



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



# THE MAGIC OF CHILDHOOD YMCA Preschool

Brace Family YMCA

2023-2024  
Parent Handbook

[ymcacharlotte.org](http://ymcacharlotte.org)



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
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Dear Families,

Welcome to the Brace Family YMCA Preschool Program! We look forward to working with your child and family during the 2023-2024 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.

Thank you for entrusting in us, your most precious child. We are very excited in what the year has in store for us.

Jennifer E. Carlson  
Early Childhood Director

JenniferE.Carlson@ymcacharlotte.org  
704-716-4323

## **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.

## **Modifications and Accommodations**

Participation by those with diversabilities is encouraged. Reasonable accommodations will be reviewed in partnership with the individual/family and implemented on a case-by-case basis for a safe and enriching experience.

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 will schedule a meeting to discuss your child's needs and work with you to create a plan to help your child have the best experience possible.

## **Calendar & Hours**

The preschool program will operate from September 5, 2023 through May 24, 2024. Program hours are Monday-Friday from 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM.

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

September 26  
October 5, 31  
November 8, 11, 23-25  
December 19-31  
January 1-2, 16, 25  
February 20  
March 27  
April 7-14

## **Childcare Usage Guidelines**

YMCA preschool programs are not licensed and regulated by the NCDHHS Division of Child Development and Early Education. Based on state guidelines, children are not able to participate in unlicensed child-care programs for more than four hours per day. If your child attends preschool for 4 hours, please note that they will be unable to participate in any other childcare programs that day, including Y-Kids drop-in childcare or Kids' Night Out.

## **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, in a labeled bag, at the beginning of the school year so we have something to change your child into if their clothing gets soiled. You will need to provide clean 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.
4. Backpack- Please send your child with a backpack big enough to hold their folder, lunch box, water bottle and change of clothes.

## **Curriculum**

The Brace Family Preschool prides itself on a play based curriculum. Giving children opportunities and intentional guidance provides them with a variety of valuable learning experiences. Play fosters and develops language, problem solving, and motor skills while allowing kids to dive into academic areas in a fun and meaningful way. We provide many age-appropriate resources to enrich their learning through play and exploration. We believe that children learn best through hands on experiences. All activities are child centered. This program encourages self-expression and exploration. The daily activities will consist of circle time, read aloud stories, free choice centers, art, music and small group work. In addition to spending quality time in the classroom, the students also attend several "special" classes throughout the week.

***A daily class schedule will be given to you at the beginning of the year by your child's teacher. This schedule will include times of activities (story time, lunch, outside, etc.)***

### **Two's Program**

Our two year old program focuses on developing a love for school and helping students with that first time separation anxiety. We provide an inviting atmosphere that encourages a child to explore, have fun and develop self-help skills. Our teachers will concentrate on

- Following a daily schedule
- Beginning to learn to share
- Use our words (communicate wants and needs)
- Encourage participation in Circle Time (songs, weather, story time)
- Painting, coloring, pasting
- Introduce letters, numbers, shapes and colors
- Introduce own name and friends names
- Assist with the mastery of "Potty training"

### **Three's Program**

Our three year old program focuses on continuing the love for school, sharing, and self-help skills. Our teachers will concentrate on:

- Following a daily schedule
- Sharing and playing with others through Centers
- Recognition of letters, numbers, shapes and colors through art
- Recognition of one's first name and friends names
- Self-reliance; Unpacking book bag, lunchtime, Packing up book bag, clothing
- Develop large and small motor skills

### **Four Year Old Program**

Our four year program focuses on continuing the love for school and building the necessary skills for the student to move on to Kindergarten. Our curriculum is based on the Scholastic program; *PreK On My Way*. This amazing program builds a students Language, Literacy and Math Skills through a weekly theme that builds upon its self for 4 weeks. Our teachers will also concentrate on:

- Following a daily schedule
- Following multi step directions
- Sharing and playing with others in group centers
- Self-reliance (unpacking book bag, lunchtime, clothing, packing book bag at the end of the day)
- Recognizing upper and lower case letters, numbers 1-20
- Introduction of sight words
- Writing one's first and last name

### **Transitional Kindergarten Program**

Our TK program focuses on building the necessary skills for the student to move on to Kindergarten. Our curriculum is based on the Scholastic program; *PreK On My Way*. This amazing program builds a student's Language, Literacy and Math Skills through a weekly theme that builds upon its self for 4 weeks. Our teachers will also concentrate on:

- School readiness
- Building the bridge to meet the needs of the 5 year old in areas of social, physical, and academics
- Developmental skills and self-esteem are enhanced
- Enhance social development
- Prewriting and spelling skills
- Graphing, measuring, sorting, patterns
- Science and the world around them
- Art and music development

accordingly. The activities are done in a small group setting, so we can meet each child's developmental needs, and the curriculum is designed so that the activities grow with them as they develop over the course of the year.

## **Students:**

Children will be assigned to classes based on their age **on or before August 31, 2023.**

***Children will not be "aged up" into a different classroom. They MUST meet the specified birthdate criteria for the class.***

Children do not change classes after they have a birthday. We recognize that classes will have a range of birthdays represented (just as children will have throughout their school career) and design our curriculum accordingly. The activities are done in a small group setting, so we can meet each child's developmental needs, and the curriculum is designed so that the activities grow with them as they develop over the course of the year.

## **Classroom Ratios (Teacher: children)**

Twos- 2:12

Threes- 2:14

Fours- 2:16

Transitional Kindergarten- 2:16

## **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, social and emotional learning, and physical activity. In addition to time in the traditional classroom setting, our preschoolers will also go outside each day weather permitting.

We utilize Scholastic Pre-K on My Way for our 4s and TK.

Your child's teacher will provide a daily 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 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 pack items that your child will be able to open on their own. As the year progresses, we will work towards your child becoming self sufficient. In our older classes we want them ready for Kindergarten.

### **Nut-Free Facility**

Please remember that we are a PEANUT FREE facility. Please do not send any 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 to school will remain in its original packaging and be returned home.

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.

### **Preschool Staff**

The Y hires a diverse team of teachers, who are excited to help young people reach their potential. After a screening process which includes background checks and drug testing, teachers receive 20 hours of training, including curriculum, child development and emergency preparedness. All YMCA staff are also certified in CPR and First Aid and must complete Child Abuse Prevention Training.

### **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 outside 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.

BrightWheel app- Each class will use the BrightWheel app to share important information, pictures, and more! You can message your child's teachers and Director using the app.

Newsletter- Once a week, you will receive a Brightwheel message 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 follow us on the Brace Family YMCA Facebook page and @BraceFamilyYMCA Instagram page where we post fun pictures either telling our daily story of what goes on or showing preparations for big events, along with branch information.

### **Feedback**

We strongly value feedback and suggestions about how to make our programs better. Please do not hesitate 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.

### **Volunteer Opportunities**

We love our parent volunteers. Teachers will have sign up sheets at open house for different opportunities to help with in the classroom.

### **Birthdays and Celebrations**

In an effort to maintain a healthy environment and to be sensitive to the increasing number of food allergies of our participants, birthdays may be observed with **non-edible items** only. Children will be given recognition of their special day (with a crown, stickers and/or a special privilege) in the classroom.

Holiday celebrations will be celebrated with healthy snacks, games and holiday projects. Your teachers will reach out to the class with the plans for all celebrations.

### **Arrival (9:00-9:15)**

A staff member will greet you at 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 (1:00-1:15)**

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 THE END OF THE DRIVE TO BUCKLE YOUR CHILD. This allows our carpool line to 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 \$1 for every minute you are late. The late fee will automatically be drafted from your credit card on file. If you arrive after 1:15 PM, you will have to walk into the building to pick up your child. If a child is not picked up after 15 minutes, we will call someone on your emergency list to pick up your child.

### **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](http://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.

### **Emergency Contacts**

Two emergency contacts/authorized to pick-up individuals are MANDATORY in addition to all parents/guardians for each child. Emergency contacts will automatically be considered as authorized to pick-up unless indicated otherwise.

### **Inclement Weather**

The Brace Family YMCA Preschool will not offer make up days or refunds due to missed days due to inclement weather, Act of God, or Power outages.

Our school calendar does follow the CMS Calendar but in the event of inclement weather the Brace Family YMCA Preschool will make an independent decision concerning closures due to the weather. We will notify families as quickly as possible via e-mail and the BrightWheel app.

## **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, a family member/guardian will be notified and will need to pick up their child immediately.

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

- Fever (temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher)
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Contagious diseases or symptoms
- Continuous and/or colored nasal drainage (can provide a physician's note if caused by an allergy)

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.

If an illness such as Head Lice, Fifth Disease or Chicken Pox has been reported to us, we will send written notices home with fellow participants so that parents/guardians can be alert for symptoms.

Program participants and staff will wash/sanitize hands upon entering the classroom at the beginning of the day and before eating. Participants and staff will also wash hands after each visit to the restroom.

## **Medications**

Please administer all medications at home whenever possible. If medications are required during pre-school hours, a "Medication Authorization Form" must be completed. Prescription medications must be in the original bottle with prescription label, and over the counter medication will be accepted only with an accompanying physician's note.

If your child has an Epi pen please complete an "Authorization to Administer Medication" form before your child's first day of school. All emergency medication will be kept in a safe location in the child's classroom.

## **Absences**

Should your child be out sick, due to illness, vacation or emergency, your child's teacher would like to know in advance. While this of course is not required, our teachers do get concerned when a child is out, especially for an extended amount of time. You can reach them at the office: 704-716-7323 or JenniferE.Carlson@ymcacharlotte.org.

## **Child Guidance**

The YMCA believes the foundation of our work in youth development is safety and character development. We believe in meeting each child's unique needs and recognize that behavior is a form of communication. The YMCA understands that not all children will come in with the same skills, and we understand that part of our role is helping teach children how to regulate their emotions. The following steps may be taken to address inappropriate behaviors:

- Redirect- child will be redirected to a more suitable choice or activity
- Warning- staff will provide a verbal warning and remind the child that continuing the behavior will result in a consequence
- Logical consequence- child will be given a logical consequence for the behavior such as being moved to a different seat or not being able to play with a certain toy
- Conference- a meeting with the family and teachers will be held to discuss what has occurred and create a plan to help the child be successful

## **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.



**Enrollment**

Enrollment begins in February and is on a first-come, first serve basis. Children who currently attend preschool (and siblings) will be allowed to register prior to registration opening to the general public. The preschool director will send information to families about registration in January.

**Financial Information**

Payments may be made via bank draft or credit card draft only. Payments are calculated by taking the daily program rate x number of days of service, and dividing that total into 9 equal payments due on the 15th of each month from 8/15/2023-4/15/2024. 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 preschool program.

My Y Pricing Scholarship is the YMCA's rate structure designed to help us fulfill our mission to serve all by being affordable for our members. Upon receiving an income adjusted membership rate and having dependents (children) on your membership, you will receive a program scholarship rate. Please visit our Sales and Service Center for more information. Approvals made after the start of the school year will be applied to future payments due. Scholarships will not be applied

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 \$90 (\$90 for non-members) is due at time of registration. Supply fees are distributed throughout the program all year long.

**Cancellation Policy**

All cancellations require a 15 days written notice. Please email your notice to [BraceFailyPreschool@ymcacharlotte.org](mailto:BraceFailyPreschool@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. All cancellations for the year must be submitted by April 15th.

\*Please note that we do not prorate tuition rates for days missed due to individual illness, vacations, inclement weather, or scheduled closings.

**Tax Time:**

YMCA Tax ID: 56-1045299

**Tuition**

Full tuition is drafted by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month, from August 15<sup>th</sup> – April 15<sup>th</sup>. Refunds are not given for days missed due to illness, snow days, Act of God or Nature or vacation. Your child has an assigned spot in our program (we cannot give your child’s spot away to outside children on days your child does not participate). **Should you have questions regarding payments, please contact Jennifer E. Carlson at: JenniferE.Carlson@ymcacharlotte.org or 704 716 4323.**

Monthly Rates	Members	Program Members
2 Year Old Class – Tues. & Thurs. 9:00 – 1:00	\$258.00	\$345.00
3 Year Old Classes: 3 days –Mon/ Wed/Fri 9:00 - 1:00	\$336.00	\$427.00
3 Year Old Classes: Monday - Thurs- day 9:00–1:00	\$351.00	\$438.00
4 Year Old Class – Monday – Thurs- day 9:00 – 1:00	\$351.00	\$438.00
4 Year Old Class – Monday – Friday 9:00 – 1:00	\$409.00	\$507.00
Transitional Kindergarten – Monday - Friday 9:00 – 1:00	\$476.00	\$616.00

**A \$25.00 late fee will be charged if tuition is paid after the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month.** Families are given a one week grace period to pay late (fee included), however, should they not pay within that week, their child/ren will not be allowed to return to school until their account is up to date. Should they wish to withdraw their child, our withdrawal procedure still applies.