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# LEARN GROW THRIVE



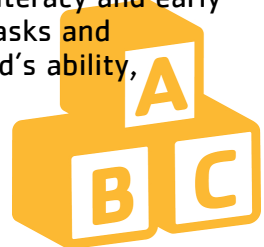
**First Step Preschool**  
THE CENTER FOR YOUTH PROGRAMS

## FIRST STEP PRESCHOOL HANDBOOK

You've made a very important decision in your child's life and we want you to feel confident that you've made the best choice by enrolling your child in the YMCA's First Step Preschool. So we've created this handbook to educate you on the goals and objectives of our program and to offer suggestions on how you can assist in your child's success now and throughout his/her education.

This journey, that your child will embark on, will focus on education through exploratory play with a concentration on literacy and early education. Our philosophy is to provide settings, tasks and benchmarks that can be modified to meet each child's ability, providing them challenging, yet attainable goals.

**THE CENTER FOR YOUTH PROGRAMS**  
6 Liberty Street Middletown, NY 10940  
(P) 845 344 9622 EXT. 243 (W) [www.middletownymca.org](http://www.middletownymca.org)



## **GOALS OF THE YMCA OF MIDDLETOWN PRESCHOOL PROGRAM**

The primary goal of our preschool program is to provide students with an age appropriate preschool education, emphasizing developmental growth in language, literacy, math, and science concepts. We also focus on physical development and encourage the strengthening of social and self-care skills. Through developmentally appropriate activities involving a hands-on, multi-sensory approach to learning, students will be provided a foundation of the fundamentals necessary to take that next step in their education.

Another goal is to actively include parents/guardians in the education process. We maintain an open door policy and welcome parents/guardians to explore the many exciting ways they can participate in our program. We are committed to helping parents/guardians gain knowledge and skills necessary to encourage and aid their children in becoming life-long learners.

## **STAFF TO CHILD RATIO**

We follow the New York State Office of Children and Family Services guidelines. Our program occasionally utilizes the services of family volunteers, student interns, and student teachers (when available).

## **TRADITIONAL PRESCHOOL HOURS**

AM Only	9:00AM-11:30PM
PM Only	12:15PM-2:45PM
Full Day	9:00AM-2:45PM
Extended AM	7:00AM-9:00AM
Extended PM	2:45PM-6:00PM

## **PARENT/GUARDIAN PARTICIPATION**

There is a strong correlation between the active participation of parents/guardians in their children's learning experience and success in school. As primary educators of your children and our valued partners, parents/guardians are strongly urged to actively participate in their child's education. It is of paramount importance that parents/guardians keep open communication with teachers and administrators and that teaching staff keep in constant contact with parents/guardians. The active involvement of parents/guardians is an essential component to their child's progress and the partnership between the parent/guardian and school is critical to the success of our program. We also depend on parent/guardian volunteers to assist in the classroom with special events. Volunteering in the classroom is a beneficial way to get involved and is highly recommended and encouraged.

## **IMPORTANT CONTACTS**

### **DAYCARE DIRECTOR**

Sue Cummings

(P) 845 395 1025

(E) [scummings@middletownymca.org](mailto:scummings@middletownymca.org)

### **BRANCH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Sherri Tironi

(P) 845 956 1546

(E) [stironi@middletownymca.org](mailto:stironi@middletownymca.org)

### **YMCA OF MIDDLETOWN**

(P) 845 344 9622

### **CHILDCARE BILLING**

(P) 845 395 1004

(E) [af@middletownymca.org](mailto:af@middletownymca.org)

**Voicemails and emails will be returned within 24 hours.**

## **PLEASE CALL US...**

- if your phone number changes during the school year.
- to update your child's records.
- to speak with your child's teacher or a YMCA Administrator.
- to update/alter your child's Health/Emergency Contact Record.
- if your child will be absent.
- if you have questions regarding our program.

## **WE WILL CONTACT YOU...**

- if your child is absent and you have not called us.
- if your child becomes ill or injured.
- if we need additional information about your child.
- if we need to address a specific issue.

## **SCHOOL CALENDAR YEAR**

Our program calendar runs fairly consistent with the Enlarged City School District of Middletown and the Minisink Valley School District. However, occasionally our schedule may vary. For example, we always run both the AM and PM sessions when the district has a scheduled half day. All calendar changes can be found in the monthly newsletter that is sent home from school. We also provide you a copy of the calendar and suggest that you keep it in a convenient, visible spot for future reference.

## **EXPECTATIONS**

It is our expectation that all children within time will be able to conform to the routine of our day and be an active participant in our program schedule. All participants must have toileting skills and other self help skills, such as being able to age-appropriately dress oneself and articulate their needs. We require that all of our participants act in a respectful manner.

## LUNCH & SNACKS

You are always welcome to send your child with a snack and lunch however, every child will be offered a daily snack. Please note that we regularly serve water as the beverage. Lunch is available through the Middletown School District for students in our full day program. A monthly menu is provided. To receive lunch/snack from the school district, you must complete an enrollment form and an income eligibility form. If your child has food allergies or is a picky eater, you are welcome to provide your child with his/her own snack and lunch. If you choose to send snack, please make sure that it is a healthy choice. We encourage you to bring a treat in for the entire class to celebrate a birthday or even a special family event.

## STUDENT DRESS CODE

Your child should be dressed with safety, independence, and “getting messy” in mind. Clothing needs to be sturdy and washable. Clothing should be comfortable so your child can enjoy participating in all activities without worry. Clothing needs to “move” with your child as he/she runs, jumps, and sits on the floor. It helps to dress your child in clothing that has simple closures to allow for self-dressing and self-toileting. Acceptable footwear includes *sneakers or other closed toe shoes with rubber soles*. Sandals and open-toed shoes are not appropriate footwear for school. When boots are a necessity, children should bring in appropriate footwear to change into. All outdoor clothing and extra clothing must be labeled with your child’s full name. All clothing needs to be appropriate for the season and outdoor temperatures. Boots, hats, and mittens are necessary attire in the winter.

**Swimming lessons** are an optional activity offered once a week for two 12 week sessions. The first session begins in October and the second one in the spring. All students are eligible. A bathing suit, towel, and sandals or pool shoes are required. Once the schedule is made available to you, you must visit the YMCA on Highland Avenue to register. **Classes are filled on a first-come-first-served basis.**

## CUSTODY AND VISITATION

If you have a Divorce or Separation Agreement that designates custody or visitation, you must provide us with a copy in order for us to deny pick-up or visitation. Parents/guardians have a continued responsibility to inform the program of any legal status regarding their child. We must honor any valid court documentation regarding custody. We must be provided with legible, updated, and validated court documentation when changes occur.

**ATTENDANCE**

The quality of your child’s classroom experience is directly related to your child’s attendance. It is critical for your child to be at school regularly. Perpetual absenteeism can put your child’s placement at risk and inhibit your child’s ability to be successful and thrive. It is expected that you will only keep your child from attending school due to illness. When your child is absent, you are required to supply the teacher with an absentee note. If your child is enrolled in our U.P.K. program, the note will be forwarded to the school district. If your child’s attendance is not consistent, the school district may directly address you regarding the issue.

**HEALTH RELATED ISSUES**

Please keep your child home and call your pediatrician when you see these symptoms:

Sore Throat	Skin Rash or Sores	Red or Swollen Joints
Nausea	Inflamed Eyes	Enlarged Glands
Runny Nose	Raspy Cough	Flushed Face
Diarrhea	Fever	Chills
Unusual Paleness	Fatigue	Vomiting

If your child becomes ill or injured at school, basic first aid will be given. If further treatment is needed, your child’s teacher will contact you. If we can not contact you, we call the emergency contacts you provided us for your child and continue to try calling until we speak directly to either you or one of your emergency contacts.

If your child’s condition is deemed serious, an ambulance will be called immediately and if you or an emergency contact does not arrive in time to accompany your child to the hospital, a staff member will do so.

When your child is sick and will be absent, please notify the school by calling 845-395-1025. It is also important to notify us if your child is diagnosed with any communicable illness, so that we can alert parents and guardians.

If your child has an allergy to bee stings, or has asthma, epilepsy, or any other chronic condition, please be sure to make us aware.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Teachers communicate through monthly newsletters and Class Dojo. Newsletters will be posted on bulletin boards outside of classrooms. Items such as report cards or end of the year payment statements will be handed directly to you or sent home in your child’s backpack.

## **CONFERENCES**

Parent conferences will be scheduled for all students in late fall and mid spring. Additional conferences may be scheduled any time during the year, either at your request or at the request of the teacher. You may contact your child's teacher to make an appointment for an additional conference. Please do not expect the teacher to spend extensive time talking with you during, before, or after class hours. If you would like to meet with your child's teacher, please arrange a time in advance.

## **BEHAVIOR**

Enrollment of a child in the YMCA of Middletown Preschool program is dependent upon an agreeable match between the child's needs, the family's needs aligning with our program philosophy, guidelines and resources.

A child's continued enrollment in our program is based upon an agreement to uphold our standards of appropriate behavior.

### **Appropriate behaviors include:**

- Students keeping hands, feet and all body parts to themselves.
- Students coming to school prepared.
- Students following directives the first time they are given.
- Students not verbally abusing anyone.
- Students being toilet trained.

Inappropriate behavior directly related to the safety and well being of the other children and adults in the program may cause a child's dismissal from our program. In the event that inappropriate behavior is observed, the teacher will contact the parent/guardian and might ask for the child to be picked up immediately. If this type of behavior continues, the program administrator will contact the parent/guardian either by phone or in writing to notify them of the observed behavior(s) and request a formalized meeting. The child will not be allowed to return to school until the parent/guardian meets with the program administrator and teacher to discuss the situation and come up with a plan of action.

If the behavior occurs again, the child will be permanently removed from our program.

Though it is not typically our policy, if a situation warrants it, a child can be immediately dismissed from our program for highly inappropriate behavior that put students and/or teachers at risk.

## **DROP OFF & PICK UP**

At no time does the YMCA provide transportation. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to get their child to and from school and special events. It is critical that your child be dropped off and picked up on time. If you are unable to pick up your child on time, you must provide an alternate pick-up person. If you are late more than two times, you will be charged a late fee of \$1.00 per minute. If you are late more than three times, you will risk your child's placement.

## **ENTERING THE FACILITY**

To enter the facility, please activate the buzzer outside the main entrance. A Center staff person will come open the door for you. Any person that the teacher/staff do not recognize will be asked to provide a photo ID. We reserve the right to refuse entry to anyone whom we do not have adequate information on.

## **SCHOOL CLOSING**

We follow the Middletown and Minisink school districts' decisions on inclement weather closings. This information can be found on each district's website. You will receive an automated call on the phone number you provide if we close, delay opening, or dismiss early.

Each family should have a plan in place for unscheduled early dismissals due to inclement weather or other emergencies. This is especially important for parents/guardians who work.

### **If school is dismissed early:**

- You or someone you designate must be available for pick up.
- Those individuals you designate to pick up your child must be listed on the Health Card as a verified pick up person.
- In emergency situations when your designated pickup people are unavailable, verbal and written consent must be provided whenever you need to add someone new to the pick up list. Please include the person's name and phone number.

**YOUR CHILD SHOULD ALWAYS BE MADE AWARE OF WHO MAY PICK THEM UP IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY. PLEASE BE SURE YOU ALERT ALL YOUR EMERGENCY PICK UP PEOPLE THAT WE WILL BE ASKING THEM FOR ID.**

## **TOILETING**

It is our expectation that all children are fully potty trained with age appropriate toileting skills. Please provide us with a change of clothes (including socks) labeled with your child's name in case of an accident. In the event that we provide your child with a change of our preschool clothes, we ask that you launder and return them back to school as soon as possible.

## **DAILY NAP/REST TIME**

3 year olds, in the full day program, are provided with appropriate rest and quiet periods following the regulations of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. Full day 3 year old students who choose to nap are required to submit a signed nap time agreement that provides you information regarding sleeping arrangements. Napping is optional.

## **WHAT TO KEEP AT HOME**

We believe that certain items are best left at home to maximize your child's experience at preschool. A full day of activities are planned for children and our classrooms are fully equipped. Therefore, we ask that children leave personal belongings at home. Your child may have a scheduled "show and tell" day when they can bring in items.

## **TUITION**

The annual fee for YMCA First Step Preschool is broken into 10 monthly payments. There are no credits for days there is no school. The monthly tuition is always due on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the prior month. **A fee of \$25.00 will be charged for each late payment and payments returned due to insufficient funds. Monthly tuition and all additional late charges must be paid in full by the 25<sup>th</sup> or your child will not be permitted to utilize the program until payment is made in full.**

## **TUITION CHANGES/CANCELLATIONS**

A Preschool Change Form must be submitted 30 days prior to the first of the month and a \$10.00 fee is due at the time of the change. Please refer to the Payment Agreement form.

## **MEMBERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES**

We feel so strongly about the benefits your family may experience at the Y, we include a free YMA Family Membership in your YMCA First Step Preschool tuition. UPK families are invited to sign up for a YMCA Family Advantage Membership at a substantial savings. To activate your membership at the Y, please stop by our Welcome Centers or call 845 344 9622.