



**YMCA of
Niagara**

Child Care Program Statement

The YMCA of Niagara's Child Care programs strive to deliver stimulating learning experiences in a safe environment that enhances children's social, intellectual, physical and emotional development. At the YMCA we understand that children learn through play – it is the cornerstone of our curriculum.

YMCA Child Care promotes and incorporates the YMCA's Core Values of caring, health, honesty, inclusiveness, respect, and responsibility throughout our curriculum and daily interactions with our children and families. Values are the principles of thought and conduct that help distinguish right from wrong and provide a foundation for decision making. Living with, and acting on good values contributes to the development of self-esteem and overall personal happiness.

Our Program Statement describes how our programs and our educators support and foster early learning. It outlines our view of the child, our philosophy and pedagogy, as well as the goals and approaches used to ensure healthy child development.

The goals and approaches of our Program Statement, and our YMCA curricula align in philosophy, standards, and recommendations with the province's documents:

“How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years”,
“Think, Feel, Act – Lessons from Research about Young Children”, and
“Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT)”

Goals & Approaches

A) The YMCA of Niagara promotes the health, safety, nutrition and well-being of the children.

Overview: Keeping children healthy and safe is a priority at the YMCA and we understand that the well-being of their child is a parent/guardian's utmost concern. Therefore we have developed research-based procedures that provide the basis for our staff to support children's well-being.

YMCA educators' approaches to promoting children's health and well-being are woven into the compliance of policies and procedures, which include practices such as:

- ✓ Safe supervision of children
- ✓ Child Protection procedures and training
- ✓ Menu planning following the Canada Food Guide
- ✓ Emergency procedures

- ✓ Educators will promote physical activity, play and movement by encouraging and planning for gross-motor activities with the children.

B) We support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents, child care providers and staff.

Overview: At the YMCA we understand that young children flourish in all areas of development when they are in positive and responsive relationships with adults.

YMCA educators incorporate the following approaches to support positive and responsive interactions:

- ✓ Educators will build a foundation of trust with children by being available, sensitive, responsive, and caring.
- ✓ Educators will create an inclusive and respectful environment to foster positive, equitable, and collaborative relationships.
- ✓ Educators will interact and communicate with parents on a daily basis sharing observations, documentations, and reflections.

C) We encourage children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate.

Overview: The YMCA believes that it is the role of the adult in a child's life to support them to learn how to interact effectively with the world around them including other children, adults, and the environment. This includes self regulation and the development of a sense of self as being capable and able to manage their emotions and behaviour.

Approaches implemented by YMCA educators to set the stage for positive interactions among children include:

- ✓ Educators will provide small group experiences that allow for more individualized adult attention.
- ✓ Educators will role model inclusive, respectful, and collaborative interactions with children and other adults.
- ✓ Educators will ensure that sufficient and appropriate toys, equipment, and materials are available to children at all times.
- ✓ Educators will ensure that children are given freedom to make choices.

D) We foster children's exploration, play and inquiry.

Overview: Children are born with a natural sense of curiosity and wonder. They play naturally. Children explore their world through their senses, repetition of tasks, imitation, asking questions, and pretending. The YMCA believes that our role is to support play so that learning and development flourishes.

YMCA educators use the following approaches to foster children's play, exploration and inquiry:

- ✓ Educators will be active participants in play.
- ✓ Educators will adapt the environment in response to children's interests and curiosity.
- ✓ Educators will encourage children to decide where, when, what and how they play.
- ✓ Educators will ensure there is an appropriate amount of equipment, supplies and planned activities available for children to choose from.

E) We provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences.

Overview: Our YMCA curriculum focuses on play-based learning, allowing the child to take the lead and then focusing on his or her interest to develop learning experiences. When this approach to learning takes place, along with the educator's understanding of child development, the child's competence, capacity and potential are maximized.

Approaches used by YMCA educators to provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences include:

- ✓ Children and parents/guardians are warmly greeted by educators upon arrival and children are invited to share news of their day.
- ✓ Educators will take opportunities to ask the children open ended questions and engage discussion that expands their curiosity, learning and interests.
- ✓ Educators will set up the room with a variety of activities and materials that support the observed interests of the children.

F) We plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be supported.

Overview: YMCA Child Care programs are located in a variety of facilities within schools and YMCA owned buildings. We understand the importance of the learning environment and planned experiences as an integral part of supporting children's play so that early learning and healthy development is maximized. This includes doing our best to support children with special needs and Individual Support Plans to also experience this positive learning environment in our YMCA programs.

YMCA educators will use the following approaches to plan for positive learning environments and experiences:

- ✓ Educators will design learning centres to be flexible and responsive to the needs and interests of all the children.
- ✓ Educators will strive to create home like environments that include soft furnishings, items from nature, family and centre photographs, and accessories that are intended to make children feel comfortable and confident.
- ✓ Educators will strive to support the inclusion of children with special needs and ISPs to fully experience the positive learning environment in their group.

G) We incorporate indoor and outdoor play, as well as active play, rest and quiet time into the day, and give consideration to the individual needs of the children receiving child care.

Overview: At the YMCA, we understand that a daily schedule should meet the needs of all the children and provide a balance of activities throughout the day.

YMCA educators' approaches to providing variety and balance throughout the day will include:

- ✓ Educators will ensure enough time is allotted for children to explore, play, and enjoy activities both indoors and out.
- ✓ Educators will keep transitions from activity to activity to a minimum so children get to play more, and will strive to make transitions positive and fun.
- ✓ Educators recognize that young children in our toddler and preschool programs thrive on regular schedules and feel secure when they can predict what will occur throughout the day; therefore educators in these programs will ensure snacks, meal times and rest periods are consistent.

H) We foster the engagement of, and ongoing communication with parents about the program and their children.

Overview: At the YMCA we understand that a parent/guardian is the most important person in a child's life. YMCA educators play a supporting role while the child is in our care. We recognize that our engagement and communication with parents/guardians helps a child to feel a greater sense of belonging and is key as we strive to build relationships with our YMCA families.

Approaches implemented by YMCA educators to foster engagement and communication:

- ✓ Educators will communicate with parents/guardians on a regular basis about children's activities, health and well-being.
- ✓ Educators will share children's artwork, sculptures, creations and photographs of the children at play.
- ✓ Educators will make program plans available that include observations of children's interests, activities and their connection to learning.

I) We involve local community partners and allow those partners to support the children and their families and staff.

Overview: The YMCA works closely with local community agencies and partners in order to support the children and families in our programs. While our range of community partners is broad, the largest and most important are the two local school boards. Since most of our centres are located in schools, relationships with principals and school staff are critical for us to be able to support our children and families.

YMCA educators will include the following approaches to involve community partners:

- ✓ Educators will seek out opportunities to share our knowledge and to learn from others in the community through formalized options and informal networking.
- ✓ Educators will work in close co-operation with specialized services, when required, such as Speech Services Niagara, Infant Mental Health, FACS, Pathstones Mental Health, and Preschool Services.

- ✓ Educators will strive to build positive relationships with members of their school's staff community.

J) We support our staff or others who interact with the children at a child care centre in relation to continuous professional learning.

Overview: The YMCA is committed to the ongoing professional development of all our educators.

Approaches to support continuous professional learning include:

- ✓ Educators will attend a wide spectrum of training sessions throughout their career with the YMCA, including child care curriculum, legislated training requirements and YMCA-focused training.
- ✓ The YMCA delivers a system and opportunities designed to support all levels of leadership to mentor, coach and develop the educators in our centres.
- ✓ Educators are actively engaged in Quality Child Care Niagara (QCCN), as required.

K) We document and review the impact of the strategies set out in clauses (a) to (j) on the children and families.

Overview: The YMCA is committed to supporting children to grow to their fullest potential in a safe, caring and nurturing environment. This Program Statement describes YMCA of Niagara specific goals for children's learning and development, and the approaches that will be implemented. Each member of the program team holds a role and responsibility in ensuring the approaches in the Program Statement are implemented.

Approaches by management, supervisors and educators in the implementation and monitoring of the Program Statement will follow a specific outline:

- ✓ All new educators, students and volunteers will be oriented to the YMCA Program Statement before they interact with children. A sign off sheet including signatures of educators, students and volunteers with witness signature and date of orientation will be kept on file.
- ✓ Educators, students and volunteers will be required to formally review the YMCA Program Statement annually or when there are substantive changes to the Program Statement. Recorded verification of the review will be signed and dated by all educators, students and volunteers.
- ✓ All educators, students and volunteers will be monitored and observations documented for the implementation of approaches as set out in the Program Statement. For the year, a minimum of 2 observations in each period of September to January and February to June, and 1 observation in July to August (only centres in operation) will be recorded.
- ✓ Goals related to the implementation of and observation(s) related to the Program Statement will be incorporated into the ongoing process of performance management.
- ✓ Annual YMCA parent/guardian survey results and evaluation of the Program Statement strategies will inform and influence regular and ongoing development of the Program Statement.