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

Name of Center: The Growing Patch Learning Center **Enrollment:** 33 **License ID No. (Reapplications)** 48450

Street: 702 Main St **City:** Center Point Iowa **Zip** 52213 **County:** Linn

Mailing Address: 700 South St, Urbana, IA, 52345

Director's Name: Jennifer Liedtke **Phone Number:** 319-343-0472

On-Site Supervisor(s): Nicole Hellberg, Austin Dougherty, Makalia Dircks, Jamee Wiebold, Kandice Dircks, Shayla Slager **E-Mail:** growingpatch2017@gmail.com

Date(s) of Visit: 06-17-2024

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

LICENSING VISITS

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

Signed Application (470-0722) Received X **Yes** **No** **NA** **Date Signed:** 06-02-2021

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

Date Inspected: 02-22-2023

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 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	18	12	10	7	47
Summer					0

QRS Rating: 3

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: Amy Lyons **Date:** 07-01-2024

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

Not applicable.

II. IDENTIFY THE AREAS OBSERVED ON THE VISIT:

The Growing Patch Learning Center operates the following two programs throughout the community: The Growing Patch Learning Center (TGPLC) and Growing Patch Summer Camp (GPSC). Specifically, this license is for TGPLC. TGPLC has been in operation since 3/1/2017. TGPLC operates year-round, Monday through Friday from 6:30am to 5:30pm. The program offers childcare to children age infant through school-age. Current enrollment is 33.

Multi-site original founding owner and director is Jennifer Liedtke. Ms. Liedtke has a BS degree in secondary education, has a current State of Iowa teaching license, has over 10 years of experience working with children, and continues to participate in much child development related training. On-site supervisor (assistant director) Nicole Hellberg has over 10 years of experience working with children and continues to participate in much child development related training. On-site supervisor Austin Dougherty has completed 2 years of a 4 year degree in elementary and special education. Mr. Dougherty is a paraeducator with the local school, has several years experience working with children and continues to participate in much child development related training. On-site supervisor Makalia Dircks has been employed by TGPLC since 2018, has experience working with children and continues to participate in much child development related training. On-site supervisor Jamee Wiebold has been employed by TGLP since 2019, has an AS degree in Early Childhood Education and continues to participate in much child development related training. On-site supervisor Kandice Dircks has been employed by TGPLC since 2021, has experience working with children and continues to participate in much child development related training. On-site supervisor Shayla Slager has been employed by TGPLC since 2022, has experience working with children and continues to participate in much child development related training.

On 6/17/2024, program space was observed.

III. IDENTIFY THE OBSERVED STRENGTHS OF THE CENTER:

TGPLC and GPSC offer a variety of early learning programming and childcare to help meet the needs of children and families in the community. TGPLC and GPSC are located in predominantly rural areas and accept a variety of funding sources. In March 2024, TGPLC celebrated their 7th year of business. GPSC commenced operations on 5/31/2022 and is currently celebrating their 3rd year of business. Congratulations!

TGPLC and GPSC sponsor a social media page for those in the community to learn more about their programs.

The mission of TGPLC and GPSC is "…to provide a safe, developmentally appropriate environment for infants, toddlers, preschool and school-aged children….focus is to provide a stimulating early care and educational experience which promotes each child's social/emotional, physical, and cognitive development…our goal is to support each child's desire to be lifelong learners."

TGPLC participates in quality initiatives including CACFP and IQ4K. TGPLC achieved IQ4K 3-Star. The program has historically been recognized for their support of CPU high school students.

Ms. Liedtke is a local entrepreneur invested in children and the community. Ownership and management (e.g. multi-site owner and director Ms. Liedtke, on-site supervisors) of TGPLC and GPSC has remained consistent. Management is organized, and in turn, TGPLC and GPSC operate smoothly. The programs have noteworthy systems of organization in place to help ensure administrative items are completed and maintained as required. Management team (e.g. Ms. Liedtke, Nicole Hellberg, Austin Dougherty, Makalia Dircks, Jamee Wiebold) is knowledgeable of licensing guidelines as well as their own program's policies and procedures.

Since the last monitoring visit, the program has retained seasoned staff as well as hired a few new ones. Staff reported celebrating 7 years and 1 year with TGPLC. During the monitoring visit, kitchen staff reported being the substitute cook who has been able to provide culinary delights to children on and off for 7 years. Ms. Liedtke reported having several staff with early childhood degrees and having all lead staff trained in PBIS. The program supports onboarding of new employees within the first 90 days which includes the required trainings as well as training in curriculum and CACFP. Documentation reviewed indicates staff professional growth continues to exceed licensing requirements. The program utilities TEACH. Ms. Liedtke talked about how she is investing in her employees by encouraging professional goals, offering flexible scheduling whenever possible, offering competitive wages/benefits, incorporating a training based pay scale, displaying staff appreciation whenever possible, and having teacher work/professional development days built into the year.

TGPLC and GPSC have emergency plans, policies, and procedures in place which are annually reviewed and updated as needed. The programs successfully navigated through the 2019 winter Polar Vortex, 2019 health (covid-19) pandemic, 8/10/20 Derecho Storm, 2021 food supply issues, 2022 infant formula shortages and 2023 air quality alerts.

The building continues to receive extremely noteworthy and exceptional replacements and refreshes! Upon arrival, one can see the changes that occurred to the older children's outdoor play space (e.g. surfacing, fencing) with goals to redo the infant/toddler outdoor play area in the near future. New flooring, new cabinets, new countertops, updated paint, new diapering areas, new area washable rugs, new windows, and new materials/furnishings continue to be updated throughout all classrooms. Ms. Liedtke reported a goal for classroom remodeling to be finished in fall 2024 (with only 1 room left and some finishing touches including trim). Center kitchen is organized, maintained, and sanitary.

Classrooms continue to be arranged in a thoughtful manner with learning at the forefront. Since the last review, the older and younger infant classrooms switched classroom space to better meet the needs of the community and children served. Children's accomplishments (e.g. artwork) are displayed in various program areas. Ms. Liedtke discussed how the program switched primary curriculum to Learning Beyond Paper which aligns well with Iowa's ELS. Ms. Liedtke acknowledged their full-time curriculum coordinator who holds an early childhood degree and helps teachers plan, implement and carry-out curriculum. Curriculum also incorporates off-site field trip experiences (e.g. local dairy farm, local parks/splash pad), on-site guest speaker events (e.g. annual CPU Children's Theater experience, Easter bunny), enrichment activities (e.g. gardening, water days, butter making, butterfly metamorphosis observation), themed days, and holiday/seasonal parties.

TGPLC and GPSC 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.

TGPLC and GPSC collaborate well with community partners including Child Care Resource and Referral, local AEA, local school district, local businesses, city recreational department, and health professionals. Ms. Liedtke discussed their partnership with the local school district that has included some transportation.

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. This program has policies and procedures in place for hand washing, cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. 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 recent study included summer, insects and bugs. Children have access to an array of materials (e.g. books, imaginative play options, building materials, sensory items, crafts, bubbles outdoors) that encourage innovative play. Activities observed were many (e.g. infant cares, outdoor large gross motor play, center play). Staff provided a companionable presence allowing children to have many choices in their play experiences. Routine transitions (e.g. clean up activities) worked smoothly into the program's welcoming and cooperative play environment. Throughout the classrooms, staff were overheard providing children with many words of encouragement, utilizing positive redirection when needed and encouraging the use of social graces. 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:

Please consider adding a platform step-up for children to observe outside from the classroom window as several were seen having a desire to do so.

Continue to ensure postings are updated as needed (e.g. lesson plans, menus).

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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.