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

Name of Center: St Pius X Early Learning Center **Enrollment:** 237 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 31443

Street: 4925 Council ST NE **City:** Cedar Rapids Iowa **Zip** 52402 **County:** Linn

Mailing Address: 4925 Council St NE, Cedar Rapids, IA, 52402

Director's Name: Connie Schulte **Phone Number:** 319-200-4546

On-Site Supervisor(s): Sara Frew; Michelle McDermott; Michelle Schultz-Schroud **E-Mail:** cschulte@stpiusxschoolcr.com

Date(s) of Visit: 05-16-2023

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: 03-24-2022

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 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	28	18	144	237	427
Summer					0

QRS Rating: 2

RECOMMENDATION FOR LICENSE:	
X	**FULL** license from 05-01-2022 to 05-01-2024
	PROVISIONAL license from
	DENIAL of initial application
	SUSPENSION of license
	REVOCATION of license

Licensing Consultant: Amy Lyons **Date:** 06-06-2023

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

Not applicable.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

St. Pius X Early Learning Center (St. Pius X ELC) commenced operations in August, 2014. This is a non-profit program located adjacent to the St. Pius X Catholic Elementary School. St. Pius X ELC is the Early Childhood division of St. Pius X School under the authority of the St. Pius X / St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Board of Education. St. Pius X ELC operates year-round Monday through Friday from 6:30am to 6:00pm. The program serves children age infant through school-age. Enrollment as of this report is 237.

Director of St. Pius X ELC is Connie Schulte. Ms. Schulte as been the director of the program since it commenced operations in August, 2014. Ms. Schulte has over 25 years of experience being employed in an early learning center and continues to participate in much child development related training.

On 5/16/2023, program space was observed.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

St. Pius X ELC is a well established program offering many different early learning and childcare opportunities to help meet the needs of families and children throughout the community. In August 2023, the program will be celebrating 9 years. Congratulations!

The mission of St. Pius X ELC is "...to promote the development of each individual to her/his fullest potential through an educational program permeated with a Christian Spirit and Christian values...children develop spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially through a Christian atmosphere..."

St. Pius X ELC has the following website for families and the community to learn about the program: https://stpiusxschoolcr.com/.

St. Pius X ELC has a history of participating in quality initiatives including CACFP and local quality initiatives. The program has achieved a QRS 2 Star.

Ownership and management of St. Pius X ELC has remained consistent. Director Ms. Schulte has years of experience working with children and managing a childcare program. Ms. Schulte has been an evaluator for a local quality initiative. Ms. Schulte continues to be a mentor to other childcare programs and within the early childhood community helping to improve quality and bridge gaps in programming. The program's management team (e.g. Ms. Schulte, Ms. Frew) is organized and has noteworthy systems of organization in place to help ensure administrative items are completed as required and maintained in a secure manner. Ms. Schulte and Ms. Frew are knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own program's policies and procedures. As a result, the program experiences smooth daily operations.

Since the last review, St. Pius X ELC continues to retain many seasoned employees as well as hire a few new staff. Many of the staff have been with the program since it opened in 2014 reporting celebrating 9 years, 6 years, 3 years and 2 years

employment with St. Pius X ELC. Ms. Schulte talked about being incredibly appreciative and proud of their highly qualified team of employees. Ms. Schulte discussed having 3 all staff annual professional growth days built into the calendar, having two staff participate in TEACH and have 10 staff participate in Wage$. Ms. Schulte talked enhancing the program's orientation and on-going training policies and procedures through the use of one-on-one meetings and mini videos in key areas such as playground safety and effective communication.

St. Pius X was officially established as a parish in 1959. The first building officially opened in 1961 and served as the parish school and church. St. Pius X Catholic School has been part of the community for 62 years, and how the childcare came to fruition, is richly embedded in their history. St. Pius X ELC is located inside St. Pius X Catholic School. The childcare program functions under the jurisdiction of the St. Pius X Catholic School Board consisting of elected parish members, school principal, and church pastor. Building and grounds are well maintained. Since the last review, a new main entrance/exit door was installed. Future goals include roof replacement and playground improvements. Furnishings and materials continue to be updated and/or replaced as needed. School administrators, school custodial staff, and school kitchen personnel help ensure the program is sanitary and hazard free each day. The school kitchen is inspected at least annually by the health department. The center's chef has been providing culinary delights to the childcare children for 9 years! here is an AED on-site. The program continues to apply for and receive grants. During the last year, the program received a STEM grant obtaining Bee-Bots and "Contents and Containers" with supported training on the materials.

St. Pius X ELC has emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. St. Pius X ELC successfully navigated through the 2019 Polar Vortex, 8/10/2020 Derecho Storm and 2019 health pandemic.

St. Pius X ELC continues efforts at optimal communication between the program/staff and families. The program has organized parent-staff/program information centers, offers regular program newsletters, utilizes technological communication resources, and supports family programming activities. Family activities have included snack and TIES/learn parenting classes. Ms. Schulte talked about the continued positive family feedback they receive as well as their increased enrollment. A "Bursting with Gratitude" staff display was observed as well as numerous posted notes of appreciation (from families to staff).

Classrooms continue to be arranged in a thoughtful manner with learning at the forefront. Since the last review, some classrooms were re-arranged to help meet the needs of all children served. Children's accomplishments are displayed in various program areas. Ms. Schulte discussed how since the last review, play based enrichments have increased (e.g. Management and staff shared details about a very cleverly staff-planned farm experience that happened in the 3yo preschool room early May 2023!) and Handwriting Without Tears has been introduced. St. Pius X ELC curriculum additionally incorporates "Character Counts", a religious component, garden experiences, shared sensory boxes, on-site guest speaker events, off-site field trips experiences, open houses, parent/teacher conferences, holiday celebrations, buddy reading program, crafts, outdoor activities, community service projects, spring graduation ceremony, teacher-inspired activities and "STEM" exploration. Garden projects have historically been part of "Feed Iowa First" which helps combat food insecurity throughout the community. Future curriculum goals include adding an assessment component.

St. Pius X ELC summer programming 2023 registration has been well-underway. Insightful, exceptional summer planning by seasoned staff continues to allow the children to have a plethora of fun while socializing and learning! Activities will include gardening, off-site field trips (e.g. local swimming pools, Iowa Children's Museum, Maquoketa Caves, local parks with trails, splash pads, bike events, ice skating, visits to a local farm), on-site large gross motor activities, on-site guest speakers with traveling events or storytelling, and theme days. The program continues to maintain the staff-created unique outdoor guided movement paths for children to be able to develop their gross motor skills as well as the clever indoor space inspired sensory path (e.g. "Hop to the Spaceship", Countdown, Orbit the Planets). Fundraising efforts (e.g. blood drives) also help St. Pius X ELC program obtain new materials.

St. Pius X ELC partners well with those throughout the community including the local school districts, early access persons, local businesses, CCR&R, TIES, and health professionals.

The infant room has a “no shoe” policy and supports safe sleep practices. Great ideas continue to be observed for identifying and organizing infant bottles and pacifiers!

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. Head start has policies and procedures in place for hand washing, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. Staff were able to verbalize and engage in these processes. Cleaning checklists and daily sanitation reminders were observed to be posted in various areas of the center.

On the day of the monitoring visit, staff were nurturing and attentive to the children's needs. Areas of study included camping, Earth Day, spring, octagon shape, butterflies and bugs. It is noteworthy that each classroom was observed to be in various stages of studying caterpillar-butterfly metamorphosis with child lead discussions and observations happening as children freely observed their room's butterfly habitat. Children were noted to be greatly enjoyed this experience! Children have access to an array of materials (e.g. books, imaginative play options, building materials, sensory items, crafts) that

encourage innovative play. Activities observed were many (e.g. infant cares, outdoor large gross motor play, group discussion with book reading and fingerplays, crafts, book reading, outdoor sand, water and container play opportunities). Staff provided a companionable presence allowing children to have many choices in their learning play experiences. Staff were observed communicating with the children verbally, with picture cards, and through sign language. Routine transitions (e.g. clean up activities, food service rituals, naptime events) worked smoothly into the program's welcoming and cooperative play environment. Staff were overheard providing children with many words of encouragement and engaging children in much meaningful discussion. Staff were observed warmly greeting families arriving for child pick-up. Children responded well to staff and appeared to be truly enjoying their day.

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

None noted.

V. SPECIAL NOTES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Continue to ensure lower classroom cabinets are child-proofed or contents remain child friendly.

The school-age outdoor playground area is showing ware (e.g. cracked slides/equipment, rust). Some leeway with that space is being allowed with an understanding that a plan (with timeline) is being developed for replacement and updating of the area including equipment. Since the ELC utilizes the outdoor school-age playground areas year-round and daily as weather permits, please continue to ensure they remain part of the future crucial planning and development/equipment replacement processes.

Push plate buttons continue to be strongly recommended at the main entrance/exit to the St. Pius X ELC childcare building as well as the entrance/exit from the childcare building into the St. Pius X school building. Automatic doors can provide greater accessibility for all.

Licensing continues to strongly recommend a dishwasher be installed in the young infant room. If a dishwasher was available, infant room staff would have more time to dedicate to individual infant cares rather than hand washing bottles, toys, and so on.

With the immensely detailed and highly advanced ELC outdoor gardening projects, an expanded fully equipped center kitchen continues to be strongly supported. This will allow for better on-site meal/snack preparation and more advanced classroom cooking projects.

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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.