



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



**THE
MAGIC OF CHILDHOOD
Ballantyne Preschool
Academy
MORRISON FAMILY YMCA**

**2024-2025
Parent Handbook**

ymcacharlotte.org

Welcome to Ballantyne Preschool Academy! 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

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Ballantyne Preschool Academy Director
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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 foundation of the Ballantyne 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, foreign language, 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.

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.

Calendar & Hours

The preschool program will operate from September 3th, 2024 through May 23th, 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:

- October 3.4
- November 4.5.11.27.28.29
- December 23-31
- January 1.2.3.20.24
- February 17
- March 31
- April 14-21

Program Overview

The Ballantyne 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 our 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
- Theatre
- 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

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.

Arrival (8:55-9:15)

Morrison Family YMCA

Please enter through our entrance off of Community House Road and proceed to our Building Car Line at the playground. Place your car line Sign on your dashboard. 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.

Ballantyne Art Center

Please park in our shared parking lot. We are located on the second floor of the shopping center. You can use the elevator next to Tropical Smoothie Café to come upstairs or use the stairs at the end of the building next to Salad Works. Once you exit the elevator, proceed straight ahead until you see our double glass doors on your left (vice versa from stairs). You will be greeted in the lobby and checked in.

Departure (12:45-1:00)

Morrison Family YMCA

Please enter through our entrance off of Community House and proceed to our Building Car Line at the playground. Place your Car Line Sign on your dashboard. A staff member will verify the check out and your child will be brought to your vehicle. 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.

Ballantyne Art Center

Please park in our shared parking lot. Come upstairs using the stairs or elevator and enter the Ballantyne Art Center. Proceed to the lobby and a staff member will check your child out.

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.

Emergency Contacts

Two emergency contacts/authorized to pick-up individuals are requested in addition to all parents/guardians for 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 and the BrightWheel app.

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. Please do not send products containing nuts. 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).

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 are 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 recommended 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).

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). (Children at the Ballantyne Art Center will utilize our indoor playground space.) 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 your child’s backpack 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. Please do not send products containing nuts.

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.

Caregiver & Guardian Expectations

Our hope is that Ballantyne 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 Preschool Director or your child’s teachers. We ask that you follow the policies and procedures outlines in this handbook and maintain open communication with BPA teachers and staff.

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 or February 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.

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.

Email—Once a month, you will receive a newsletter 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.

BrightWheel App—Each class will use the BrightWheel app to share important information, pictures, and more! You can message your child's teachers using the app. Please wait until the next scheduled school day for a response.

Social Media—Please "like" the Morrison Family YMCA Facebook page and Ballantyne Art Center Facebook page. You can also follow us on Instagram @morrisonfamilyymca and @ballantyneartscenter_ymca where we post fun pictures either telling our daily story of what goes on or showing preparations for big events, along with branch information.

Volunteer Opportunities

Please email MorrisonPreschool@ymcacharlotte.org if you are interested in volunteering at Ballantyne Preschool Academy. All volunteers must complete a background check screening to become a registered YMCA volunteer. Teachers will reach out to parents when they need assistance with special events in the classroom. We also have opportunities throughout the year for parents to help us prep curriculum materials (You are not required to complete the volunteer process for curriculum help.)

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 childcare 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.**