

Introduction

The YMC Child Development Center has been established since September 2000. The current facility was open on November 1, 2004. It was constructed to meet the needs of children.

The center has been a 2-star facility since 2001. We have continued to maintain this level and in April of 2009 the YMCA Child Development Center obtained its national accreditation and became a 3-star facility through the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation.

The staff is dedicated to provide children with the best learning experience. They uphold a degree of professionalism by continuing to learn of current events taking place in early childhood education. Teachers work close and partner with parents to build a strong relationship with the children's best interest in mind.

The YMCA believes in building character by upholding the character values: Honesty, Responsibility, Respect, and Caring.

The YMCA Mission Statement: To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

We build strong kids, strong families, and strong communities.

Goals for Children

- For each child to learn at his/her pace
- For each child to develop strong and positive attitude toward school and learning
- For each child to develop a love for literacy
- For each child to have positive interaction with the child's school
- For each child to enjoy all experiences received from school
- For each child to develop good work habits
- For each child to follow center rules
- For each child to develop the foundation for mathematics
- For each child to develop foundations for reading and writing
- For each child to develop listening skills
- For each child to develop social skills
- For each child to develop small and large motor skills
- For each child to develop a positive relationship with teachers
- For each family to believe in the program

Curriculum Model

It is the goal for the YMCA Child Development Center that every experience a child has, including routines like naptime and family style meals are a learning experience that is developmentally appropriate. All activities are centered on individual and special needs of the child. These practices include classroom learning centers, outside play/outside learning centers and cooking experiences. All the learning centers focus on the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language development of each child.

The curriculum used is the Creative Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers, Infants and Toddler activities, Literacy Play and Creative Pre-K. The curriculum includes activities, arrangement of the environment and materials, teachers and parent input and teacher-child interaction. Organization and management are a major factor influencing the quality of an early childhood program. When teachers are organized, they are free to interact with the children and parents become more involved. The more teachers are satisfied with their jobs they are more likely to interact positively with the children. Both English and Spanish languages are taught throughout the curriculum.

The curriculum used is built on the following beliefs:

- Developmentally appropriate practices are practiced
- Children's individual and special needs are met when they learn much of what they need to know through play exploration
- Children benefit more from an early childhood program when teachers and parents have input, are involved and believe in the program and its goals
- Parents value the program when it is well organized
- Video times are only for ages 2 to 5. No children under the age of 2 watch video's or T.V.
- Parents are more likely to volunteer in the classroom when the classroom is well organized, when they can make significant contributions, when they have specific duties, when they are given daily progress reports and attend regular parent/teacher conferences to discuss their child's assessment
- Children learn best when the atmosphere is calm and relaxed
- Children learn from first hand experiences followed by symbolizing experiences
- For learning basic concepts like classification, socialization, seriation, visual skills, one-to-one correspondence, and auditory skills, children need repetition of the same basic activity using a variety of materials
- Children develop cognitive and language skills best when the teacher put into words what the child is doing or stimulates the child to put into words what is being done
- Children develop positive attitudes about school, which are permanent, when the routines and materials are well organized
- Early experiences with literature have positive effect on children's attitude toward reading and ability to learn to read
- The development of a healthy self-concept is related to development in all other areas. Self-concept is enhanced, and children are more comfortable and relaxed when their

culture is incorporated into all aspects of the curriculum in a natural way. Cultural activities should be used to develop basic concepts

- Children experience optimum development when activities are hard enough to challenge them, but easy enough for them to be successful
- All children in the program have a right to developmentally appropriate activities including rapidly developing children and slower developing children
- Children's emotional development is learned more when they develop positive relationships with their teachers, which is possible when adults are nurturing, and with other children when teachers facilitate the development of social skills
- Children benefit from outdoor play. Children need the freedom of outdoor play. Large motor development, which primarily occurs outdoors, serves as a foundation for the development in all other areas

How The Curriculum Is Put Into Practice

The first step in putting the curriculum into practice is to design the environment by establishing a daily schedule, limits, arrangement of space, and arrangement of materials. All staff should work on this planning together, following the principles presented.

Daily Schedule

The daily schedule is in place daily. It is designed to eliminate as many transitions as possible, while allowing long periods of time for free play. Some principles to follow in designing the daily schedule are:

- Plan as few transitions as possible
- Provide at least 45 minutes (preferable an hour) for indoor self-selected activities for each half day
- Provide at least 45 minutes for outdoor play for each half day
- Alternate quiet and active times
- Alternate free times with structured or directed times
- Provide two short group times per half day or three per full day
- Much of the day should be self-selected activities, so the group times should be short: 15-20 minutes for preschool age and older and 10-15 minutes for infants and toddlers

Once set, the order of events in the daily schedule should be followed. Although preschool children cannot yet tell time, they certainly can and should remember the order of events. So, although bad weather may shorten the outdoor time and lengthen the indoor time, the order throughout the day should not change. Even special events like holiday celebrations, special visitors, and field trips should be scheduled fit into the blocks of time established. A special visitor would be, for example, scheduled for group time, not during self-selected time.

Limits

The classroom staff decides on limits for the children's behavior. There should be as few limits as possible, since the reason for the limits should be to protect the children or to protect property. They should not be arbitrary, like sitting with hands folded or standing in line.

The limits should be written in positive words with the action word first, as it would be spoken to the child. The limits are then posted in the classroom at the child's eye level as a visual reminder to the child and for use by students and substitutes.

Arrangement of Materials

The materials for each center are arranged in the center on low open shelves or on hooks at the child's eye level. Only materials planned for children's use are visible. All other materials, such as teacher materials, toys not planned for the day, and broken toys, are stored outside the classroom. All materials that the children can see, and reach should be available for them to work with.

It is very important that materials are arranged neatly to communicate to the child the importance of his/her work and to prevent any unnecessary restriction on the child's natural curiosity.

Materials on open shelves are stored in bins, preferably transparent ones. If picture labels are used, the same picture/label is on the shelf and on the bin.

The materials are placed on open shelves without stacking and with at least 3 inches of space between each activity, so children can see what is available to work with.

Equipment

It is important that there is enough variety and quantity of materials to keep children interested and to accomplish the goals that each child will learn to enjoy school and will progress at his/her optimum developmental rate. It is important that there is enough quantity of certain items like blocks and table toys for the children to completely develop their ideas and stretch their imaginations. For this reason, minimum amounts of certain kinds of equipment are listed. The amounts listed below are for a classroom of 20 children and would need to be modified when the program has larger groups of children. The materials listed would not all be out at the same time, but the staff should have access to them, so they can rotate the materials and change the environment periodically, as well be described later.

Blocks

- Unit blocks-complete sets (Mostly basic units, half units, and double units)
- Hollow blocks- complete set (50 blocks)

Housekeeping

- One set of basic housekeeping furniture (stove, refrigerator, sink, table, and chairs, and storage for clothes)
- Cash register
- Baby bed
- 4-6 large dolls of different ethnic groups
- Miscellaneous props such as dishes, doll clothes, ironing board, or high chair

Manipulatives

- Activities to promote counting, sorting, seriating, association of set and symbol, one-to-one matching and part/whole relationships
- Some activities should be self-correcting, and some should be open-ended/ multiple use activities
- Visual games like lotto's and concentration, pictures, flannel board activities, letter activities, and rhyming activities

Table Toys

- Sets of construction type table toys such as Lego's Bristle Blocks, Ring-a-Majigs, and Crystal Climbers
- These sets should be large enough for 2-3 children to work together, so usually that is 2-3 sets as they appear in catalogs

Reading/Writing Area

- Quality books in good condition. Staff needs to have access to these many books. This could include a planned rotation with other centers or classrooms or supplementing with public library book. Various books are located in the resource room.

Music/Listening Area

- Tape player, assortment of tapes including music, musical instruments

Discovery Area

- Containers for animals, magnets, magnifying glasses, live plants, assortment of natural objects such as rocks, shells, nuts, seeds

Population Control

- Staff establishes limits on how many children can work in each area. The limit is set based on the amount of space and materials. The purpose of limiting the number of children is to structure the area so that it is likely that the children will have enough materials and space to work to their maximum potential and to foster social skills development. The total number of children who can work in all areas should total more than the number of children in the group.

Arrangement of Space

The room is divided in distinct learning centers. The boundary of each learning center is clearly defined by furniture or change of floor covering. The room is divided into the following centers:

- Blocks
- House or Dramatic Play
- Listening/Music (May be combined with language)
- Table Toys (May be combined with other areas)
- Manipulatives
- Discovery/Science

- Writing (Especially for older preschoolers)
- Art

As the room is set up, consideration is given to group time space. For each 10 children, there should be a space large enough for those children to assemble with a teacher, or for each 20 children, a space large enough for those children to assemble with two teachers.

Guidelines to follow in arranging the space are:

- Separate quiet areas from noisy areas
- Maintain a clear path
- Use the arrangement of furniture and open shelves to clearly define the boundaries of each learning center
- Avoid large open space
- Include at least one soft, private space for children
- Leave no more than 4 feet between open storage of materials for children and the space you intend for children to work with those materials
- Remove everything from the children's reach and sight that the children cannot get out during free time (i.e. Materials to use later in the day or during group time)
- Place coat storage near either the door to the outdoor place space or near the door where the children enter

What Takes Place During Self-Selected Activities

During self-selected activity time, children may choose to work any place where there is an opening (number of children who may work in an area is established by the staff and posted on the wall in each area). Once a child has selected an activity, he/she is free to work there until he/she decides he/she is finished. The child is not asked to leave to give another child a turn or to "share". This is not necessary because there are plenty of interesting activities and children need to be able to work as long as they are interested in an activity to increase their attention span. When the child has finished, he/she puts the material away and chooses another area or another activity.

Teachers are often concerned when a child consistently chooses the same area. Children usually are capable of choosing where they need to work. If a child continues to over-choose an area or to avoid an area, the staff may agree to limit the child's choice in one of the following ways:

- Dismiss the child from group time and ask him/her to choose any area except the repeatedly chosen area
- Dismiss the child and ask him/her to work in a specified area before choosing something else.

The teacher's role with self-selected activities begins before the children arrive. This is time to plan the activities that will be available and prepare the materials. Each staff is given planning time weekly. It is very important to have everything ready before the children arrive so that the teacher is free to interact with the children and parents. Being prepared also helps produce a calm, relaxed environment.

If the space used for self-selected activities is used for something else first, the materials can be arranged on trays ready to set out. For example, if tables used for art are used for breakfast first, the teacher can prepare all art materials on trays and then put the art materials on the table when it has been cleared.

The teacher's role with self-selected activities is that of a facilitator. He/she puts the children's observations into words, asks questions, adds materials according to the children's interests, suggests different ways to experiment with materials, encourages and extends interest. The teacher's role with each area is discussed below:

Art

- Demonstrate techniques as applicable
- Make sure there are enough materials to work with
- Help children evaluate their own work, help children evaluate the aesthetic quality of materials
- Give children just enough assistance to make success possible
- Encourage children to work longer
- Put into words the child's activity ("You chose all red pieces")
- Remind children to use materials correctly, encourage children to make decisions

Block/House Area

- Put children's work into words ("you made a design using two small blocks")
- Extend children's work
- Help children to move to the next stage of block building
- Help children with low imagination learn to play
- Suggest and secure additional props to enrich children's play
- Help children incorporate writing into their play by making signs and labels

Table Toy Area

- Invite children to work
- Extend children's work
- Expand children's work
- Put into words what the child is doing or ask the child to put his/her actions into words
- Remind children to use materials correctly and return them
- Protect children from distractions

Manipulatives

- Demonstrate materials
- Suggest new ways for children to work with open-ended materials
- Extend children's interest in materials
- Give just enough assistance to assure success
- Remind children to use materials correctly and return them to their places

Reading/Writing Areas

- Read to small groups of children as time permits
- Model by looking at books as sources of information
- Record children's stories
- Demonstrate language games
- Direct language games that have rules
- Give just enough assistance to assure success
- Suggest ways to use materials

Group Times

Group time is primarily a literature experience. The teacher reads a book or tells a flannel board story. The purpose of group time is to develop listening skills and a love of literature; hence, it is very important that books are selected for their literary value. Although other forms of stories may be used such as flannel board stories, the majority of the literature experiences should be reading books.

The three parts of the first group time are:

- Transition activity – song or finger plays to hold children's attention while the group assembles
- Group meeting
- Follow-up activities or discussion and dismissal

The second group time can be scheduled anytime during the schedule although it should be alternated with free times. It has 4 parts:

- Transition activity – songs or finger plays to hold children's attentions while the group assembles
- Read a book
- Directed activity – an activity selected from the children's individual plans, a Peabody activity, or an activity from the resource unit
- Dismissal – can be related to the story or to a concept or each child would be asked to do a part of the directed activity.

The third group time is music and story. Following a transition activity, the teacher reads a story and presents a music activity. The music activity can be creative movement with or without music, and activity record, a rhythm activity, musical instruments, or singing.

Group time is important because children practice listening skills. It is the only time children are asked to do exactly what the teacher has planned. All activities including songs and finger plays are planned by the teacher ahead of time. Group times are well planned and written on a separate form. One teacher is assigned to lead the group and her responsibility is to be as interesting as possible. The other teacher's responsibility is to quiet disruptive children and to handle all guidance. All other adults should support children listening at group time by being quiet and not distracting. For example, other adults should talk only in whispers. If lunch is being set out at the moment group time is going on, it should be done quietly.

Asking Questions

An important part of the teacher's role as facilitator is to ask questions. One way to look at questions is open-ended versus closed-ended. Closed-ended questions are usually convergent (have one correct answer) and can be answered with one or a few words. "What color is this?" "What did Curious George do after he fell off his bike?" "Are you supposed to splash?" are examples of close-ended questions. Open-ended questions do not have wrong answers. Examples are: "What do you think?" "What do you see?" "Why do you think the puddle got bigger?"

In general, open-ended questions are better because they require more advanced thinking, expand language abilities, and are not threatening. However, they are not always a good choice. Be careful about asking open-ended questions in the following situations:

- When you do not have time to listen to the answer
- At a large group time because all the children will talk at the same time or you will have to let each child answer, which requires the group to spend lots of time waiting
- When children could not possibly know the answer and you probably do not either (such as "Why does it rain?" "Why is the apple red?" "Why can birds fly?")

When children cannot answer an open-ended question, it is often effective to go back to closed-ended questions to help children form an answer. For example, children are looking at the parakeet. A few days ago, they observe a chicken. You ask, "How is the parakeet different from the chicken?" and you get no answer. You could then ask, "What size was the chicken?" or "what color was the chicken?" Then ask the open-ended question again.

Another special consideration in asking questions is to avoid asking questions that make a child feel inadequate. When you ask a child a question that he/she cannot answer, it is your responsibility to give the child some aid or information, so it can be answered. Imagine you are watching a child build with parquet blocks and you remember naming shapes is one objective for this child. You ask her, "what shape is this?" and you get no answer. Then it is your responsibility to think of a way to give her aid, so she can answer. You could pick out another block of the same shape and say, "This is a triangle. What shape is your block?" or you could say, "It's not a circle. It's not a square. It's not a rectangle. What is it?"

When children answer but the answer is wrong, you also have the responsibility to help the child continue to feel competent. Almost all wrong answers are partially true. Imagine you ask, "what is the name of this animal?" and the child says, "horse," although it is a cow, you could say, "It looks like a horse because it has four legs, but it isn't, It's a cow." Some teachers think they should not tell the children when he/she is wrong, but that is not respectful to the child. Some teachers also respond to incorrect answers by saying to another child, "can you help him/her?" suggesting the other child answer. This does not build confidence in the child.

Content of The Curriculum

The project approach is another way of developing a meaningful curriculum.

Question: What makes puddles get bigger and littler?

A group of kindergarten children observed that puddles on the playground changed in size and sometimes went away. (The playground is asphalt, which is unsafe and not recommended.) The children mentioned this question to the teacher who brought it up at large group time.

At large group time, the children discussed the puddle question and decided to measure a particular puddle for several days. They did this by holding a piece of yarn across the diameter of the puddle and then gunning it to a chart. After a few days, it became apparent that the puddle did change in size. Again at large group time, the children listed all the possible reasons they could generate. Their list included:

- Rain
- Someone pouring water in the puddle
- A dog peeing in the puddle
- Wind (which blew the water away)
- Someone jumping in the puddle
- Someone riding a bike through the puddle

Together they reached agreement it was unlikely someone poured water in the puddle, although they suspected the janitor who did not want them to play outside.

The children decided to test each idea. They tested the rain by keeping weather records and comparing them to the size of the puddle. They took turns observing the puddle during recess to see if anyone jumped into the puddle. One boy lived within sight of the school and he kept an eye on the puddle for peeing dogs and bicycles. It turned out this had an extra benefit because the boy had a reputation as a “bad kid” and he had the opportunity to speak as an authority on what happened to the puddles when the class was not in school.

In the course of recording the weather, it did get hot and the children accidentally discovered that when the weather is hot, the puddle go smaller. At this point, the teacher led the children to the idea of experimenting with water in dishes left uncovered. The children went on to conduct experiments and record their findings related to evaporation and surface, evaporation and temperature, and evaporation and air movement (wind).

Self-Concept Activities

To make sure enough focus is placed on self-concept, at least one self-concept activity is planned and presented daily. The activity may be self-selected activity or a group time activity. As resources there are several books available to each room that focus on self-concepts.

Cultural Activities

Cultural activities are incorporated into the curriculum both as self-selected and group time activities. Rather than presenting them as “cultural activities” per se, cultural items are incorporated into the area naturally. For example, cultural items are used for counting games,

visual discrimination activities, flannel board stories, and puppets. Traditional foods and methods of food preparation are used as cooling experiences and traditional clothing and props are incorporated into the dramatic play areas.

Planning Self-Selected Activities

All self-selected activities are planned by the staff. The teacher’s primary responsibility with self-selected activities is to arrange the environment to provide children with a variety of interest activities. One of the goals is for parents and children to develop positive attitudes about school. Providing a well-organized program with a variety of interesting activities contributes to that goal by eliminating many guidance problems.

Materials Are Rotated According to The Following Schedule

- Table Toys: These are assessed weekly. Some are rotated, and some are not, depending on whether children are still working with them. There needs to be a balance between variety and sameness.
- Dramatic Play and Blocks: Props are generally changed weekly. If they are not changed, they are “freshened”, washed, straightened and replaced.
- Math: Generally, this is changed weekly as the resource unit changes, although materials still being used by children are left in the area.
- Language: Like table toys and math, this is assessed weekly. Some additions are made weekly or some basic activities like writing will remain the same with different pictures.
- Science: Materials on open shelves or tables are assessed weekly. Formal or directed activities are changed to meet the children’s interests and needs.
- Art: Easel painting is available every day. Basic art materials like scissors, crayons, paste, and paper are always available on a daily basis with a table nearby to work on. At least one other activity is learned each day. Depending on its experimental nature, it may be available all week or one day only.
- Books: These are changed weekly.

In attaining the goal of helping children develop attention span, decision-making, and interest in school, enough spaces for two times the number of children is planned. The number of play spaces is looked at in two ways. One is by the number of play spaces available for children in each center. The other is by letting the children decide how many children should be in a particular center.

As an example, assume the following activities are planned:

<u>Space</u>	<u>Play Spaces</u>	<u>Number Of</u>
Art	Easel Painting, Basic Materials, Paper Collage	2-4, 4, 4
Books	20 Books	4
Discovery	Magnetic Shapes	2
Writing	Creative Writing Experiences	4
Manipulative	8 puzzles, 3 language, 10 math activities	8, 3, 10
Table Toys	6 sets of table toys	6

Dramatic Play	Washing dolls, props: dolls, towels, clothes, dishes, Cooking utensils, etc.	8
Block	Miniature trucks, people, multicultural families	4
Cooing Experience	Depending on theme of the week	4

Guidelines for Weekly Planning

With so many current goals for the children in addition to the content included in the resource units, it is helpful to identify the frequency at which certain kinds of activities should occur. Listed below are guidelines, most of which are taken from the curriculum and program planning units.

Some of the guidelines are ones that each center has to develop for itself, based on how long the children are at school, how many materials the program has, and the developmental stages of the children. Table toys are examples of activities that will be rotated more or less frequently depending on characteristics of individual programs.

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Cooking experiences	Monthly
Art	Daily
Easel Painting	Almost Daily
Changing dramatic play props	Weekly
Changing manipulative toys	Weekly
Changing puzzles and table toys	Weekly
Rotating books on shelf	Weekly
Planning outdoor activities/changing painting	Weekly
Music	Daily
Music other than singing	3 times per week
Directed language activity (provided by theme)	Daily
Directed discovery activity	3 times per week

Individualizing

At enrollment children are assessed and goals are set by parents and administration. Developmental goals are identified for each child. Once goals are set, teachers plan activities weekly based on the child's needs. The activities can be self-directed, group time, or small group activities. The activities may be planned for morning or afternoon. When the child has achieved the goals established, additional goals are set during conference times (2 times per year) or as scheduled.

Guidance

Children learn from every experience, not just planned ones. They learn from routines, such as hand washing and mealtimes. They learn much about themselves from the way they are guided. The guidance system forms part of the curriculum. The way children are guided directly influences their self-concept and language development. It indirectly influences all areas because it influences how well children attend to activities., how much time they have available for activities, and their attitude toward school. Children who receive warm, yet firm guidance from

adults are more likely to be interested in learning from that adult. Children are guided in the way the environment is arranged. It is one of the goals to arrange their environment and materials to communicate to the child what is and what is not acceptable. This is done by defining boundaries of learning center, posting written limits (primarily for student, temporary teachers and parents), labeling where items are returned, removing non-activity materials from the classrooms, and storing everything a child needs for an activity near its place of use. Transitions can ruin the atmosphere of a program and waste learning time. Transitions are carefully planned to be as smooth as possible. Moving children gradually from each activity to another is planned to give children warning when self-selected activities are about to end. The Daily Schedule is planned to have as few transitions as possible. Staff have several transition activities in place to reduce problems during transition times.

What Takes Place During Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is planned like indoor activities, it is a part of the curriculum and not just recess or a time for children to work off energy so they can come inside and learn. The principles that are used for planning indoor self-selected activities (number of play spaces vary) and for arranging space and materials apply to outdoor play as well. Gross motor activities include two large climb toys, large muscle toys for toddler and preschoolers. Some of the self-selected activities include basketballs and kick balls, riding toys, painting, sand and water play, chalk drawing and dramatic play.

During outdoor play, the children choose from a variety of activities including: climbing, digging, dramatic play, riding toys, woodworking, water play, art activities, manipulatives and gardening, as the weather permits. The teacher's first role is to plan and set up activities. While the children are working with outdoor activities, the teacher supervises closely to protect the children's safety and also to interact with the children and to extend their interest, expand their activities, help children initiate activities, and show interest in their work.

The YMCA gym may be used for the following times:

1. When it is too cold to play outside
2. When it is too hot over 90 degrees
3. When it is raining or too wet or muddy
4. For a scheduled or special field trip
5. When the temperature is below 40 degrees