

THE ANITA & G. THOMAS HARGROVE
CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Y's LITTLE OWL
NURSERY SCHOOL



PARENT HANDBOOK
2011-2012



NEW CANAAN YMCA

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YMCA Mission Statement

New Canaan YCMA – Strengthening the foundations of community.









Nursery School Philosophy

The New Canaan YMCA Y's Little Owl Nursery School operates on the premise that children's natural curiosity and desire to make sense of their world are used to motivate them to become involved in learning activities. A child's personal motivation is increased through self-esteem when they experience success, encouragement, challenges, no social barriers, and freedom of creativity. In such an environment, learning is enhanced. The New Canaan YMCA Child Development Center is accredited by and operates according to the philosophies of the NAEYC.

In our YMCA facility, we offer children spacious, bright, age-appropriate indoor and outdoor space to explore and learn.

Our goal is to create a stimulating environment, with continuous opportunities and learning experiences for the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of the preschool child.

Program Objectives

-  Create an environment where children feel safe, secure, and accepted.
-  Provide children with opportunities to collaborate with peers and develop meaningful relationships with YMCA teachers and caregivers, in an effort to promote a sense of community within the group.
-  Develop each child's awareness of themselves and those around them—focusing on respecting differences, being responsible for their actions, being honest, and caring for one another.
-  Create an environment and program where the child's natural desire to learn is stimulated through meaningful, appropriate, and playful learning experiences, one that meets the needs of each child as an individual.
-  Provide opportunities for children to express thoughts, ideas and feelings; listen to and appreciate others points of view; and to be an integral part of a group—both as a leader and active member.
-  Develop a curriculum that incorporates each child's natural interests, curiosities, and developmental levels.
-  Encourage each child to solve problems independently.
-  Encourage communication between parents and teachers about each child's overall development.

Program Activities & Curriculum

The Nursery School staff organizes a curriculum on a weekly basis with each week being planned around a specific theme. Daily plans are designed in a variety of curricular areas, each of which concentrates on developing specific skills.

Throughout the day, the children participate in various types of activities, including the following: large group activity, small group activity, and self-exploration and discovery through guided free-play activity. Teachers prepare the environment for children to learn through active exploration and interaction with adults, other children, and materials.

Large group activities, such as gym games and outdoor play, are planned daily, so children can develop large muscle skills, learn about outdoor environments, and express themselves loudly and freely.

The children work in small groups with the teacher on daily projects and learning activities from among a variety of learning areas the teachers prepare. Children are provided concrete learning activities with materials and people relevant to their own life experiences. Areas may include blocks, books, dress-up, games and puzzles, housekeeping, music, etc. These activities provide the children with opportunities to develop important social skills, such as cooperating, helping, negotiating, and problem solving.

Teachers move among the areas to facilitate children's involvement with materials, activities, and others, by asking questions, offering suggestions, or adding more complex materials or ideas to a situation.

A typical day could include Bouncing Bears (gymnastics), swimming lessons (4 year olds only), circle time, art, science and nature, music, as well as free play and snack time.

Our Nursery School program encourages young children to be:

Explorers	Creators
Communicators	Problem Solvers
Thinkers	Reasoners
Interactors	Socializers

Note: In the best interest of all children, the New Canaan Preschool Director's Association requests that children attend only one preschool program.

Staff

The teachers at Y's Little Owl Nursery School have been hired based on their educational background, hands-on experience, specific skills, and their commitment to our Nursery School philosophies. The blend of their unique qualifications and personalities creates the best opportunity for an educational, nurturing, caring and positive early childhood experience for each participant. All staff members participate in ongoing professional development throughout the year.

Parent Involvement

We have established many avenues to help foster open communication between parents and the school. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to participate in the Y's Little Owl Nursery School program.

Parent/Teacher conferences are held in November and March; however, our teachers are always happy to schedule informal conferences and meetings throughout the year. In order to best serve your child, it is important that we work together and communicate honestly. We strive to treat each child and family as individuals, and we work with each family to implement a plan that meets everyone's needs.

A newsletter is distributed monthly to help keep parents informed of our classroom activities and current events.

Volunteers are the heart of the YMCA and enrich all of our programs. Volunteering in your child's classroom and/or at the YMCA is a wonderful way to get to know the YMCA and its creative and enthusiastic staff and volunteers. As a volunteer, you will play an active part in your child's early education, enrich our program, and provide extra time for the teachers to work with children individually. A parent volunteer sign-up schedule will be available monthly.

Here are some specific ways to get involved:

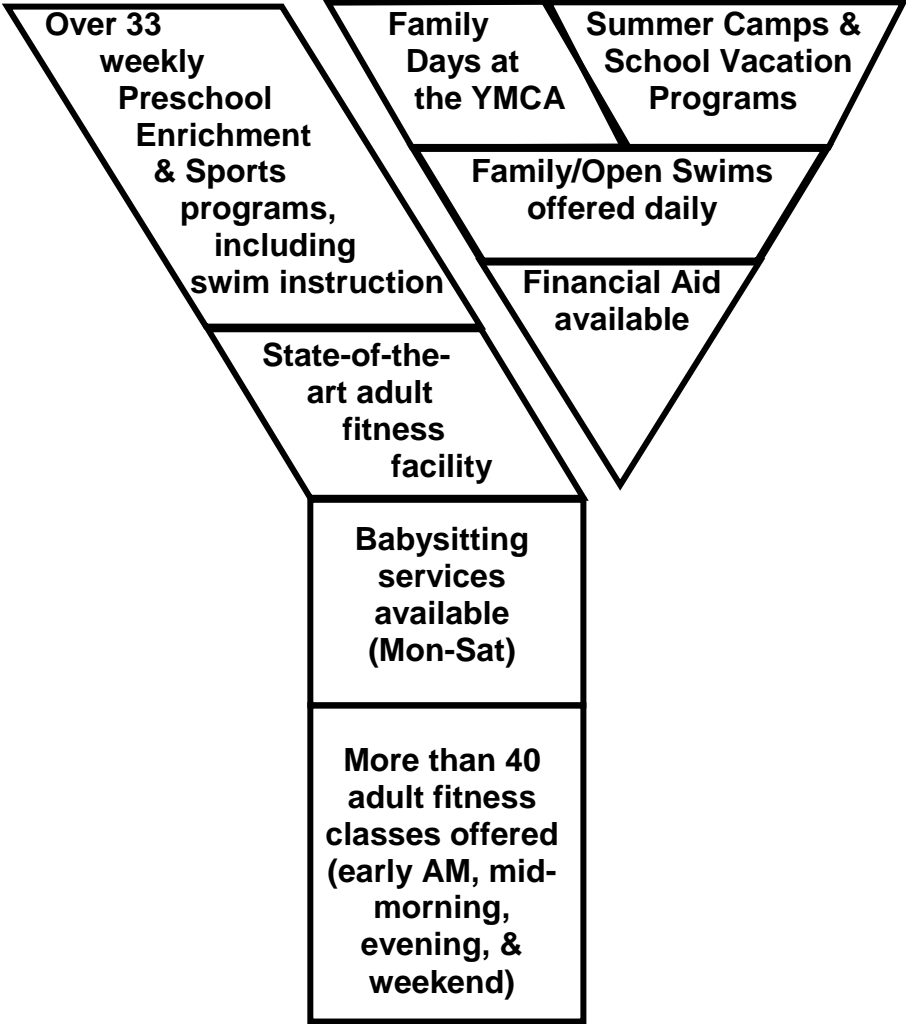
- "Room parent" for a particular event—working directly with the teacher to plan special class events, parties, etc.
- Being a guest speaker or storyteller.
- Field trip transportation and chaperoning.
- Assisting with Bouncing Bears and/or swim instruction.
- Participating in YMCA family events, such as our Halloween Party (October), Visit with Santa and Holiday Crafts (December), Family Fun Festival (May), as well as additional monthly family events. Volunteers are always needed for preparation prior to the event, as well as hands-on help that day.

Please let the Nursery School Director know if you are interested in getting involved!



“At the YMCA, we are more than just a preschool!”

Throughout your child’s experience in the Y’s Little Owl Nursery School, he or she will interact with many people at the New Canaan YMCA. Our Nursery School program is unique because of the rich diversity of our renovated YMCA facility, our people, and the programs to which your child will be exposed. We believe these opportunities and special offerings will enhance each child’s experience at our school.



2011-2012 Calendar

Orientation for Parents:	Wednesday, September 7
First Days of School:	Mon., Sept. 12 & Tues., Sept. 13 & Fri., Sept. 16
Last Day of School:	The week of May 21.

School Closings:

September 29, 2011:	Rosh Hashanah	December 19 – January 2:	Dec. Break/New Year's
October 10, 2011:	Columbus Day	January 16, 2012:	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
November 8, 2011:	Election/Prof. Dev	February 13-20 :	Winter Break
November 23-25, 2011:	Thanksgiving Recess	April 2-9 :	Spring Break/Easter Monday

Withdrawal Policy

Since your child is joining us for a program that runs the course of a full school year, the full year's tuition is required, regardless of absence due to illness or vacation. We are unable to reduce or refund fees because of your child's absence, withdrawal, or dismissal, except under the following circumstances:

- If we receive written notice of withdrawal on or before June 1, 2010, parents/guardians will not be responsible for additional tuition payments, although the YMCA will retain the non-refundable, non-transferable application fee and tuition deposit (\$300 total).
- If we receive written notice of withdrawal any time *after* June 1, 2010—and the YMCA is able to fill the spot from the wait list, parents/guardians will be responsible for the non-refundable, non-transferable application fee and tuition deposit (\$300 total), as well as the prorated tuition payments up to the time the new child enters.

If the staff feels that the child's behavior is detrimental to the health or progress of the child, other children, or staff members and withdrawal is deemed necessary, a prorated refund of the remaining tuition will be returned to the parents/guardians if applicable.

Pick-Up Procedure

The Y's Little Owl Nursery School day ends at end of the program day. All children must be picked up on time by parent/guardian or an authorized person who will be asked to show photo identification before a child is released to him/her.

Late Pick-Up Policy

A late pick-up fee will be charged to any parent/guardian arriving after the end of the program day. The late fee will be \$5.00 per child, per 5 minute interval or any part thereof. As a courtesy, please call the Nursery School staff if you anticipate being late on any given day. Parents/guardians who are consistently late may be requested to find another program which better meets their schedule.

Winter Snow Procedures

The Y's Little Owl Nursery School follows the New Canaan Public School decision on school closings.

- If schools are closed, Nursery School classes will be closed.
- If there is a one-hour delay, Nursery School classes including 2's will open at 10:00 AM. If there is a 90-minute delay, all Nursery School classes will open at 10:30 AM.
- If there is more that a 90-minute delay, Nursery School will be closed.

If the children come to school in the morning and it later becomes necessary to close early, parents will be called to come pick up their child. Staff will stay with the children in the classroom until they are picked up by the parent or an authorized pick-up person.

Toileting and Diapering Policy

Bathroom facilities are located in each classroom and children may use the bathroom whenever needed. Children will be taught to flush the toilet and wash their hands after using the bathroom. All 3 and 4 year olds must be completely toilet trained at the start of the school year.

Children are not required to be toilet trained in the 2's program, and the staff will cooperate with the parents in toilet training when a child shows an emotional and physical readiness. Diapers will be changed as needed if the child has a bowel movement during the class.

Toileting accidents will be handled calmly and matter-of-factly. The child will be given assistance in changing his/her clothes, and will be thoroughly cleaned. Clothing will be sent home in a sealed plastic bag. It is the parents' responsibility to replace extra clothing as needed.

Each child is required to have a seasonally appropriate complete change of clothing to be stored in their cubical in their Nursery School classroom.

Medical Information

State law requires that your child's health form be on file prior to the first day of school. The form must be complete, with all immunizations noted and the doctor's signature. The child will not be admitted to the program without the necessary paperwork. The physical exam is valid for one year, and children will be required to have another exam during the school year if it expires. We request that parents inform us of any particular health problem or allergy. We urge all parents to report any contagious sickness to the teacher.

No medications are administered at Y's Little Owl Nursery School with the exception of emergency medications (i.e., EpiPen). All emergency medications must be accompanied by a written authorization statement provided by a physician and the parent.

Sick Policy

The New Canaan YMCA staff strives to maintain a healthy environment for your child. In order to maintain a healthy environment for all the children and the staff, the following policy was established using licensing requirements and by consulting with a pediatrician.

1. The child will be sent home from the program if he/she shows evidence of any of the following:

- Is unable to participate in usual daily activities
- Excessive crankiness or irritability
- Auxiliary temperature (under the arm) of 100° or more
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea, defined as an increased number of stools compared with the child's normal pattern, with increased stool water and/or decreased form
- Persistent cough
- Open sores that cannot be covered
- Any contagious disease or infection including; a rash, drainage from the eye and head lice

2. The child may return to the program when:

- Temperature has been normal (child has been fever-free) for 24 hours
- Diarrhea has stopped for 24 hours
- Vomiting has stopped for 24 hours
- Persistent cough has been checked by a pediatrician
- Questionable rash has been checked by a pediatrician
- 24 hours after medication for strep, conjunctivitis & any other infectious disease
- After treatment with a head lice medication and staff has determined that the child is lice and nit free
- Children with chicken pox may return after their pox have scabbed over and are no longer open sores
- Upon request, Physician's note submitted to Director

3. **If a child contracts a communicable disease the parent must immediately report this information to the Director. A doctor's note is necessary for the child to return to the center, stating that the child is no longer contagious.**

Clothing

Children should be dressed for active play in washable and comfortable clothes. Daily activities may include messy arts and crafts, cooking, gym, swim, and outdoor activities. Clothing should be appropriate for the weather, so that outdoor play can be enjoyed year round.

It is especially important that children are dressed appropriately on gym and swim days. For example:

- **Gym Days:** Sneakers are a must. Boys and girls should be dressed in comfortable pants or sweatpants so that they can climb, swing, roll, crawl and jump easily. A tee shirt (layered with a sweatshirt or sweater in colder months) is recommended as the children can get very warm in the gym.
- **Swim Days (4's classes only):** Please help your child (and his or her teacher) by sending them in easy-to-manage clothes on swim days. Pull-on tops and bottoms are best. Shirts with lots of buttons, overalls, and tights are very difficult for the children. We want to encourage independence, a feeling of accomplishment, and self-confidence; easy-to-manage clothing helps us do so.

Snacks/Birthdays

Snacks are provided and served daily. Children love to be the "snack helper". The classroom teachers develop the snack helper schedule monthly.

Birthdays are very important times for children, and we like to help them celebrate with their classmates, the Center will provide a special snack for birthdays. The birthday boy or girl will be given a birthday crown and will be the snack helper for the day. Special paper products may be brought in if you like.

If your child has a summer birthday and you would like to celebrate in May, please let the teacher know. You can pick a day and we'll celebrate!

Please note: *Birthday party invitations may not be distributed at the YMCA and should be mailed to home addresses.*

Field Trips

o supplement the learning experiences of our curriculum themes, field trips may be scheduled and/or special visitors may be invited into our classrooms. Parents will be notified in advance, in writing, of all field trips, and permission slips will be distributed. Permission slips signed by the parent or guardian must be on file for participation in each field trip. Children are transported in the cars of YMCA staff or parents and are always securely buckled. ***Fours only will participate in field trips off YMCA premises.***



“Cherishing Our Young Children”

A Statement of Beliefs by New Canaan’s Preschool Directors and Elementary Principals

Position Paper Number Two



New Canaan
Early Childhood
Directors Association

As educators of young children, we value childhood and want to keep it sacred. Too much exposure to television, computer games, and organized activities robs children of their childhood and produces the “hurried child syndrome.” Too much exposure to formal academics too early in a child’s development can cause a child to be resistant to the excitement of learning. Our goal is to allow children to explore, to wonder, to experiment with language and materials, to play and to develop a love for learning.

Early childhood is a time of wonder and discovery. Teachers strive to treasure and protect each child’s journey through childhood in order to ensure that children develop a firm foundation for their later years.

The New Canaan Preschool Directors, Elementary School Principals and Preschool and Kindergarten Teachers endorse and value the following skills as appropriate goals for young children.

Social/Emotional Skills

We believe children’s success in school is in part related to events and experiences that occur prior to a child’s entry into kindergarten. Children’s social skills affect the quality and success of the school experiences. Young children construct understanding by interacting with others and with their environment. Throughout early childhood we emphasize sensitivity to the feelings of others, kindness, patience and cooperation. In early childhood, social/emotional competencies are best achieved through play and play related activities. In order to be successful in a classroom, children need, for example, to be able to exert self-control when frustrated, be polite, listen, follow directions and classroom rules, take turns and read non-verbal language.

Communication Skills

Communication and language skills are critical to children’s social, emotional and cognitive well-being. Throughout early childhood, we encourage children to develop increasingly sophisticated language skills through social interaction, dramatic play and age appropriate activities. In order to communicate effectively, children must be able to use appropriate conversational tone and volume, advocate for him/herself, use appropriate vocabulary to put feelings into words, use language to discuss activities and events and use manners without prompting.

Self-Help Skills

Children gain confidence and self-esteem as they become more independent. Throughout early childhood, we provide opportunities for children to master important self-help skills that include the ability to:

- Recognize teachers and other children by name
- Respect property and materials that belong to others
- Manage one’s own clothing, including buttons, zippers and snaps
- Wash hands and use the bathroom independently
- Manage snack independently
- Tie shoes when developmentally appropriate

Fine and Gross Motor Skills

As teachers, we recognize the impact of fine and gross motor skills on educational progress. The stage is often set with enough rest, proper diet and good physical health. We will encourage opportunities to:

- Develop large muscles, including upper body strength
- Experience skipping, jumping, hopping, climbing and balancing
- Play for exploration and enjoyment
- Develop awareness of personal space while walking, running and playing
- Use proper grip when using crayons, markers and pencils
- Use scissors correctly
- Use a variety of art materials

Readiness Skills

A child's approach to learning is central to his/her success in school. Curiosity and the desire to learn come from positive, age appropriate experiences with story, language and problem solving as well as from exposure to new ideas. Throughout early childhood, students need to develop the ability to listen and comprehend a story being read out loud. Children also need to develop the language and thinking ability to retell and sequence a story. Recognizing and generating rhymes in games and songs and poetry are also appropriate skills for preschool and kindergarten children. Familiarity with lower case letters and an ability to problem solve are also skills young children are ready to learn.

We also believe that, in addition to the above skills, children should be exposed to experiences in the arts and sciences. Children should be taught an appreciation and curiosity for their world; they should develop a sense of beauty and a love for learning. There is so much for a young child to learn about him/herself and the world around him/her. We believe these skills/values must be in place before a child enters kindergarten if the child is to have maximum success. These may seem like pretty simple skills, however, each of these represents a great deal of effort or "work" on the children's part and will help to achieve social competence, comfort and joy during the kindergarten year.

EAST SCHOOL

SOUTH SCHOOL

WEST SCHOOL

BEGINNER'S NATURE PROGRAM

DAY CARE CENTER OF NEW CANAAN

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN NURSERY SCHOOL

NEW CANAAN COMMUNITY NURSERY SCHOOL

NEW CANAAN COUNTRY SCHOOL

OPPORTUNITY CENTER

PLAYLAND NURSERY SCHOOL

ST. MARK'S NURSERY SCHOOL

TODDLER TIME NURSERY SCHOOL, INC.

UNITED METHODIST NURSERY SCHOOL

THE ANITA & G THOMAS HARGROVE CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

RAINBOW STATION INFANT-PRESCHOOL CHILD CARE

Y'S LITTLE OWL NURSERY SCHOOL

