



# Young Children's Program

## Practicum and Volunteers Handbook

College of Education [www.jmu.edu/coe/ycp](http://www.jmu.edu/coe/ycp)

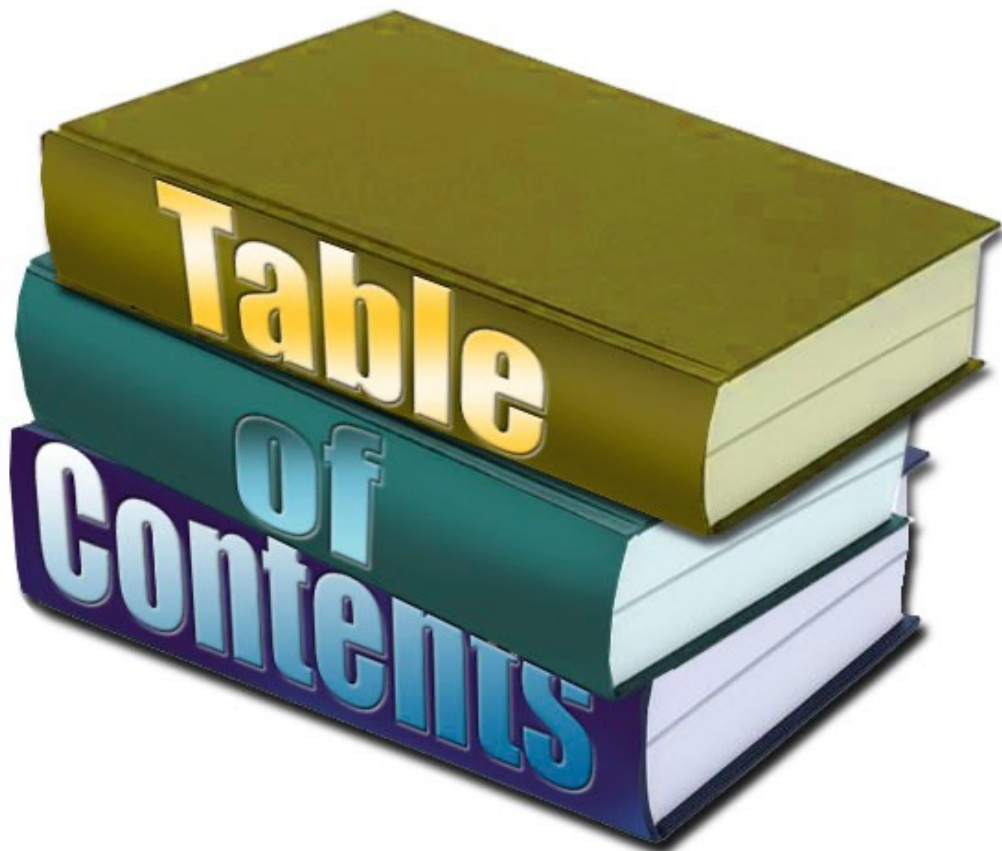


Following Virginia Department of Education Guidelines

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## MISSION STATEMENT

We are an inclusive early childhood education community dedicated to growing life-long learners through high quality teaching, research, and outreach.

## VALUES STATEMENT

We collaborate with our community, leveraging support and access to quality resources, diverse skill sets, and a broadened knowledge base.

We honor **intentional** experiences and interactions that provide a solid foundation for high quality early childhood education.

We build positive, respectful, lasting **relationships** with our families, students and community partners.

We believe that learning should be **student-centered** and built upon the needs and interests of all learners.

We are an **inclusive** program where all students have the opportunity to be full and active participants.



## WELCOME TO THE YOUNG CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

The Young Children's Program, YCP, is an early learning center for children ages 10 weeks-5 years of age. The YCP is an environment specifically designed for young children. Opportunities for social interaction, independence and choice, physical activity, self-expression, language enrichment, and appropriate learning experiences are primary considerations as the teachers arrange the classroom and plan daily activities. The atmosphere is one of warmth and respect for all people.

As a student, you are a vital and dynamic contributor to the Young Children's Program. Your placement provides the setting needed for your course assignments, as well as the opportunity to learn as you work with the children and a lead teacher. Because the current YCP facility includes the use of many classrooms, students have important responsibilities for supervision and appropriate interaction with the children. It is critical that you keep your dual role of observer/practicum student clearly in mind throughout the term and assume the professional obligations associated with these multiple responsibilities. It is expected that you will consistently demonstrate commitment to professional growth, as well as to the Young Children's Program, its children, and their families.

The opportunity to regularly observe children will help you relate developmental theory to classroom practice, understand the perspective of the young child, become familiar with methods and materials used in an early childhood learning environment, and sense the complexity and satisfaction of being a teacher of young children.

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# CURRICULUM

The most critical component of the Young Children's Program curriculum is the demonstration of sincere respect for every child. It is each teacher's responsibility to know the children personally; their special interests, fears or needs for dependence, out-of-school routines, activities, family values and dynamics. This is accomplished through consistent and meaningful interaction with each child, careful observation and assessment within the school environment and the development of a cooperative and communicative relationship with all families.

The Young Children's Program has adopted the Frog Street Curriculum. The Frog Street curriculum is a comprehensive, dual-language program designed to meet the needs of diverse learners while supporting developmental learning domains. The curriculum aligns with our mission to support the growth of each child in all areas of development: physical, social, emotional, cognitive and language. Professional training, skillful observation and personal relationships with each child and family enable teachers to make curricular decisions that facilitate optimal growth and learning. Assessment results, both formal and informal, guide individualized learning plans.

Program goals represent the areas of development and provide the framework of the curriculum. They are aligned with Virginia's Early Learning and Development Standards (VDOE). All choices relating to short-term and long-term planning reflect these guidelines with the understanding that children construct knowledge through interaction with materials, people and the environment, as such interactions are important to learning. These curriculum tools can be modified to meet the languages spoken by families in our program.

The curriculum includes a research-based scope and sequence for literacy, math, and content domains. It acknowledges the individual needs of all learners and includes strategies for differentiated instruction and adaptations for special needs or English Language Learners. Cultural responsiveness strategies are also embedded with prompts to assist teachers in maintaining an anti-bias mindset. The curriculum incorporates components of Conscious Discipline which is a comprehensive classroom management program and a social-emotional curriculum.



## ASSESSMENT

Assessment of children's growth and learning is an integral part of the curriculum. The information learned through purposeful assessment enables teachers to plan experiences for children that are personally meaningful, appropriately challenging, and consistent with their level of understanding.



Assessment is often done through careful observation, collection of work samples, and the use of checklists and anecdotal notes. When assessment of specific, unobserved skills is necessary, it is conducted in an atmosphere that is supportive and enjoyable for the child. Pre-K teachers complete required state assessments including the Virginia Language and Literacy Screener (VALLS) and Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP).

All written information collected on individual children in the YCP is confidential and is kept in a secure location. Access is limited to the child's family, the teaching and administrative staff, and officials of regulatory agencies. In addition to facilitating individual growth and learning, the information compiled through consistent observation within the classroom is used to make decisions that result in the improvement of overall curriculum, teaching strategies, and classroom environment.

Teachers complete progress reports throughout the year. Those progress reports are closely aligned with Virginia's Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) Birth-Five Learning Guidelines developed by the Virginia Department of Education.

### ATTENDANCE

1. You are expected to attend every day you are scheduled. Be punctual and participate for the entire period.
2. Park in student lots only. The marked YCP spaces around the buildings are for parent pick up/drop off only.
3. You will receive a code to enter the building. Do not share this code with anyone.
4. If you must be absent from the YCP due to personal illness or emergency, notify your YCP teacher **AND** Director before school begins.
5. In the event of inclement weather:

Due to the nature of the program, YCP will sometimes close even if JMU remains open. An email will be sent out to practicums if YCP will close due to weather. If JMU is closed, YCP is closed and no email will be sent.

\*You are not expected to attend YCP during official JMU closings.





## DO'S and DON'TS

1. Dress Professionally! As a student at the YCP, you are expected to follow guidelines for appropriate dress. Failure to do so will result in a request for you to leave the classroom. Your attire does not have to be elaborate, but must be neat and professional. Be sure you are dressed to be actively involved with young learners and will be able to reach and bend without exposing undergarments, cleavage, or midriff.

The following guidelines must be followed:

- NO short skirts, biker shorts or short shorts
- NO low necklines
- NO sweatpants
- Leggings are okay if your backside is completely covered
- NO spaghetti straps
- NO exposed midriffs
- NO tee shirts with logos unless JMU apparel or teacher inspired shirts
- NO ripped jeans

The classes go outside unless it is raining hard or extremely cold. Be sure you are dressed to be comfortable both indoors and outdoors.

2. Use Ms or Mr (First Name) when addressing other adults in the classroom.
3. Respect the confidentiality of each child.
4. Ask permission before taking any videos or photographs and do not post pictures or videos of the children on your social media.
5. Cell phones are not to be used during instructional time. Teachers may use their cell phones to post to Procure throughout the day and conduct face to name checks.
6. Do not eat or chew gum while working in the classrooms. Water bottles and coffee cups are permitted but be mindful that you place them out of the reach of children.
7. Do wash your hands often. One of the most reliable ways of controlling the spread of germs is proper and consistent hand washing. This is expected of the children and must be modeled by all adults working in the YCP classroom.



**DO's**



**DON'T's**

## INTERACTIONS

1. Children must always be within “sight and sound” of a supervising adult. You must constantly be aware of the location of children. Practicum students should never be alone with the students.
2. When speaking to individuals or a small group of children, position yourself on their eye level so that a loud voice is unnecessary and eye contact is natural. Even when speaking to the entire class, a soft voice is more effective. It is never appropriate for you to raise your voice to speak to children across the classroom; walk to them and kneel down to ensure eye contact before you begin talking.
3. Convey an attitude of warmth and acceptance. Children (AND adults) respond most favorably to someone they know cares for them. Smile a lot! Let everyone know you are happy to be at school and value them as individuals.
4. Be sensitive to cues from the children that your involvement is needed. Be responsive when they ask for assistance. However, your role is not to be their playmate or do things for children that they can do themselves. Talk with the teacher if you are uncertain about how much help to provide in specific situations.
5. Insist that rules are followed. Be firm and positive in your interactions. Do not end ANY directions with “OK?”. Remember, you are a teacher, not a “buddy.” Talk with the teacher about your role in situations of inappropriate behavior and keep the teacher informed of any problems you observe or help resolve. Never interfere with the teacher’s directions to the group or a specific child.
6. Avoid the generic “Good job!” as a habitual response to children. Personalize your response by commenting specifically on what a child is saying or doing (“You did a nice job putting the blocks away.” or “You found your name on the snack list all by yourself!”)
7. Be mindful of ways that you can assist the teacher – convey your willingness to assist. Ask “How can I help?”
8. The YCP teachers expect that you will have questions and are strongly committed to supporting your growth as an early educator. Feel free to share openly with them and ask about situations you do not understand. If you have concerns, your initial step as a professional should be to discuss them with your teacher.





# WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?

## (Expectations for Involvement in Classroom Activities)

### ART CENTER

In all types of creative activities for young children, the process, not the product, is of primary importance. For this reason, we insist that you **do not** make models for the children to copy or draw pictures for them. Children have the right to use the materials in their own way and will make that representational discovery in their own time.

1. Children should always be seated when using scissors. Scissors should not be carried away from the art area.
2. A child using large amounts of glue may be reminded calmly, *"It only takes a little bit to make it hold."* This is an understanding that comes with experience, so be patient and don't be overly concerned about waste.
3. When children are painting at the easel, they are encouraged to work with only one color of paint at a time. When finished, that cup should be returned to the tray and another color chosen if desired. This allows the children a wider selection of colors and eliminates the problem of brush handles interfering as children paint.
4. Many children will write their own names on their art. If you write for a child, do it only after the child's work is completed. You may ask, "Where would you like me to write your name?" Please ask if you are in doubt about the spelling of a child's name. Print appropriately (first letter capitalized, all others lower case) and neatly.
5. Different colors of play dough should not be mixed together unless otherwise directed by the teacher.

### DRAMATIC PLAY CENTER

Be involved in a child's play if he or she seems to really need or want you but never lose sight of your supervisory role. Be sensitive to the child's cues and allow him or her to direct the play. Do your best to draw another child into the play and minimize your role.

1. Children may need assistance with dress-up clothes. The clothes should be returned to the designated hooks or bins as the children finish with them.
2. Storage labels on baskets and trays can help children locate what they need and return it to the proper place. Dishes and food containers should not be thrown randomly into the cabinets during clean-up.
3. Gun and weapon play is strongly discouraged. If you feel uncomfortable intervening in this kind of situation, or, if the children are unresponsive to your suggestions, let the teacher know immediately what is happening.
4. Avoid becoming involved in a captive role that allows children to take advantage of you (i.e., putting you in prison, tying your hands together, covering your eyes in any way). The focus of children's play in a school setting should not be on domination of adults.

## BLOCK CENTER

The presence of an adult in or near the block area can encourage children to build. If you are with children who are building, be an interested listener and ask questions if it seems appropriate, but do not attempt to direct the play. Suggestions should be open-ended and respectful of the child as decision-maker. For example, you might say, “Will there be a place for the cows to sleep in your barn?” instead of, “Why don’t you build a stall for the cows to sleep in?”

1. Blocks should never be thrown, intentionally dropped, or pushed over.
2. Children should not walk on the blocks.
3. Encourage the children to take from the shelves the blocks they need “for right now,” rather than dumping large piles into the area.
4. If a block structure becomes the child’s height, an adult should stay in close proximity. Watch closely for structural flaws that could cause the blocks to fall unexpectedly. Buildings should be no higher than the child’s head.
5. When taking down buildings, blocks should be removed one at a time. Buildings should never be pushed over. If you anticipate this is about to happen, remind the children of the way it should be done and explain that crashing buildings is not safe because it can cause people to get hurt and it can damage the blocks.
6. If necessary, assist children in returning the blocks to their proper place.

## SENSORY BINS

1. If water or other wet material is in the table, be sure the children’s sleeves are rolled or pushed up as far as possible.
2. Materials (water, sand, grain, etc.) are to be used so they stay inside the tub. Assist children in cleaning up spills quickly using towels, a mop, or broom and dustpan.
3. Do not allow children to throw sand, water, or other materials from the table. If a reminder or request is not heeded, notify the teacher.
4. The children should wash their hands after playing in the sensory bins.  
The children should not add extra water, soap, or materials or toys from other areas without permission. When in doubt, stop the children and check with the teacher.

## SNACK AND LUNCH

1. Children are to remain at the tables during snack and lunch time.
2. Adults and children must always wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before and after preparing or eating food.
3. Encourage children to try to open their things independently but help when needed.
4. When children finish eating, they are to throw away any trash.
5. The food area should be swept and the tables cleared and thoroughly cleaned with bleach water after all children have eaten. Feel free to grab the wipes and help sanitize.
6. Because of individual dietary restrictions, children are not permitted to share food from their lunches. Adults should also not share their food with children.

**\* We discourage children from sharing food because of allergies. If a child in your class has a life-threatening allergy to another food, you will be informed.**

## GROUP TIME / WHOLE GROUP INSTRUCTION

1. At least one adult should be in the group meeting area as children begin to transition there. Practice transition activities and/or read books to the children until the teacher assumes responsibility.
2. Sit directly behind the children and encourage them to listen and participate by modeling attentive behavior and participating in songs and finger plays.
3. Help to prevent problems by sitting with children who need support in this setting.
4. When children are distracted or disruptive:
  - Stay next to them or directly behind them.
  - Position yourself between children who might be distracted.

## OUTSIDE PLAY

1. Adults should not congregate while outdoors. Your role is to ensure the safety of the children as they are involved in active play, so student staff should be stationed throughout the playground and/or courtyard area to supervise appropriately.
2. Having an adult within sight and sound of every child is as critical outdoors as it is indoors. If a child leaves the area you are supervising, be sure to communicate with the person who should take over supervision responsibilities.
3. Don't yell across the play area unless there is an immediate threat of danger. Walk to a child and get his or her attention before giving directions.
4. Sand, gravel, and mulch should never be thrown and must be kept in the designated areas. Mulch is not for digging!
5. Children should not play in the storage shed.
6. Adults should **not** swing on the small swings, use the slide, ride the tricycles, or climb on equipment.
7. The swing area must be supervised closely. Redirect children who are running close to the path of others who are swinging. Children may swing forward and back (not side-to-side) and can sit on their bottoms or on their bellies.
8. Digging must be done in the designated areas only. **DIGGING TOOLS SHOULD NOT BE RAISED HIGHER THAN THE CHILD'S WAIST.**
9. Assist children in putting equipment in the storage shed or containers at the end of the period and park bikes in designated areas.
10. Adults should never swing children around in a circle by hanging onto their hands.
11. When using the slide children should be reminded to go feet first. Toy vehicles are not permitted on the slide.

## ADVENTURES and FIELD TRIPS

Adventures and Field trips are considered an extension of the YCP classroom with specific learning objectives and expectations for appropriate behavior. The teacher will communicate guidelines for individual trips.

1. If you assist with unloading children from a vehicle, position yourself so you can prevent running into the parking lot or traffic area. Children must always be near an adult.
2. You may be assigned to assist with a small group of children. You should assume responsibility for the safety and behavior of your group. Keep the children together at all times.
3. Talk with your group about what you are experiencing, ask questions to extend the children's thinking, and help to position children in ways that enable everyone to be involved as meaningfully as possible.
4. Avoid carrying children unless it is absolutely necessary.
5. Follow the teacher's lead at all times. The teaching staff is ultimately responsible for the safety and behavior of all children participating in the trip. You must assume this responsibility -- even if it means directing a child whose parent is present.

## BASIC GUIDELINES FOR TALKING WITH CHILDREN

- **Make sure you have the child's attention before you begin to speak.**  
This is easier if you are close to the child and down on her level. A gentle hand on her arm might help, too, depending on the child and the situation.
- **Always get down to a child's level when talking to her.**  
If sitting on the floor or squatting is uncomfortable for you, try keeping a chair handy.
- **Remember that body language, tone of voice, and facial expression affect the message you deliver.**  
The same phrase can be reassuring or threatening depending on how you say it. Words matter. Your expression and tone of voice matter just as much, and sometimes more.
- **Use simple words and short sentences.**  
Avoid idioms, sarcasm, and shortcuts. Try to say exactly what you mean as clearly as possible.
- **Don't be wishy-washy.**  
If you mean no, say it. If you say no, mean it!
- **Don't ask a question or offer a choice when there isn't one.**  
Let children know clearly what you need from them. Avoid using "okay?" at the end of directives, as in "It's clean-up time, okay?"
- **Don't ask questions to which you already know the answer.**  
This applies to managing behavior as well as concept development. Don't ask a child, "Is that the way we treat our friends?" You already know that pushing another child is not a good way to treat him, but a young child doesn't yet.
- **If you must interrupt children, remember they deserve the same courtesy adults expect.**  
Say something like, "Excuse me, I need you in the book corner now, please." Teach *please*, *thank you*, *I'm sorry*, *you're welcome*, and other niceties by your own modeling rather than prodding with that old "What do you say?"
- **Use praise in moderation and only when it is sincere and truly called for.**  
When you are praising a child, be specific—for example, instead of just saying, "Good job!" follow it with the appreciated behavior: "Good job picking up the blocks." Better yet, avoid praise altogether, and comment on or thank the child for the work she did. For example, "You did a lot of work picking up those blocks," or "Thank you for picking up so many blocks. Look how much space there is now!"

Mooney, C. (2005). *Use your words*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.