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

Name of Center: Growing Minds Early Learning Center **Enrollment:** 52 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 30419

Street: 608 West 4th ST **City:** Waterloo Iowa **Zip** 50702 **County:** Black Hawk

Mailing Address: 608 W 4th ST, Waterloo, IA, 50702

Director's Name: Meghan Smith & Ed Gruenwald **Phone Number:** 319-236-2063

On-Site Supervisor(s): Mary Neisen **E-Mail:** grinandgrow10@gmail.com

Date(s) of Visit: 07-01-2024

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: 10-24-2023

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: X Infants (0-23 mo.) X 2 Years X Preschool-Age 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	15	23	60	0	98
Summer					0

QRS Rating: N/A

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 08-01-2023 to 08-01-2025
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Becky Frost **Date:** 07-15-2024

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

N/A

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

On 07/01/24 I made an unannounced off year licensing visit to Growing Minds Early Learning Center, previously known as Grin and Grow Ltd-West 4th Street, in Waterloo. I met with Meghan Smith, the co-director and Mary Neisen, the on-site supervisor/program coordinator. Ms. Smith started with the program in January 2023. She has an AA in education and several years of experience in childcare. Ms. Niesen has mostly been with the program since 1995. She left the center in May 2019 but returned in January 2020. Ms. Neisen has her CDA. I also briefly met with Ed Gruenwald, the co-director of the program/director of operations and development for the center. Mr. Gruenwald started with the program in October 2019 and became the co-director in January 2022. He has a MS in forest recreation resource management. The center employes 17 staff members and one substitute.

The childcare center was founded in 1943 and is celebrating 80 years in the business. The center is located inside the First Congregational United Church of Christ, but the program is not affiliated with the church. The program operates Monday through Friday from 6:00 am until 6:00 pm. It serves children who are infants until they start Kindergarten. There are currently 52 children enrolled.

The program utilizes the following classrooms: infant room (Little Ducklings), toddler room (Cardinals), two-year-old room (Parrots), two and one-half through three-year-old room (Penguins), four-year-old room (Blue Jays) and a four and five-year-old room (Flamingos). An inspection of each room was completed. Windows provide natural lighting. The rooms are decorated with 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 for the older children.

The centers observed on the day of the licensing visit include library, Lego/blocks, table toys, games, puzzles, playdough, transportation, art, dramatic play, 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 child level, so they were easily accessible to the children.

There are two bathrooms in the hallway on the upper level that are used by the children. The boy's bathroom has one toilet, two urinals and two sinks and the girl's bathroom has two toilets and two sinks. There is also a changing table in the girl's bathroom. Handwashing and diaper changing procedures were posted. There are two bathrooms and a changing table that are shared by the Cardinals and Parrot's room. Each bathroom has one toilet and one sink and procedures were posted. There are additional bathrooms in the church.

The program uses a variety of resources to develop their lesson plans. Activities are based on weekly themes. Each teacher prepares their own lesson plans. The preschool children receive ASQ assessments. Lesson plans were available to review in each room. The program offers free preschool for three and four-year-old children for the families who qualify through ECI-Cedar Valley Promise. This is a state grant. Free preschool is Monday through Friday 8:00 am until 1:00 pm. The center uses Tucker Turtle "turtle techniques" to help children learn to calm themselves.

There was a phone with emergency numbers in the classrooms and the kitchen. The center's address and phone number must be added to the posting. Emergency fire and tornado procedures and evacuation diagrams were posted by most program doors and outdoor exits throughout the center. Post the emergency evacuation diagram near the two doors to the Parrot room from the Cardinal room. Daily schedules were posted in each room.

I reviewed documentation of monthly fire and tornado drills. I reviewed documentation of monthly playground inspections. A radon test was completed in December 2022 and must be repeated in two years. The annual fuel burning inspection was completed and no concerns were noted. A carbon monoxide detector was on site in each of the classrooms. Outlets were protected. The fire marshal inspection occurred on 10/24/23.

The program is using the Brightwheel app to communicate with parents and are also completing paper daily sheets.

I observed and discussed diaper changing procedures with staff members and proper procedures are followed.

The center participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The center provides breakfast, lunch and a morning and afternoon snack. Trisa Edler is the cook but was not present during my visit. The center uses a four-week rotation of menus, and the menus change for spring/summer and fall/winter. Menus are posted outside each of the classrooms on the parent board.

The center provides formula, cereal and baby food for the infants. Bottles are prepared in the class and returned to the kitchen to be cleaned and sanitized.

The kitchen was observed. The children's dietary special needs were posted. There is one refrigerator and thermometers were present. There is an additional refrigerator and upright freezer in the basement and thermometers were present. An industrial dishwasher is used to wash dishes. There are also two sinks available. The pantry is located off the Blue Jay classroom. Food items were stored according to NHSPS guidelines.

There are refrigerators in each childcare room and thermometers were present.

Member's Mark Sanitizer is used to sanitize the food tables and Clorox All Purpose Disinfectant is used to disinfect the changing tables.

The parent information is located inside the entrance. 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 church has a fenced in playground area that is used by the childcare center. Woodchips are used for fall surfacing. There is a piece of climbing equipment with a slide. There is a grassy area that has a couple tunnels. There is a slide on the grass that requires fall surfacing because it has a fall height greater than 18 inches. Please move this to the woodchip area. Trees provide shade. There is a sandbox.

Staff members had good teamwork. They were spread out inside the classrooms and outside to provide supervision and to interact with the children. I observed staff members counting children as they left the room to go outside. They were enthusiastic and provided the children with praise and choices. They were nurturing when children became upset. They were patient and used positive redirection when necessary. Children sat on staff members' laps as staff members actively played with the children. They encouraged the children to use their imaginations. They talked with the children about sharing. The children appeared to enjoy their time at the center.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

The center is working on IQ4K and have a goal of obtaining level 1.

Ms. Smith states she loves the diversity among the staff members and the children. They have children and staff members who speak different languages.

Ms. Smith states staff members have a good rapport with parents. Their staff members are the cheerleaders for the children and they want what is best for them.

Ms. Smith states she enjoys her direct relationship with parents and helping in the classrooms. She is building her skill set.

The center is in a secured building and there are cameras in the classrooms.

Staff members are good at getting the children outside for gross motor play.

The center uses the Brightwheel app to communicate with parents.

Ms. Neisen states they have increased the pay of the staff members. The lead teachers make $15.25/ hour and assistants make $14.25/ hour. There is a sliding fee scale if the employee is educated.

Staff members receive childcare benefits for working at the center. After one month of employment, they receive 100% discount off their oldest child, 50 % off their next oldest child and 25% off the next oldest child during the hours the employee is working or while they are on paid time off.

The center has scholarships to assist with childcare fees.

Ms. Neisen has longevity with the childcare center. She is a great mentor to new staff members and she has good knowledge of licensing standards. She is organized and great at her job.

Mr. Gruenwald has a great working relationship with Ms. Smith and Ms. Neisen. He is great at handling the financial side of the business.

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.