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YWCA of Minneapolis earns national recognition from NAEYC

Early childhood education programs earn special acknowledgment for their work in engaging diverse families

Minneapolis, MN – The YWCA of Minneapolis Downtown Children’s Center has been identified as an *Engaging Diverse Families* exemplary program by the [National Association for the Education of Young Children](#) (NAEYC) – the nation’s leading organization of early childhood professionals. The [YWCA Early Childhood Education program](#) is one of only ten programs nationwide to receive this honor.

The goal of the [Engaging Diverse Families](#) project is to learn how excellent early childhood education programs are effectively engaging diverse families and to share what is learned with other programs struggling to start and sustain family engagement practices. Family engagement occurs when there is an ongoing, reciprocal, strengths-based partnership between families and their children’s early childhood education programs. NAEYC looked for evidence of shared decision-making related to their children’s education; consistent, two-way communication; integration of families’ lives and communities into all aspects of the program; and program policies and professional development that support effective family engagement, such as ongoing training in communication skills and cultural competence.

“We’re thrilled to have earned this designation from NAEYC and to be recognized for our commitment to supporting and engaging diverse families,” said Deby Ziesmer, YWCA Director of Early Childhood Education. “This exemplary status reaffirms to families in our community that we are committed to fully engaging them in their children’s learning experiences, which is so critical in the early years.”

The YWCA of Minneapolis believes that early childhood education is one of the best social investments for communities to make. The YWCA operates three, urban Children’s Centers in Minneapolis, MN and provides high-quality early childhood education with an strong emphasis on inclusion that prepares children for success in school and life. Programming also supports families and actively works to engage parents in their child’s education.

The YWCA of Minneapolis will be recognized next month at the [19th National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development](#) in Phoenix, Arizona.

To be recognized as exemplary, the YWCA Downtown Children’s Center participated in an extensive process examining our research-based family engagement practices. The YWCA submitted a written application and program materials, participated in a phone interview, provided parent and family testimony, and received an on-site visit by NAEYC staff to provide a body of evidence showing that we are effectively reaching out to and including the diverse families we serve.

A growing body of research suggests that meaningful engagement of families in their children's early learning supports school readiness and later academic success. For many families, engagement in early learning is linked to their children's participation in early childhood education programs.

The YWCA Downtown Children's Center is also NAEYC-accredited. In the 25 years since NAEYC Accreditation was established, it has become a widely recognized sign of high-quality early childhood education. The Engaging Diverse Families exemplary programs have shown evidence that the YWCA of Minneapolis leads the early childhood education field in family engagement.

For more about *Engaging Diverse Families*, visit <http://www.naeyc.org/ecp/trainings/edf>.

The YWCA of Minneapolis is a nonprofit organization striving to achieve the empowerment of women and girls and to eliminate racism. The YWCA Early Childhood Education program serves more than 400 infants, toddlers, pre-school and school-age children annually. In 2009, 64 percent were from low-income households and 79 percent were children of color. The YWCA strives to nurture young children in partnership with their parents and prepare them for success in school. For more information, please visit www.ywcampls.org.

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