program. The voluntary program operates Monday through Thursday from 8:00-11:30 am.

The school operates out of one classroom. The Montessori primary environment is referred to as "Children's House". An inspection of the room was completed. Windows provide natural lighting. The NEIM handbook states the program offers a "rich educational environment, including exercises for motor development, self-mastery, and programs in language, reading,

math, culture, sensorial, practical life, geography, science, technology, music and art." The goals of Montessori for children are several: it encourages self-discipline, self-knowledge, and independence, as well as enthusiasm for learning, an organized approach to problem-solving, and intellectual and social skills.

Montessori materials are classified in six major areas: Practical Life, Sensorial Skills, Mathematics, Language, Science and Social Studies, and The Arts. Work areas are established in each of these areas and children move at their own pace and according to their individual capabilities. The work areas were arranged so there was plenty of space for the children to do various activities. There was a good variety and supply of materials to accompany the work areas.

There are two bathrooms in the program for use by the children. There is one toilet and one sink in each bathroom. Handwashing procedures were posted. There is one sink in the classroom that is primarily used for dishes. The center is environmentally friendly and uses a new washcloth each time a child's hands are washed. Cots are used to nap. Naps are offered but are not required following the Montessori philosophy.

The curriculum is based on the Montessori principals of teaching. The staff also completed Creative Curriculum training and incorporate 10-15 hours each week into the program as part of the voluntary preschool grant. Ms. Lenehan completes GOLD assessments on the children who are part of the voluntary statewide grant. The program uses Fundamentals curriculum. The program has specific presentations that serve as lesson plans. The presentations were available for review on IPads. They use the Montessori Compass app to document the information. The guides have a plan each day and specific works for the children to learn.

There was a phone with emergency numbers in the Guide's office. Emergency fire and tornado procedures and evacuation diagrams were not posted by any of the program doors or outdoor exits in the program. Please post the evacuation diagrams near all the exits out of the classroom and the building. A daily schedule was posted.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. A radon test was completed in July 2023. The results were above the EPA guidelines which resulted in a radon mitigation system being placed in the building. Ms. Buresh did not have the results of the radon test. You should receive the results and have them available for review. When you get a radon mitigation system you should test again to make sure the levels are below 4.0. I recommend contacting a radon mitigation specialist to discuss the follow-up testing.

The annual fuel burning inspection was completed and no concerns were noted. A carbon monoxide detector was on site in the storage room off the dining area. Outlets were protected. The fire marshal inspection occurred on 11/28/23, with compliance on 01/05/24.

The program does not participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) but follow the guidelines. Parents provide the lunch for their children and the lunches are reviewed to make sure they meet the CACFP guidelines. The staff members document that each child brings a food or drink under each specific food group. Parents provide the morning snack for school and the afternoon snack for the children who stay for after school care. The program provides milk for the children. Children prepare their own snack under the supervision of leads.

There is a refrigerator and thermometers were present. Food items present at the program were stored according to NHSPS guidelines. There is a dishwasher on site. Allergies were confidentially posted.

The center uses bleach and water to sanitize the tables.

There is a fenced outdoor play area the program has developed. It is across the street from the program. It is naturalistic and does not have any climbing equipment. The area has all concrete. There is a dramatic play center. There are trees outside the fence that provide shade. There is a caterpillar tunnel for children to crawl through. There is a soccer net in the area and a basketball hoop. There is a sandbox with a cover. There is a picnic table and small chairs for the children to rest. The outside area has a shed for storage.

The program did not have a parent board in the new building. The parent board must include the mandatory reporter, childcare consultant and the handbook availability. You must also post the license. A no-smoking sign was posted at the entrance.

Staff and children files were reviewed at the time of the licensing visit. I reviewed six children files. They were in good condition. One file had an invalid immunization certificate because it was not on the mandated HHS form. This will not be cited because there was not a pattern of disregard.

I reviewed two staff files. The files had outdated fingerprint results. The staff members reported they recently did fingerprints but Ms. Buresh could not locate the results. If the results are not found the staff members will have to do the fingerprints again.

I reviewed policy and procedures, staff and parent handbooks. The necessary written emergency procedures and policies were present. Emergency Preparedness Plans have been completed.

Staff members are experienced and have worked together as a team for a long time. 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 wash their hands. They had conversations with the children about sharing and taking turns. Staff members provide the children with choices and were actively engaged in activities with the children. There are several visual cues in the classroom to assist the children. Teachers offer suggestions to the children and offer to help and allow the children to decide if they want the help. Staff members are patient and positive redirection was used when necessary. The children enjoyed their time at the center.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

Ms. Buresh states the program has dedicated teachers and they have longevity.

Ms. Buresh states the program is celebrating twenty years.

Ms. Buresh states all their teachers have some form of Montessori education or degree.

The program has organized, easy to read staff and children files and an organized licensing binder.

Ms. Buresh has received her National Administrator Credential (NAC).

Staff members participate in the WAGES program.

The program partners with the Decorah School District to provide the voluntary preschool program.

The program has an IQ4K level 1 that expires on 06/30/25.

The program offers a unique niche in the community and offers an alternative education setting for children ages three through six-years-old. The activities are child directed. The Montessori Method is about peace, respecting one's self and others and the community. They focus on being kind. They also focus on a love of nature.

The program partners with Keystone AEA to provide services to children with identified needs.

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

109.4(4): Requirements and procedures for mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse shall be posted where they can be read by staff and parents.
The program did not have a parent board.

109.4(5): Child Care Centers and Preschool Licensing Standards and Procedures shall be available in the center and a notice stating a copy is available for review. Contact information of the child care consultant shall be included in the notice.
The program did not have a parent board.

109.9(1)b: All files contain:A signed copy of DHS criminal history record check or any other permission form approved by the Department of public Safety for conducting an Iowa or national criminal history check. A copy of Request for Child Abuse Information.Copies of the results of Iowa records checks conducted.Copies of national criminal history check results.Any Department-issued documents sent to the center related to records check.
The files had outdated fingerprint results. The staff members reported they recently did fingerprints but Ms. Buresh could not locate the results. If the results are not found the staff members will have to do the fingerprints again.

109.10(15)b: Emergency instructions, phone numbers, and diagrams for fire, tornado, and flood shall be visibly posted and documented at least once a month for fire and tornado. Records shall be maintained for current and previous year.
Emergency fire and tornado procedures and evacuation diagrams were not posted by any of the program doors or outdoor exits in the program. Please post the evacuation diagrams near all the exits out of the classroom and the building.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

A full license is issued. 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.