
IOWA WESTERN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CENTER

by Jean Stiehl

“Training, equipping, and sending out” is our motto. We are **Iowa Western Early Childhood Education Center**. We began our existence in 1971 as a half day preschool program which provided a training site for students studying early childhood education. In 1982, the center expanded to provide full day programming. The building was remodeled in 1999 to include space for two preschool classrooms and a toddler room. Infant care was added to our program in 2007. We added another infant room in 2016. Our mission is to provide a unique learning experience for young children. We provide a nurturing, child-centered learning environment that meets the interests, ages, developmental needs, and diversity of each child. The learning environment at our center fosters exploration through hands-on developmentally appropriate materials that ensures access to all children. Social, emotional, cognitive, and physical domains of development are considered through planned activities that foster the development of each individual child.

The center is staffed with degreed teachers who have backgrounds in early childhood education, child development, and other related fields. Each classroom has a Lead Associate with a bachelor’s degree and an Associate with an associate’s degree in early childhood education. The center serves as a training laboratory for students studying Early Childhood Education at Iowa Western Community College. An excellent adult/child ratio is maintained in our center by our paid staff and our laboratory students along with other student employees.

The children’s learning experience is supported through the partnership with the Early Childhood Studies academic program. Each day the ECS students engage the children in one-on-one and group learning opportunities under the guidance of the center’s teaching staff. This affords our center a consistently low child-teacher ratio as well as an opportunity to effectively incorporate current educational theories into everyday practice for the students to experience.

In addition to being licensed by the state of Iowa, the Iowa Western ECE Center is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The NAEYC awards accreditation to programs which have demonstrated high quality care and education to children.

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Our first accreditation took place in the late 1990’s. Since then we have pursued to renew our accreditation every five years. This has helped to keep us updated on the most recent, forward thinking, and expansive ideas in the field of early childhood education. Our staff is able to show

the students appropriate care and learning experiences for the children. Being accredited has helped to keep the staff and instructors moving in the direction to become a mature and a well-rounded educator. Everyone involved with the accreditation process is helped to understand the vision and purpose for the improvement of the care and education of young children through items that represent the [10 standards in the accreditation system](#). This gives us an assurance that our curriculum and practices are aligned with the national standards for school readiness. At first the accreditation process may seem overwhelming but once you get rolling, you are able to see the improvements that develop in the program. In the process of applying or renewing accreditation, the NAYEC accreditation team is there to support your work.

By being involved with NAEYC, we have achieved other acknowledgment in the local community for providing high quality care. NAEYC accreditation helps to achieve 18 points toward the application process of the Quality Rating System, which is achieved after an observation from Iowa University Extension and Outreach in partnership with Child Care Resource & Referral. The standards and items that are focused on in the NAEYC accreditation process helps to ensure high points earned in the QRS rating.



By being involved with NAEYC, as members and by achieving accreditation, the team at Iowa Western Early Childhood Education has stayed focused on what is best practice in applying the most recent research-based theory in play and brain development to our work with young children. We are so proud to be a part of this association and to what it brings to the early childhood community. We would encourage anyone that wants to provide a future that is bright for children and families, to become a part of this association. We have receive over \$60,000 in grants over the years through the Quality Rating System in Iowa. This would not have been possible without being an accredited NAEYC child care center.