



YMCA OF AUSTIN PROGRAM SERVICES BRANCH
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CAREGIVER HANDBOOK



EARLY LEARNING READINESS



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ASSESSMENT, FIELD TRIPS, EMERGENCY PROCEDURES, & TABLES

Assessment

In order to gauge the success of the program for participants and the larger Austin community, child observation will be used to track the skills and knowledge children are developing in the groups. **Program evaluation will be done regularly and used for program improvements. Additionally, caregivers will be asked to complete survey packets twice through the program.**

Field Trips

The Austin community is rich with resources that caregivers can easily access, but it can sometimes be difficult to know where to start. Over the course of the program, we will plan field trip “meet-ups” to libraries, parks, and other locations, to help caregivers become more familiar with the resources in their area. Caregivers will be responsible for their own transportation.

Emergency Procedures

In the case of an emergency evacuation while at class, we ask caregivers to follow the procedures posted at the entrance to the school. Please exit the classroom in a calm and orderly fashion with your child, and proceed to the nearest parking lot. YMCA staff will provide further instructions at that time.

Tablets in the Classroom

Tablets are an important part of the classroom and function like an interest center. While your child is using the tablet we ask caregivers to engage with the tablet, as well. Using technology together can be educational and build family bonds.

At the end of the program your family will receive a free one month YMCA membership and a tablet **if your child and a caregiver attend 80% of the program, and miss no more than 4 classes.** If you fail to meet this expectation you will not receive a membership and the tablet and may no longer be able to participate in the program.



BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE & INTERACTION WITH CHILDREN

Behavior Guidance Policy

A unique feature of the ELR program is that caregivers remain in class with the children in the program. Although staff and volunteers are trained to support or help in guiding behaviors when asked or needed, guidance is primarily the responsibility of the caregiver at the site. **Our classes are designed to allow caregivers to interact and play with their child one-on-one in order to maximize the child's success.** However, caregivers with more than one child are welcome to explore new ways to experience each activity with each child.

In some cases, fussiness or acting out by young children may be due to overstimulation. As our environment is filled with a number of activities that are designed to stimulate all senses, it is highly likely that this might happen from time to time. **We understand and encourage you to step out with your child for a cool down/quiet period and allow them to process all the new sensory experiences.**

Interaction with Children

The YMCA of Austin has five character traits that are interwoven and emphasized throughout our daily activities: **Responsibility, Honesty, Caring, Faith, and Respect.** Staff are encouraged to teach, model, and reward these character values at all times. **Caregivers will also be asked to model these values, and the goal is to have positive interactions during the group by all adults.**

Our daily activities are loosely structured. We make opportunities available, but the intention is that the **caregiver lets the child choose where to play (for learning), and follows and participates.** Each child can spend as much or as little time at any Activity Center, and **participants are expected to stay for the entire 2 hour period.**



ABOUT THE PROGRAM SERVICES BRANCH



The Program Services Branch of the YMCA of Austin is dedicated to developing, organizing, and delivering those programs that are not dependent on specific YMCA facilities.

They include:

Early Learning Readiness Program (ELR)

Afterschool Childcare -- AISD, RRISD, HCISD, and Area Charter Schools

Summer, Spring Break and Holiday Camps

Staff Development and Training

Teen Programs: Youth & Government, Robotics, Middle School Soccer

Project S.A.F.E.: First-Grade Swim Lessons

Mind Exercise Nutrition Do-it (MEND): Childhood Obesity Intervention Program

Volunteer Coordination and Training

New Program and Non-Traditional Program Development

The YMCA of Austin is a non-profit private organization, incorporated in Austin, Texas. Chartered in 1953, the YMCA of Austin serves over 55,000 facility members and 50,000 nonmember participants. Should you have any questions regarding our services or the programs listed above, please contact the YMCA Program Services Branch.

WELCOME



Welcome to the **Early Learning Readiness (ELR) Program!**

This program is focused on providing a nurturing educational environment for children and their caregivers to play and learn together.

The goal of the program is to help provide children preschool preparation including cognitive, physical and social skills they need to be school-ready. Because children learn by playing, our classes feature age-appropriate activities that encourage children to problem-solve and think creatively. And because adults attend the classes too, you'll be an integral part of your child's learning and enjoyment.

As an adult caregiver, you are the child's first teacher. Therefore, we seek to aid caregivers in their understanding of child

development, and provide useful information on resources available in the Austin community. **This program is provided free-of-charge.**

Some things you can expect to see in our classroom:

Staff-led Circle Time with songs, stories & finger play.

Guided hands-on activity stations focusing in writing, music, dramatic play, indoor art, science, math, technology, and more!

Caregiver Corner with take-home activities, caregiver resources and online caregiver resources, such as Ready Rosie.

BASIC DEVELOPMENT MILESTONES

Emotional Development

Likes to conform, easy going attitude, not so resistive to change, more secure, greater sense of personal identity, beginning to be adventure-some, enjoys music.

Age 4

Social Development

Cooperative play, enjoys other children's company, highly social, may play loosely organized group games – tag, duck-duck-goose, talkative, versatile.

Intellectual Development

Uses complete sentences, vocabulary includes 1540 words, asks endless questions, learning to generalize, highly imaginative, dramatic, can draw recognizable simple objects.

Physical Development

Skips on one foot, draws "Man", cuts with scissors (not well), can wash and dry face, dress self except ties, standing broad jump, throws ball overhand, high motor drive.

Emotional Development

Seems sure of himself, out-of bounds behavior, often negative, may be defiant, seems to be testing himself out, needs controlled freedom.

Age 5

Social Development

Highly cooperative play, has special "friends", highly organized, enjoys simple table games requiring turns and observing rules, feels pride in clothes and accomplishments, eager to carry out some responsibility.

Intellectual Development

Vocabulary includes 2,072 words, tells long tales, carries out direction well, reads own name, counts to 10, asks meaning of words, knows colors, beginning to know difference between fact and fiction-lying, interested in environment, city, stores, etc.

Physical Development

Hops and skips, dresses without help, good balance and smoother muscle action, skates, rides wagon and scooter, prints simple letters, handedness established, ties shoes, girls small muscle development about 1 year ahead of boys.

Emotional Development

Self-assured, stable, well-adjusted, home-centered, likes to associate with mother, capable, of some self-criticism, enjoys responsibility. Likes to follow the rules.

(From YMCA Preschool Program Manual, 3rd Edition)

For more information, visit:

www.parentingcounts.org

www.developingchild.harvard.edu

BASIC DEVELOPMENT MILESTONES

Below is a list of typical activities and achievements for children from two to five years of age. It is important to keep in mind that the time frames presented are averages and some children may achieve various developmental milestones earlier or later than the average, but still be within the normal range.

This information is presented to help parents understand what to expect from their child. Any questions you may have about your child's development should be shared with his/her doctor or YMCA leader.

Age 2

Social Development

Solitary play, dependent on adult guidance, plays with dolls, refers to self by name, socially very immature, little concept of others as "people." May respond to simple direction.

Intellectual Development

Says words, phrases and simple sentences, vocabulary includes 272 words, understands simple directions, identifies simple pictures, likes to look at books, short attention span, avoids simple hazards, can do simple form board puzzles, starts to use short sentences and controls and explores world with language, stuttering may appear briefly.

Physical Development

Walks well, goes up and down steps alone, runs, seats self on chair, becoming independent in toileting, uses spoon and fork, imitates circular stroke, turns pages singly, kicks ball, attempts to dress self, builds tower of six cubes.

Emotional Development

Very self-centered, just beginning a sense of personal identity and belongings, possessive, often negative, often frustrated, no ability to choose between alternatives, enjoys physical affection, resistive to change, becoming independent, more responsive to humor and distraction than discipline or reason.

Age 3

Social Development

Parallel play, enjoys being by others, takes turns, knows if he is a boy or girl, enjoys brief group activities requiring no skill, likes to "help" in small ways—responds to verbal guidance.

Intellectual Development

Says short sentences, vocabulary includes 896 words, great growth in communication, tells simple stories, uses words as tools of thought, wants to understand environment, answers questions, imaginative, may recite few nursery rhymes

Physical Development

Runs well, marches, stands on one foot briefly, rides tricycle, imitates cross, feeds self well, puts on shoes and stockings, unbuttons and buttons, build tower of 10 cubes. Pours from pitcher.

A TYPICAL ELR SCHEDULE

Greeting & Sign In

Circle Time

Interest & Snack

Clean Up

Circle Time

Description of Activities:

Sign-in: Name recognition and writing skills are practiced at this station. Direct your child to look for their picture at the Children's Sign in board and move it to indicate they are present. Encourage your child to also sign-in using any writing tool of his/her choice. Please sign-in at the Caregiver's table, and remember to sign in all children, infants, and adults attending class that day.

Circle Time: This involves group song, story time, music, movement, and finger play, as well as a themed Caregiver Talk.

Interest Centers: Includes Dramatic Play, Manipulatives, Puzzles, Science/Math, Library/Listening Center, Writing, Indoor Art/Play dough, Blocks, Music, Infant/Toddler, Outdoor Activities, and Snacks/Cooking. Movement between centers is free and at your own pace.

Snack: The YMCA will provide a free snack, which can be found at the Snacks/Cooking center. Parents must tell site staff of a child's allergies or negative reactions to food. Although nutrition is considered and the YMCA works to provide nutritious (low-fat & low-sugar) snacks, the YMCA is not responsible for the nutritional value of food provided.



LOCATION, HOURS, ATTENDANCE & CONTACT INFO

Location and Times:

Guerrero-Thompson Elementary | Tuesday & Thursday 9—11 am
102 E Rundberg Ln, Austin, TX 78753

Houston Elementary | Tuesday and Thursday 9—11 am
5409 Ponciana Dr., Austin, TX 78744

***Please arrive no later than 9:15am to sign in and be marked present.**

Attendance:

Regular attendance is needed for positive results in the growth and development of children and caregivers. Commitment is minimal - just 2 hours a day, 2 days a week for the length of the 15 weeks. Please notify your YMCA facilitator if you will not be attending class. **After two unexplained absences, a YMCA leader will call to obtain further information.** After 5 missed class days you and your child will no longer be eligible to participate or graduate.

*If your child is sick or a family emergency occurs please call the facilitator or Program Director at (512) 236-9622.

Bad Weather Plan:

If inclement weather changes the regular operating hours of school, the following will be in effect: If the school remains open during the scheduled meeting time, the YMCA will hold class as scheduled. If the school does not open for class, the YMCA will not have class either. If the school delays start to 10:30 am the YMCA will not have class.

Contact:

Miriam Rodriguez

Program Services Branch
programservices@austinyymca.org
512-236-9622



WHAT TO BRING, WHAT NOT TO BRING & DAILY WEAR FOR GROUP TIME

What to Bring:

Yourself! In our unique program, Children and Caregivers attend class together.

A playful approach. The program is designed for learning through play, with caregivers and children working side by side.

What not to Bring:

Toys or valuable personal items.

Food or drink from outside of the program. We will provide a healthy snack and water.

Daily Wear for Group Time

We recommend tennis shoes and "play clothes" that will allow caregiver and child to be comfortable while playing, crawling, and sometimes getting messy!

