



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®**  
**FOR HEALTHY LIVING**  
**FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

# LEARN, GROW AND THRIVE

**PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM  
AND PROGRAM OVERVIEW**



**THE LEARNING CIRCLE YMCA**  
A branch of the Summit Area YMCA

When you entrust your child to the Y, we strive to fulfill our promise to make each day an opportunity for your child to **learn, grow and thrive**. We aim to make our facility a home-away-from-home, where your child feels confident and secure to learn new things and discover his/her potential.

**The Learning Circle YMCA** is the area's premier childcare provider serving over **250** children in our all-day programs.

Our **mission** is to develop and nurture the potential of every child, to provide opportunities that promote healthy living, and to encourage social responsibility through inventive programs.

The YMCA is the **largest non-profit provider of child care** in the country. We are attuned to the budgets and busy schedules of single parent and dual-career families. A variety of program options are offered so you may work secure in knowing that your child is being cared for and educated in a safe, constructive and stimulating environment.

Positive role models are critical to a child's development. That's why our full-time child care and school age child care programs are staffed with **experienced teachers** all of whom are required to complete 10 hours of **ongoing annual training** and are **certified in CPR and First Aid**. Our staff understands the cognitive, physical and social development of children to help them feel safe, supported and connected so they can thrive.

We weave our core values of **caring, honesty, respect and responsibility** into all that we do, because we believe that foundational values and skills learned early in life form the building blocks that lead to a happy, healthy and centered person.

Our child care programs are licensed by the State of New Jersey.

## PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM

### KEY COMPONENTS OF THE FRAMEWORK ARE:

- ↻ THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
- ↻ WHAT CHILDREN LEARN
- ↻ CARING AND TEACHING
- ↻ PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES
- ↻ HOW CHILDREN DEVELOP AND LEARN

### OUR CURRICULUM FOCUSES ON THESE ESSENTIAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- ↻ SOCIAL EMOTIONAL
- ↻ PHYSICAL
- ↻ LANGUAGE
- ↻ LITERACY
- ↻ COGNITIVE
- ↻ MATHEMATICS
- ↻ SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
- ↻ SOCIAL STUDIES
- ↻ THE ARTS
- ↻ ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Our Creative Curriculum has been developed in accordance with the New Jersey Department of Education's "Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards of Quality". The Creative Curriculum tool is based on the child development theories of **Piaget, Erickson, Maslow, Gardner, Smilansky and Vygotsky**. It is also based on **Brain Research** and **Resiliency Research**. The curriculum gives teachers a framework for ensuring that the academic and emotional needs of all children are met.

# NEW JERSEY STATE CURRICULUM STANDARDS FOR CHILDREN AGES 3–5 YEARS:

## STANDARD 1

## STANDARD 2

## STANDARD 3

## STANDARD 4

## STANDARD 5

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:

S1 Children listen and respond to environmental sounds, directions and conversations.

S2 Children converse effectively with different audiences in their home language, English, or sign language for a variety of purposes related to their experiences.

S3 Children demonstrate emergent reading skills (e.g., print awareness, knowledge and enjoyment of books, phonological awareness)

S4 Children demonstrate emergent writing skills (e.g., combination of drawings, dictation, scribble writing, letter-strings, or invented spelling)

### MATHEMATICS:

S1 Children demonstrate an understanding of numbers and counting.

S2 Children demonstrate an initial understanding of numerical operations.

S3 Children begin to conceptualize measurable attributes of objects and how to measure them.

S4 Children develop spatial and geometric sense.

### SCIENCE:

S1 Children develop inquiry skills.

S2 Children observe and investigate matter and energy.

S3 Children observe and investigate living things.

S4 Children observe and investigate the Earth.

S4 Children gain experience in using technology.

### SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

S1 Children demonstrate self-confidence.

S2 Children demonstrate self-direction.

S3 Children identify and express feelings.

S4 Children exhibit positive interactions with other children and adults.

S5 Children exhibit pro-social behaviors.

### VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS:

S1 Children express themselves and develop an appreciation of creative movement and dance.

S2 Children express themselves and develop an appreciation of music.

S3 Children express themselves and develop an appreciation of dramatic play and storytelling.

S4 Children express themselves and develop an appreciation of visual arts (e.g. painting, sculpting, and drawing)



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### HEALTH, SAFETY AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION:

- S1 Children develop self-help and personal hygiene skills.
- S2 Children begin to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to make nutritious food choices.
- S3 Children begin to develop an awareness of potential hazards in their environment.
- S4 Children develop competence and confidence in activities that require gross and fine motor skills.

### SOCIAL STUDIES, FAMILY AND LIFE SKILLS:

- S1 Children identify unique characteristics of themselves, their families and others.
- S2 Children become contributing members of classroom community.
- S3 Children demonstrate knowledge of neighborhood and community.
- S4 Children develop an awareness of cultures within their classroom and their community.

### APPROACHES TO LEARNING:

- S1 Children demonstrate initiative, engagement, and persistence.
- S2 Children show creativity and imagination.
- S3 Children identify and solve problems.
- S4 Children apply what they have learned to new situations.

### WORLD LANGUAGES:

- S1 Children know that others may use different languages (including sign) to communicate and will express simple greetings, words and phrases in a language other than their own.

### TECHNOLOGY:

- S1 Navigate simple on screen menus.
- S2 Use electronic devices independently.
- S3 Begin to use electronic devices to communicate.
- S4 Use common technology vocabulary.
- S5 Begin to use electronic devices to gain information.



# CURRICULUM THEMES

Our Creative Curriculum themes are broken down into six “studies,” and include the “Beginning of the Year” study for the first several weeks of school. The remaining five studies are project-based investigations that can be used in any order. Each study is divided into a series of investigation questions, and each investigation lasts approximately 3–5 days. At the end of each study, we conclude with our own unique study, and celebrate what we’ve just learned.

## BEGINNING OF YEAR

- ↻ What names do we need to know at school?
- ↻ What should we do if we get sad or scared at school?
- ↻ What are our rules?
- ↻ When do things happen at school?
- ↻ Who works at our school?
- ↻ How do we make and keep friends? How can we be part of a group?
- ↻ What sounds do we hear at school? Where do they come from?

## BALLS

- ↻ What do we want to know about balls? What do we want to find out?
- ↻ Do all balls bounce?
- ↻ Do all balls roll?
- ↻ What makes balls move?
- ↻ Who uses balls?
- ↻ What are balls made of?
- ↻ Our Investigation / Celebrating Learning

## CLOTHES

- ↻ What do we know about clothes? What do we want to find out?
- ↻ What are the features of clothes?
- ↻ How do we take care of our clothes?
- ↻ How do people make clothes?
- ↻ How is cloth made?
- ↻ Where do we get our clothes?
- ↻ What special clothes do people wear for work?
- ↻ What other special clothes do people wear?
- ↻ Our Investigation / Celebrating Learning

## BUILDINGS

- ↻ What do we know about buildings? What do we want to find out?
- ↻ What do the buildings in our neighborhood and in other places look like?
- ↻ Who builds buildings? What tools do they use?
- ↻ What are buildings made of? What makes them strong?
- ↻ What is special about our building?
- ↻ What happens inside buildings?
- ↻ Our Investigation / Celebrating Learning

## REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

- ↻ What do we know about reducing, reusing, and recycling? What do we want to find out?
- ↻ What do people throw away?
- ↻ Where does trash go? What do workers do there?
- ↻ How do trash and garbage affect our community?
- ↻ How can we reuse junk?
- ↻ How can we create less trash?
- ↻ Our Investigation / Celebrating Learning

## TREES

- ↻ What do we know about trees? What do we want to find out?
- ↻ What are the characteristics of the trees in our community?
- ↻ Who lives in trees?
- ↻ What food comes from trees?
- ↻ Who takes care of trees?
- ↻ How do trees change?
- ↻ What can we do with parts of trees?
- ↻ Our Investigation / Celebrating Learning

# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT PRESCHOOL

## **RATIO:**

The ratio in Preschool classrooms is ten children to one teacher.

## **ENRICHMENT:**

The children go to the Summit YMCA branch for swim class. Schedules are determined by the Summit YMCA Aquatic Director and subject to change.

The children go to the Summit YMCA branch for gym class. Schedules are determined by the Summit YMCA Branch Program Director and subject to change.

Preschool enrichment and special programs are scheduled throughout the year. Programs include, but not limited to: gardening, community helpers/professionals, music/curriculum-themed enrichment, special guest readers, etc.

## **PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES:**

Parents are invited to participate in parent/teacher conferences during their child's time in Preschool. At conferences parents have the opportunity to track their child's development and view their child's developmental portfolio. Parents may contact their child's teacher at any time throughout the year to discuss their child or to arrange an additional conference. We may request an additional conference with a parent also. We encourage parents to attend these scheduled conferences.

## **NAP/REST:**

The children continue to nap/rest in Preschool. The state requires that all children under four years of age be given the opportunity to nap/rest. If a child does not nap after being on their mat for 30 minutes, they may do an alternative quiet activity. Teachers are not allowed to withhold naps/rest at a parent's request for any reason. The amount of rest that children need varies, so if you believe your four year old still needs a rest period, please advise us. We'll come up with an individualized plan together.

## **DEVELOPMENTAL PORTFOLIOS:**

A developmental portfolio is kept to record the child's development in different areas of learning.

## **USES OF THE PORTFOLIO:**

- Show a child's growth over time.
- Help plan instructions that will address the needs of the child.

"My daughter recently "graduated" from The Learning Circle's Preschool program to its Pre-K program, and yet she wants to visit her old teachers every day. That says a lot about the impact that the Preschool teachers – indeed, all TLC teachers – make on the children. Add to their warmth and engagement the themed learning objectives that structure each week, and it's a tremendous program. Great effort is made to expose the kids to a range of learning activities. My daughter's favorites included the weekly swim and gym sessions, daily playground time (Preschoolers have their own outdoor play space), and cooking "projects" in class. Special outside programs, like music for kids and science experimenters, are also brought in. As much as we will miss the Preschool program and its teachers, our daughter was more than well prepared to advance to Pre-K!"

–Andrea D.,  
The Learning Circle YMCA Parent

- Identify areas of learning that may require additional support.
- Share with parents at conferences.

## **BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS:**

Birthday celebrations are very important to the children and to us. In an effort to keep all our children safe, food will no longer be the focus of our birthday celebrations. We will continue to celebrate each child's birthday in a way that is special to him/her and safe for everyone. There are children in our classrooms with very severe allergies. The parents of these children know how important it is to control the foods they are served or exposed to. To make the day special for the children we will make crowns, cards, birthday books, and more. The teachers will ensure that every child enjoys their special day. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.



# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT PRESCHOOL

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT:

As parents, you are your child's first teachers. We hope to build a partnership of mutual respect and trust as we work together to care and educate your child.

### WAYS PARENTS CAN BE INVOLVED:

- Attend Parent information nights and conferences.
- Volunteer at the Center.
- Share your ideas, interests and talents with us in the classroom or at special events and special programs.
- Teach us about your culture.
- Join the Parent Teacher Organization as a parent representative for your child's class.
- Support the Y's Annual Campaign to raise funds for financial assistance for families in need.
- Give us constructive feedback about how we can improve our center programs and offerings.



## HEALTHY U CATCH PROGRAM

### (Coordinated Approach to Child's Health)

In Preschool the children participate in Healthy U's CATCH program. The CATCH Program is a physical activity and nutrition education program. It was designed to keep children active by engaging them in specific structured activities and to teach them about good nutrition. The children are introduced to tasty and healthful foods that they help to prepare.



Healthy U is a collaborative partnership between the New Jersey YMCA State Alliance and the Horizon Foundation for New Jersey with the goal of combating childhood obesity through nutrition education, physical education and family involvement. The Summit Area YMCA is proud to incorporate Healthy U in our childcare and afterschool programs.

# THE LEARNING CIRCLE YMCA YOUNG EXPLORERS SUMMER PROGRAM JULY AND AUGUST



**DISCOVER THE WORLD!**  
AGES 3 AND 4 (7:00AM – 6:00PM)

The Young Explorers is a first summer experience for preschool children. Each week the explorers will investigate a new theme in a fun, exciting way that combines activities and special events. The children will swim at the Summit YMCA Branch and enjoy daily water-play. All meals are included in program fees. We provide breakfast, lunch and a snack. Extended care is available to 7:00pm for an additional fee.

## **PAST SPECIAL EVENTS INCLUDED:**

Turtle Back Zoo Visit  
Young Explorers Fiesta  
Hawaiian Hullabaloo/Luau  
TLC Summer Camp Art Show  
Science Enrichment  
Sports/Fitness Enrichment  
Summer Olympics  
Young Explorers Treasure Hunt  
End of Summer Ice Cream Party

## **WEEKLY THEMES INCLUDE:**

Red, White, & Blue  
All Ball Week  
Ooey Gooey Science  
Under The Sea  
Storybook Summer  
Animal Antics  
Imaginarium  
Kitchen Creations  
So Long, Summer



## **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

Individuals and families may apply for financial assistance for membership or programs such as childcare and day camp. We make Financial Assistance available to those in need, and it is based on a number of factors including total household income and number of dependents in a household.

The process is confidential and application forms are available at each of our three branches or online at [www.theSAY.org](http://www.theSAY.org).

Applicants must live or work within the Summit Area YMCA service area: Springfield, Millburn, Short Hills, Summit, New Providence, Berkeley Heights, Gillette and Stirling.

## **THE LEARNING CIRCLE YMCA**

A branch of the Summit Area YMCA

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[www.theSAY.org](http://www.theSAY.org)

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The Summit Area YMCA is one of the area's leading charitable 501(c)3 organizations. Our programs and services are open to all through our financial assistance programs made possible through the generosity of our members, donors and partners.