

Steele Creek YMCA Preschool Academy

Education through the Arts

YMCA MISSION

To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

YMCA VISION

The YMCA of Greater Charlotte will connect and engage people to enhance lives and build community.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

At the foundation of the Steele Creek Preschool Academy is the belief that children learn best through hands-on, immersive, and sensory-rich experiences and environments that are specifically designed to integrate literacy, visual and performing arts, outdoor education, creative mindfulness and STEAM. We place high importance on movement in education and believe that children thrive when they are physically active throughout the day. We strive to provide a safe and engaging environment where children are encouraged to develop and balance their academic and creative skills through our unique curriculum and talented staff.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Steele Creek Preschool Academy is an arts-integrated preschool program that provides a visual, exploratory, engaging environment where your child will learn through visual and performing arts and thematic concepts. We place high importance on movement in education and believe that allowing our children to be physically active throughout the day, even during their academic activities, helps them to better process new concepts and retain information easier. It also helps with behavior management and to instill lifelong health and well-being. Our preschoolers have a unique opportunity to work with early educators, arts professionals and to learn in an environment that focuses on being active as a way of life. Through a curriculum inspired by the pedagogy of Reggio Emilia, our students and their teachers question, discover, create and move together.

Our program offers developmentally appropriate curriculum that includes the following:

- Monthly Themes
- Literacy and Math Learning Labs
- STEAM
- Creative Movement
- Drama
- Public Speaking
- Music
- Visual Arts
- Science and Discovery Lessons
- Sensory Exploration
- Outdoor Education
- Circle Time/Social Skills
- Self-Directed Classroom Centers
- Fine and Gross Motor Skill Developments
- Creative Mindfulness
- Monthly Character Traits

YMCA Quality Standards place limits on the amount of screen time (TV, computers, etc.) for preschoolers in our care to less than 30 minutes per day. Please note, the Preschool Academy does NOT regularly allow the children to watch or play with electronic devices. On rare occasion, a short piece of educational video may be used to supplement a lesson (i.e., an example of music or animals) or as part of a special class party (i.e., on a pajama party day a class may watch a holiday program while drinking hot cocoa).

STAFF

Our program is staffed with well-qualified, educated and trained professionals who are eager to positively influence the life of your child. After a thorough interview process, chosen teachers must complete a minimum of 30 hours of training throughout the year in areas such as child development, re-directive discipline techniques, positive reinforcement, social and emotional learning, appropriate lesson planning, best practices, safety and emergency procedures, CPR/First Aid, and YMCA child protection procedures. We look for leaders who exemplify outstanding character and compassion. Your child will work with a team of teachers all dedicated to providing a safe, nurturing and engaging learning environment. These professionals each possess expert field knowledge of their respective concentration (education, visual arts, theatre, dance, movement, and more).

PROCEDURES

Operating Hours:

The Steele Creek YMCA's Preschool Academy will operate for the upcoming school year from September 6, 2022 through May 26, 2023 at the Central Steele Creek Presbyterian Church (9401 s Tryon). Our daily hours are: Monday-Friday from 9:00am-1:00pm.

The program will consider the days below a holiday and no class will be held:

- Wednesday, November 23 – Friday, November 25
- Monday, December 19 – Monday, January 2
- Friday, April 7
- Monday, April 10- Friday, April 14

In the event of inclement weather or other event that requires closing or delaying preschool, we will notify responsible adults as quickly as possible via the Remind app. More information will be sent out closer to the first day of school.

*Please note: The Steele Creek YMCA Preschool Academy does not prorate tuition rates for days missed due to individual illness, vacations, inclement weather, or scheduled closings.

Arrival and Departure:

Our program begins at 9:00am and ends at 1:00pm. More information will be sent out closer to the beginning of school with details on our drop-off/pick-up procedures.

NC state child care laws limit the amount of time a child can be in care in an unlicensed preschool to four hours. For this reason, **it is imperative that your child is picked up by 1:00pm**. Please be respectful of this rule and do your best to arrive on time to pick up your child. If you are coming into the carline after 1pm, there will be a late fee assessed of \$1 per minute. You will get a verbal warning the first time you are late, but if it occurs more than once, will charge your YMCA account automatically.

Please note that children may NOT participate in the following programs or a combination of the following programs for more than FOUR HOURS in a calendar day in any YMCA of Greater Charlotte or combination of YMCAs in Greater Charlotte: Y Kids, Preschool Academy, Parents' Morning Out, Staff Child Care and Afterschool. This means that you will not be able to utilize Y Kids (at any YMCA in Greater Charlotte) for your child if they have already used the Ballantyne Preschool Academy that day. *However*, you are able to use recreational programming on the same day your child has preschool. For example, if your child attends school on Tue-Fri, you may not bring them to Y Kids on those afternoons, but you can bring them to a soccer clinic, gymnastics class, dance class, preschool club, etc.

YMCA Preschools are not licensed and regulated by the State Department of Child Development. YMCA of Greater Charlotte preschools adhere to YMCA Quality Standards and our guidelines meet or exceed state requirements. These standards are available at your request.

Early pick-up:

Please let us know at morning drop-off if your child will be picked up early and when possible, please email Jasmine.Young@ymcacharlotte.org or call the site phone at 704-654-1834 with the child's name, date and time to be picked up.

Photo and/or ID required for pick-up:

We use a software system to check your child in/out of care. Each person authorized to pick your child up will be listed on that system. Please confirm, via your online account, that your list is accurate and up to date. Changes can be made online or by emailing Jasmine.Young@ymcacharlotte.org

We will check your child out using photos stored in the software system, however, in the event that you do not have a photo saved, we will ask for a picture ID until we add one. In addition, we ask that you ALWAYS have your ID with you in the event that our system is down and we need to use another method to check out your child.

If your child is being picked up by another individual, that individual **MUST** have an appropriate child safety seat. By law, we are not able to release a child to a vehicle that does not have an appropriate car seat.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Payments:

Payments may be made via bank draft or credit card draft only. Payments are calculated by taking the daily program rate * number of days of service and dividing that total into 9 equal payments due on the 15th of each month from 8/15/2021-4/15/2022. If payment is not received by the 15th it will result in a **late payment fee of \$25. This fee is assessed automatically by our business office.** Failure to pay tuition within 5 days of the due date will result in the **termination of the child's enrollment** in the Steele Creek Preschool Academy.

Financial assistance is available. Please contact a Sales & Service representative at the Steele Creek YMCA to learn more about the assistance program. Approvals made after the start of the school year will be applied to future payments due.

A **non-refundable** registration fee of \$75/child (\$100 for non-members) is due at the time of registration.

A **non-refundable** supply fee of \$75 (\$125 for non-members) is due at time of registration. Supply fees are distributed throughout the program all year long.

All inquiries, questions, or concerns about payment/member account will need to be addressed to steelecreekympaprograms@ymcacharlotte.org

Wait-List Option:

If the class you wish to sign up for is at full capacity at the time of registration, we do have a wait-list option. Please register online for the class you wish to attend. You will be contacted by phone or email any time during the school year once an opening becomes available. You will be given a 48 hour window of time to respond before the next family on the list will be contacted.

Program Cancellations:

Year-long enrollment: All cancellations require a **TWO WEEK NOTICE VIA EMAIL**. Please email your notice to steelecreekympaprograms@ymcacharlotte.org to ensure proper and timely cancellation. Cancellations with less than two weeks notice will result in a prorated charge for the month regardless of whether the child attended. If notice is provided and a draft falls within the two weeks, any monies due will still be drafted. In order to stop a draft, two weeks notice via email is required. Registration and supply fees are non-refundable.

Short Term Change of Pick-Up:

To change your child's pick-up person for a specific day or a short term period, please email steelecreekympaprograms@ymcacharlotte.org at least 2 hours prior to pick-up when possible. If you need to permanently change or add an authorized person to the roster, please make those changes online. Remember to alert any authorized pick-up person to bring their valid photo ID.

COMMUNICATION

At the Steele Creek Preschool Academy, we want our families to be involved and informed. Communication between responsible adults and teachers is strongly encouraged and happens through a variety of methods. All of these communication points are intended as a way to open up communication with your child about their day and we encourage that you use the opportunity to build deeper understanding, reinforce learning and create even more enthusiasm for coming to school!

Backpack - Handouts and reminders will be sent home as appropriate in your child's backpack. Please check and empty your child's backpack after school each day to ensure that you don't miss any important news.

Weekly Lesson Plans – Your class's lesson plans will be provided to help you plan. They also include important reminders about specific upcoming classroom activities, which may need your attention.

Email – Once a month, you will receive an email from your teaching team about the many on-going activities that have taken place in the classroom, our new monthly theme, and activities to look forward to. You will also receive communication from program leadership as it relates to school wide activities and information.

Social Media – Please like the Steele Creek YMCA Facebook page and Instagram page- SteeleCreekY, where we post fun pictures either telling our daily story of what goes on or showing preparations for big events, along with interesting articles and quotes.

Modifications and Accommodations– If your child is in need of an accommodation to be successful in our program, please reach out to us prior to the start of school. We want to work with you to create a plan for your child so that we are prepared to provide the best possible care. We are happy to sit down as a team of teachers and administrators to get to know your child’s needs and how to help meet them so that he/she will have the best experience possible.

Volunteers – Unfortunately, with our new Covid-19 guidelines, we are unable to have in-person volunteers at this time. If you are interested in being informed of opportunities once they arise, please let us know and we will keep you informed.

Emergencies - Teachers keep their personal cell phones on and with them at all times. In the event of an emergency, they will follow the YMCA’s emergency protocols which include notification to other staff members. Be aware that in cases of a true emergency, 911 will be called first.

In the event a responsible adult needs to contact the classroom, please call the main us at 704-654-1834. The program staff member who answers the phone will then contact your teachers to convey any pertinent message, like an unexpected early pick-up.

POLICIES

Medications:

With the exception of medication for severe allergic reactions, the Steele Creek YMCA expects that all medications be administered at home before coming to school. However, if medication (prescribed or OTC) is absolutely required, please give the ORIGINAL PRESCRIPTION CONTAINER THAT IDENTIFIES THE PRESCRIBING PHYSICIAN, THE NAME OF THE MEDICATION, DOSAGE AND THE FREQUENCY OF ADMINISTRATION directly to Leadership Staff. Our leadership staff is responsible for safely storing the medication in a lockbox in the program office, including EpiPens. No over-the-counter medications, unless accompanied by a doctor’s note, will be administered. A signed medication consent form is also required to be able to administer any medicine including Epi-Pens. Medicines, including Epi-Pens, cannot be expired.

Emergencies:

All of our staff is certified annually by the American Safety & Health Institute in Infant/Child CPR and First Aid. We are well-quipped to handle and treat routine cuts, scrapes and bumps. In the case of serious illness or an accident involving your child we will provide appropriate care and contact you immediately. Be aware that in cases of a true emergency, 911 will be called first.

Discipline Policy:

The philosophy of our program is based on the character development principles of Respect, Responsibility, Caring, Honesty and Faith. It is with respect that each teacher will handle every disciplinary situation. Our main objective is to provide positive reinforcement, consistent praise, and encouragement. When a child misbehaves the following steps will be taken:

1. **Redirect-** the child will be redirected from the inappropriate behavior to a more suitable choice or activity.
2. **Warning-** the child will be given a verbal warning and reminded that continuing the inappropriate behavior will result in a consequence.
3. **Logical Consequence-** the child will be given a logical consequence for their behavior such as being separated from the group for a short time or not being able to play with a certain toy, etc.
4. **Conference-** if the above steps have not been successful, a conference with the responsible adult and teachers will be held to discuss positive methods.

Please note that in the event that a child demonstrates behavior that puts the safety of others at risk we may choose to send them home for the remainder of the day.

Our first priority is creating a safe and nurturing environment for ALL of our children to learn and grow in. Our school has a unique set-up, both by curriculum and daily transitions. We reserve the right to document behavior and to set up conferences with any family whose child may find this type of preschool setting challenging.

Biting Policy:

With young children, biting is a normal and temporary developmental phase, particularly for those who do not yet have the verbal skills to express their thoughts. However, we recognize that this behavior is not only disruptive to the class, but also unsafe. Teachers will do their best to prevent biting, but in the event that a child is bitten the following safety measures will be taken:

1. The child who was bitten will receive proper care for their injury. If the skin has been broken, the child's responsible adult will be called and given the option of having both the biter and the bitten child tested for communicable diseases by the YMCA. This is done at no cost to the family and confidentiality of both parties will be strictly maintained.
2. The biter will be firmly reminded that biting is not an acceptable way to treat his/her friends and will receive a consequence of being separated from the group for an age appropriate amount of time (2-3 minutes).
3. The responsible adult of both children will be notified at pick-up (a phone call will be made if the skin is broken) and an incident report will be filed at the YMCA.
4. If the child bites, regardless of whether skin is broken, 3 times within a 30 day period, the child will need to be picked up immediately from the program and will not be able to return the following school day (even if days separate their in-person class time). Upon returning to the Y, if another biting occurs within one week, the responsible adult/authorized pick up will need to pick up the child immediately and the child will be suspended for another 1 day (24 hours). Upon return, if additional biting occurrences happen, the child will be removed from the childcare program for a period of time based on the Directors discretion.
5. If a child is biting habitually, we will work with the child's responsible adult to create an appropriate action plan for prevention such as providing a more appropriate object for them to bite (i.e., a teething necklace).

6. If child 3 years and an older child bites and breaks the skin, they will be sent home immediately. After the 2nd bite occurs, the child will be suspended for 2 days and after the 3rd bite, the child will be removed from the program for a period of time based on the Sr. Director's discretion.

*All biting incidents will be documented regardless of severity.

Lunch and Snack:

It is the family's responsibility to pack a separate nutritious snack and a well-balanced, healthy lunch each day for their child. Teachers will monitor the children during lunch each day 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. To the extent possible, please pack items that your child will be able to open on their own. Please label your child's lunchbox (and if possible, all other belongings that are sent in with them for the school day – backpack, water bottle, etc).

*Please Note: Children will be provided the opportunity to sing a blessing prior to snack and lunch. They may choose not to participate.

Please remember that there can be NO PEANUT PRODUCTS/NUTS or TREE NUTS of any kind sent in your child's snack or lunch. If you send in an alternative butter, please label the item for your teachers. Any nut item sent into school will remain in its original packaging and be returned home with a peanut free reminder. In that situation, we will do our best to offer an alternative item or contact you for help.

While the YMCA of Greater Charlotte is committed to providing an environment free of peanuts and tree nuts, we cannot guarantee that allergens will not find their way into our facility. Responsible adults should make every effort to provide meals and/or snacks that do not contain nuts. However, we realize that most packaged products are labeled with verbiage that indicates foods may contain traces of nuts or may be made in facilities or on equipment that processes nuts so we do expect that some packaged products in our facility will contain that messaging.

Water Bottle:

Please send a water bottle with your student since we can only use the hands free water fountains at this time. Please label this water bottle with your student's name.

Birthday Celebrations/Party Invitations:

Your child will be celebrated and given recognition for their special day in the classroom, per your teachers' discretion.

Dress Code:

- No flip-flops or shoes that come off of feet easily.
- Comfortable, roomy clothes that can get messy (we do have and use smocks for our youngest students, but there are always opportunities for a spill or an "oops" in an arts preschool!)
- Be aware that all intentions are there to ensure hair bands, bows, jewelry or other special items that come to school goes home at the end of the day with their owner. But accidents happen and items can be misplaced or broken.

Potty Expectations:

We ask that children 3 years old and older are potty trained by the first day of school. If you need to discuss an accommodation with us, please reach out ahead of time so that we can work with you to create an appropriate plan for your child. We know that some children take to training easier than others and that accidents can occur occasionally, even for those that have a good grasp on it. Our teachers will do their best to help reinforce what you're working on at home and will assist kids in changing into clean clothes if there is an accident. Please be sure to send a change of clothes with your child each day. On occasion, we may ask for a child to come to school wearing a pull-up until accidents occur with less consistency.

Labeling:

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of labeling **all** of your child's personal belongings. Very often if an item is not labeled, teachers are unable to determine its owner. Therefore, if your child brings it to school, make sure that their name is clearly written on it. Do not hesitate to label EVERYTHING!

RESPONSIBLE ADULT EXPECTATIONS

Our hope is that the Steele Creek Preschool Academy is a wonderful experience for both you and your child. Over the course of the year, we hope that you feel welcomed and valued by our staff. We feel honored to have your trust in the care and development of your child. Please feel free to share your questions, comments, or concerns with the Program Director or your child's teachers. To help us meet your child's needs, we ask the following:

- Follow policies and procedures outlined in this handbook
- Maintain open communication with teachers and Academy staff. For instance, children's actions often reflect situations that are experienced at home (i.e. death of a pet, family changes, moving, etc.) If any such experiences occur, please inform the directors or teachers so that we will better meet the needs of your child.