



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



THE MAGIC OF CHILDHOOD YMCA Preschool

Lake Norman YMCA

2024-2025

Parent Handbook

ymcacharlotte.org

Welcome to the Lake Norman YMCA Preschool Program! We look forward to working with your child and family during the 2024-2025 school year. This handbook contains important information and expectations to help prepare for a successful school year. Please review before your child's first day and contact us with any questions you may have.

Important Contacts

Alison Hume, alison.hume@ymcacharlotte.org, (Preschool Program Coordinator)

Levi Baer, levi.baer@ymcacharlotte.org, (Youth Development Director-Education)

James Adams, james.adams@ymcacharlotte.org, (Senior Director of Youth Development)

Our Mission

The YMCA is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

Our Values

Caring · Honesty · Respect · Responsibility · Faith

Program Philosophy

At the Y, we believe childhood is a magical time and understand the importance of learning that takes place in these early years. Building on the natural curiosity and energy young children bring each day, our preschool programs focus on developing the whole child – physically, emotionally, socially and academically – through developmentally appropriate experiences and environments. Play-based learning is at the heart of our programs, and our early childhood educators use a theme-based curriculum to teach foundational skills in fun and meaningful ways.

Calendar & Hours

The preschool program will operate from September 4, 2024 through May 23, 2025. Program hours are Monday-Friday from 8:45-12:45 PM. (1 year old classes meet on assigned days from 8:45-11:45.)

Our program follows Charlotte-Mecklenburg School's yearly calendar for instructional days and inclement weather policy.

The program will be CLOSED on the dates listed below for holidays, teacher workdays, and school breaks:

October 3-4th

November 4-5th, 11th, and 27-29th

December 23-31st

January 1-3rd

February 17th

March 31st

April 14th – 21st

What to Wear

Please dress your child in clothing that is comfortable, appropriate for the weather, and easy for your child to manage. We go outdoors daily, weather permitting, so rubber-soled shoes are a must (no sandals, flip flops, or slick bottom shoes). Many of the activities we do in preschool are messy- painting, outdoor play, eating- so you should expect that their clothes will get dirty.

What to Bring

1. Extra change of clothes- Send an extra change of clothes at the beginning of the school year so we have something to change into if your child's clothing gets soiled. You will need to provide new clothes whenever they are used and as the outdoor temperature changes.
2. Water bottle- Send a water bottle daily labeled with your child's name.
3. Lunch & snack- It is the family's responsibility to pack a separate nutritious snack and a well-balanced, healthy lunch each day for their child.

What Not to Bring

Since toys from home can be lost or cause friction among children, please do not let your child bring them to school. We will notify you in advance if there is a day designated for Show and Tell when your child can share a special toy.

We do not allow any technology (iPads, phones, DS devices, etc.) from home to be brought to school.

Labeling

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of labeling ALL your child's personal belongings. This includes everything they bring to school and everything they wear to school: clothes, shoes, coats/jackets, hats, gloves, umbrellas, lunch boxes, drink cups, food containers, ice packs, etc.

We will make every effort to return lost items while your child is in preschool. If you discover that something is missing, please contact your child's teacher or check the lost and found.

Daily Activities

Our preschoolers participate in a variety of activities daily, including circle time, learning centers, small group lessons, creative play, music and drama, art, social and emotional learning, and physical activity.

Your child's teacher will provide a class schedule at the beginning of the year with activities and times.

Lunch & Snack

Our daily schedule includes time for a snack and lunch. Teachers will monitor the children during meal times to ensure safety and to assist with any help your child may need. However, they will NOT be responsible for the order or amount your child chooses to eat. Please note we cannot refrigerate or heat your child's lunch. You are encouraged to use insulated containers to keep your child's lunch appropriately hot or cold. Please do NOT send candy or soft drinks. Please do not send products containing nuts in your child's lunch or snack. To the extent possible, please pack items that your child will be able to open on their own.

Walking

Starting in our One's classes we require children enrolling in our preschool to independently demonstrate walking ability by August 31st of the school year. Please notify us in advance of the program start date if your child is not walking independently.

Arrival (8:45-9:00)

A staff member will greet your car and check your child into preschool. Please do not let your child out of the car until a staff member opens the door. The staff member will direct your child to his/her classroom. We ask that CAREGIVERS PLEASE STAY IN THE CAR so that we can keep the carpool line moving.

Departure (12:45-1:00)

You will receive a sign with your child's name to display in your car window during pickup. As you near the Preschool entrance, show your sign and we will bring your child to you. Please stay in your car. A staff member will put your child in the car. Please refrain from using your cell phone during carpool times as we have many students and staff members moving around the parking lot and safety is a top priority!

Y staff cannot strap your child in the car seat. PLEASE PULL FORWARD TO A PARKING SPACE OR FIRE LANE TO BUCKLE YOUR CHILD. This allows our carpool line run smoother and faster.

North Carolina law requires a child safety seat or booster seat for children under 8 years old. Staff will not dismiss a child into a car if a proper car seat is not evident.

Late Pick Up

You will be charged a late fee if picking up after our dismissal time, which will automatically be drafted from your credit card on file. If you arrive after 1:05 PM, you will have to walk into the building to pick up your child. If a child is not picked up after 10 minutes, we will call someone on your emergency list.

Authorized Pick-Ups

For the safety of your child, participants will only be released to a legal guardian or responsible adult listed on the child's account. Every adult must present a government-issued photo ID during pick-up each day unless their photo is captured in our childcare software. In the event that a child will be picked up by an adult not listed on the registration form, please email the director and include the person's name as it appears on their photo ID.

If there is any change in who may pick-up your child, especially if someone who has been regularly signing your child out is no longer allowed custody, please update your online account and contact the preschool director immediately to change your approved list. If there are special circumstances involving custody issues you must provide the Director with legal documentation of these arrangements.

If you need to make changes to your child's authorized pick-up list, please follow these steps:

1. Go to ymcacharlotte.org and sign into your account using the icon in the top right corner.
2. Click "My Account" and go to "Manage My Family" on the left side menu.
3. Select the child you would like to update information for and select "View Emergency Contacts" in the drop-down menu.
4. Now you can add, edit, and/or delete emergency contacts. Be sure that "can pick up" field is marked "yes" if that person is allowed to pick up the child.
5. Click "Save." Please note that you will need to make updates to each child.

Inclement Weather

In the event of inclement weather or something else that may require a closing or delay with preschool, we will notify families as quickly as possible via e-mail, text, and the Class Dojo app. Please make sure contact information provided during registration is up to date.

Health and Wellness Policy

For the safety and well-being of all children and staff, the following health and wellness guidelines will be strictly enforced in all youth programs. Please be considerate and do not send your child to programs when they are sick. If a child develops symptoms of illness while in our care, the family will be notified and the child will need to be picked up immediately.

Children who have the following symptoms should remain at home until they are symptom free for a full 24 hours without the use of medication or unless a written note from the child's physician is provided, stating that the symptoms are not contagious and the child can attend programming:

- Fever (temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher)
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Sore throat
- Undiagnosed rash, sore, or other skin condition
- Head lice
- Continuous and/or colored drainage from nose or eyes
- Persistent cough
- Any other contagious disease or symptoms

Staff will notify the family or guardian to pick up children when any of the following conditions exist:

1. The child displays any of the symptoms above.
2. The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in program activities.
3. The illness results in a greater need than the YMCA staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children in the program.

Medications

If a child requires medication during their time at the Y, families are responsible for updating the child's health profile in their YMCA account, notifying the program director, and completing our Medication Authorization Form.

Our team will administer medications prescribed by a physician with dosing that the family cannot provide at home. Medication must be in the original container with the prescription label attached that includes child's name, date of birth, medication name, dosage, and expiration date. Over the counter medications must be in the original container and require a physician's note as these will be treated as prescription medication.

With the exception of emergency medications, such as EpiPens, the first dose of new medications should be given at home with sufficient time before the child attends the program in order to observe the child's response to the medication given.

We cannot accept, keep, or use expired medication. Medication must be picked up within one week of the program end date.

Behavior Guidelines

Philosophy

The YMCA believes the foundation of our work in youth development is safety and character development. We respect each child's unique needs and recognize that behavior is a form of communication. Our team understands that not all children will come in with the same social-emotional skills, which is why our approach is geared toward individual development. We aim to create a positive, nurturing, and supportive environment where each child can thrive.

Behavior Expectations

Our staff work with youth to help them learn and meet the following expectations in alignment with our core values:

1. Caring- Show a sincere concern for others.
2. Respect- Treat others how they would like to be treated.
3. Responsibility- Be accountable for your promises and actions.
4. Honesty- Be truthful in what you say and do.
5. Faith- Center yourself around your own spiritual well-being.

How We Support Youth

There are several steps we take to help youth be successful and make positive behavior choices:

- We build intentional relationships with youth.
- We create consistent schedules and routines to provide a sense of security and predictability.
- We encourage children to recognize and express their emotions in a healthy manner.
- We use encouragement, praise, and rewards for positive behavior.
- We set age-appropriate expectations but also adjust expectations for individual children based on maturity, ability, culture, language, and learning styles.
- We work with families to align how we can help youth experience success in our programs.
- We remain calm while engaging with children in heightened situations.

The following behaviors jeopardize safety and/or quality of our program experience and will result in a consequence:

- Behaviors that physically harm themselves, other youth in the program, or staff
- Behaviors that threaten the emotional safety of youth or staff
- Behaviors that damage property
- Behaviors that prevent participants from learning and/or experiencing program activities
- Behaviors that violate personal boundaries or are of a sexual nature

When youth demonstrate unsafe or inappropriate behavior, we have an opportunity to teach and help youth learn from their mistakes. Our staff may use the following approaches to guide the youth unless the nature of the behavior warrants dismissal from the program:

- Staff may redirect youth to an alternate choice or activity.
- Staff may review expectations with the youth to ensure they understand what is expected of them.
- Staff may provide a verbal warning and explain that continuing the behavior will result in a consequence.
- Staff may give a logical consequence for the behavior such as being moved to a different seat or not being able to play with a certain toy.
- Rather than putting youth in "time-out," we provide "time-in" (co-regulation) with a staff member. We sit with a youth to talk about what happened, why it happened, and how they can respond in a healthy way the next time.
- Staff may contact the parent or guardian.
- Staff may work with the parent or guardian to create an individual behavior plan.

Biting

Biting is a normal and temporary stage of development for young children under the age of 3, particularly for those who do not yet have the verbal skills to express their feelings. If biting occurs during preschool, our staff will teach the child that biting is not safe and give the child new ways to respond in those situations. Families will be notified if their child bites or is bitten, and a plan to prevent future biting will be created with the family if biting is habitual.

Toilet Training

Our teachers working with two-year olds will work with families when potty training. If you are potty training your two year old, please make your child's teachers aware. Be sure to let them know what techniques you are using at home, so that the teachers can reinforce them at school. Potty training is a HUGE developmental milestone, and we want to help make it as smooth of a process as possible.

It is required that three year olds be potty trained by the first day of school. We know that accidents can occur occasionally. The teachers will assist your child in changing into clean clothes if there is an accident. Please be sure to send a change of clothes, in case this happens. If you need to discuss accommodations with us related to toilet training, please reach out ahead of time so that we can work with you to create an appropriate plan for your child (wearing a pull up, for instance).

Communication

Open communication between families and teachers is strongly encouraged and happens through a variety of methods. Children's actions can sometimes reflect challenges or changes they are experiencing out- side of the program (pet's death, divorce, conflict at school, new siblings, etc.) Please keep us informed of anything happening at home that might affect your child so we are prepared to best support your child and family.

Email- You will also receive communication from program leadership as it relates to school wide activities and information.

Class Dojo app- Each class will use the Class Dojo app to share important information, pictures, the many on-going activities that have taken place in the classroom, our new monthly theme, and activities to look forward to. You can message your child's teachers using the app. Please wait until the next scheduled school day for a response from your teacher.

Feedback

We strongly value feedback and suggestions about how to make our programs better. Please do not hesi- tate to email, call, or set up a meeting with us to discuss any feedback you'd like to provide. We will also periodically conduct surveys or reach out in other ways to seek your feedback and/or ideas in order to enhance and improve what we're doing.

Progress Updates

Teachers will provide families with an update on how children are progressing with the skills we are teaching during preschool. Conferences will be held in January to discuss your child's progress and ways you can support their learning at home.

Please contact the preschool director if you would like to request a conference at any other time during the school year.

Cancellation Policy

All cancellations require a 15 days written notice.