



Y's Beginnings Pre-School Program Parents Handbook 2009/2010

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OVERVIEW

Y's Beginnings Pre-School is part of the Rockland County YMCA, a nonprofit organization serving area families. We provide quality programs to children between ages 3 and 5 years from diverse economic, social, and ethnic backgrounds. Our purpose is to promote the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social growth of the individual child while helping to build a strong sense of self-esteem and a healthy outlook on school in particular and on life in general.

The rooms are play-centered environments with a wide range of materials and developmentally-appropriate activities designed to allow each child the opportunity to explore, create, experiment, discover, invent, manipulate, unfold, and make choices, according to his or her individual interests and needs. Each day your child will be presented with an array of new ideas and experiences from which to choose, and our teachers, trained in child growth and development, will gently and warmly guide him or her. In this way, we can promise your child a year full of fun and active learning.

PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

All of our programs are individualized with the group setting. Activities are planned daily to reflect all areas of each child's development:

Large motor skills: climbing, jumping, crawling, throwing, lifting, riding, building, creative movement, group games.

Fine motor skills: eye-hand coordination, dumping, pouring, manipulating, lacing, constructing, stringing, drawing, painting, sewing, cutting, pasting.

Sensory: activities that enhance the senses. Water and sand play, cooking, play-dough, rhythm games.

Intellectual activities: exploration of concepts such as size, shape, color, weight, problem-solving with games and puzzles, learning about cause and effect, expanding knowledge through stories and songs, fostering creativity with "open-ended" materials (blocks, art supplies, etc.)

Language arts: listening to language patterns in stories, songs, and rhythms, labeling and naming objects and events, building communication skills through dramatic play and group games, opportunities to express self as well as listen to others, story making.

Social and emotional development: development of self-help skills, development of self-esteem through mastery of materials and positive interactions with others, learning about social roles and concepts through stories and dramatic play, development of constructive communication skills through caregiver role-modeling and guidance.

Small group skills: time set aside for teachers to work with children in small groups on simple tasks that match the child's developmental abilities, including classification, seriation, spatial relations, visceral and auditory discrimination and memory, motor skills, creative expression, etc.

Pre-School is offered for 2-1/2 hours in the morning and afternoon. Children may attend two, three or five days. The program follows the Ramapo Central School District's schedule, with the exception of a few dates that we reschedule, and our starting & ending dates.

While at Pre-School, the children are involved in arts and crafts, dramatic play, stories, music & movement, and cooking. The children will also take walks to the duck pond as part of our science and nature exploration. There will also be outside visitors, special activities, and various celebrations throughout the year.

The focus of the program is on the further development of social skills, creativity, and hands-on-learning. Children at this age cannot learn by sitting and being talked at. Rather, they have to learn by moving and experiencing. Basically, by playing. This play will assist your child in learning and developing prereading and prewriting skills, as well as basic math and science concepts. Our goal is to assist your child in developing a positive self-concept and a positive outlook on school, while at the same time giving him the basic tools necessary for success in Kindergarten. We will be doing a program with our 4 year-olds called Handwriting Without Tears for preschoolers. This program continues in the Ramapo Central School District in Kindergarten, etc. Along the way, we'll also have a lot of fun!

There is also a Summer Program. Children are involved in art, music, movement, outdoor activities, water play, nature and science activities, and more.

REQUIRED FORMS AND INFORMATION

WE MUST HAVE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ON FILE IN ORDER FOR YOUR CHILD TO ATTEND THE PRE-SCHOOL:

Health History Form

Must be signed by the child's physician. All immunizations must be up to date.

Emergency Medical Treatment Authorization Form

This release on your registration form enables your child to be treated medically. Without it, emergency staff would have to await your arrival to proceed, which could be life-threatening in certain circumstances, but in any case unpleasant. Of course, before using this, every effort will be made to contact you or any of the emergency contacts named by you. However, if we are unable to reach anyone with the authority over the child, this form becomes necessary. In the event of a non-serious injury, we will treat the child with ice packs, antiseptic, and band-aids, and give you a call to let you know what happened. Please refer to the section on illness and injury.

Emergency Contact Numbers Form

You must provide us with emergency contacts. These contacts must also be on the Child Release & Carpool form in order for us to be able to release your child. Please make sure these contacts are aware that they are on the list. Also, make sure they are able to respond, e.g., they have a car, and are physically and mentally capable of picking up your child and understanding how to proceed in an emergency. These numbers will be used if your child becomes ill or injured or if it is late and no one has picked up your child. We will contact parents first and proceed through the list in order.

Child Release Contacts & Car Pool Form

List the names of any capable persons whom you will allow to pick up your child.

WE WILL NOT RELEASE A CHILD TO ANYONE FOR WHOM WE HAVE NOT BEEN GIVEN WRITTEN PERMISSION BY THE PARENT OR GUARDIAN TO DO SO. RELEASE BY TELEPHONE WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

****ANY OTHER PERSON THEN THE USUAL PICK-UP PERSON MUST BE ON THE LIST, AT LEAST 18 YEARS OLD, SHOW A PICTURE I.D. AND KNOW THE CHILD'S RELEASE PASSWORD. WE WILL NOT RELEASE A CHILD TO ANYONE WHO IS INEBRIATED OR OTHERWISE DEEMED INCAPABLE BY OUR STAFF OF CONDUCTING THE CHILD HOME SAFELY.**

EMERGENCY EVACUATION INFORMATION

Our lives after the World Trade Center and Pentagon disaster have left people concerned about the possibility of future incidents in the United States. With the war and the rising level of possible terrorist attacks, people can feel uncertain and stressed. We have set up some emergency procedures you should be aware of.

The school is on a reverse 911 list. We will be notified of all emergency situations in our area.

Please listen to Emergency Alert System Stations. WHUD, FM 100.7 will be called for our school and 1640 AM is the Rockland Resident Information Station.

Because of the need for Emergency Preparedness, we have set these procedures in place.

In case there is an emergency evacuation at Y's Beginnings, all children will be evacuated to the following locations. Please ensure that we/I have the **latest** emergency contact names and telephone numbers for you and your emergency **back-up** adult who can be notified in case there is an emergency.

If we must evacuate to a location nearby, we will walk to Richard P. Connor Elementary School at 13 Cypress Road, Suffern, N.Y. 10901 (845) 357-2858. This location will be called Emergency Evacuation Location I.

If we cannot evacuate to location I, we will walk to Mahwah Elks Club at Foxwood Lane, Mahwah, N. J. 07430 (201) 529-2906. This location will be called Evacuation Location II.

A sign will be posted at the front entrance indicating which location we have evacuated to.

If a situation arises, chemical spill, etc., that we must "shelter in place" in the Downstairs Hall & Toddler Room, a sign will be posted at the front entrance of the building. If we shelter in place we will not be able to release the children until the emergency has passed. In that case, you should remain in your homes, etc. We also will notify class parents for each class to contact parents in any emergency.

Regarding Indian Point:

We are outside of the 10-mile zone, but they may change it to 20 miles. If this happens we will be given a location to transport to and buses will be used.

For all other emergencies, we will notify you to pick up your child from school.

No plan can ever completely address all problems. We will be adapting our plan to what the situation may be.

A good phone number to call for general emergency information is The Resident Information Network (845) 364-8990.

All teachers have emergency forms that you have completed. Please keep your emergency information updated! Thank you for your cooperation.

HEALTH-RELATED ISSUES

Administration of Medications

Medications will not be administered under any circumstances.

Illness and Injury

At Home

Your child will not be able to get the most from his/her day if he/she isn't feeling well. Also, one sick child can lead to an epidemic. Please DO NOT send your child to school with:

diarrhea - - upset stomach - - complaint of unusual pain - - heavy cough
discolored discharge from the nose - - conjunctivitis (pink eye)
severe cold - - rash - - fever

A child must be without fever, diarrhea, or an upset stomach, or on an antibiotic treatment for 24 hours before they may return to the program. Any child requiring a throat culture should stay home until the results are known.

If your child happens to contract a contagious disease (e.g. chicken pox, conjunctivitis, etc.) please let the director know as soon as possible so that we may send a letter home to the other parents. Please call to let us know if your child will be absent for more than one week.

At School

Should your child become ill while attending the program, we will call you and/or your emergency contacts in their listed order, and ask that someone come to pick him/her up. Please have alternate plans ready in case a situation such as this does occur.

If a child becomes seriously injured or ill while at school, an ambulance will be called to take the child to Good Samaritan Hospital. The parents will be called and asked to meet us there. If a child is injured less seriously, the parents will be called immediately and together the teacher and parent will decide how to proceed. If a child receives a minor injury, they will be treated by the staff at the Pre-School and the adult picking up the child will be informed of the injury at dismissal time. The teacher's in your child's classroom are certified in CPR and First Aid.

REGISTRATION

Registration for the following school year begins in January of the present year for children already enrolled in a program at the Pre-School. Registration for others begins in February. We recommend that all those currently enrolled take advantage of the grace period since the programs will fill, and we may not be able to accommodate you if you wait until the Spring. A deposit of two months tuition and a \$50.00 processing fee must be paid at registration to ensure your child's placement.

TUITION PAYMENT POLICIES

Tuition is based on enrollment and not on attendance. Therefore, fees are due and payable even if the child is absent from the program. The program office must be notified at least two weeks in advance of the date that a child would be withdrawing.

YMCA MEMBERSHIP IS REQUIRED

An Annual Rockland County Membership is required of all individuals to participate in any YMCA Program. Membership fees are non-refundable.

TERMS OF PAYMENT

The yearly tuition is divided into 10 (ten) monthly payments, with the first payment being due on August 1st. Payments are payable in the form of a personal check, money order or credit card.

Please make payable to: Rockland County YMCA.

Please mail or drop off the payment to: Rockland County YMCA
91 Washington Avenue
Suffern, NY 10901

Payments charged to a major credit card can be done so in person at the Washington Avenue location, or by setting up a regular charge the 1st of each month.

A written, signed request is required (these forms are available in the office).

Payments are due on the 1st of the month. It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to make the payments when they are due. There is a \$40.00 bank fee for all returned checks. All account information and billing records are located at the Washington Avenue Office and may be reached at (845) 357-4404 during business hours.

LATE PAYMENTS

The operation of the program requires that payments be made on time. A late fee of \$10.00 will be charged to any account after the 10th of the month.

TUITION ASSISTANCE

Scholarships may also be available for families in need, subject to the review of the Scholarship Committee. All information is kept confidential. Applications and further information are available from the Director.

WITHDRAWAL OR DISCHARGE OF A CHILD

Two weeks notice is required for the voluntary withdrawal of a child. Current tuition fees will still be owed.

The Pre-School may at any time permanently or temporarily discharge a child if, in the sole discretion and opinion of the teachers and director, the child poses a behavior or management problem which threatens the safety or welfare of the child, other children, or staff, or is otherwise inappropriate for the program (e.g. he/she needs a more specialized program). The Pre-School can, in these instances, refer the parent to outside agencies, which may be more appropriate for that child.

A child may also be discharged from the Pre-School for nonpayment of tuition. Please refer to the section concerning payment of tuition.

SCHEDULE OF A TYPICAL MORNING

3-Year Olds

9:00 arrival
9:20 circle time
9:35 arts & crafts activity
10:00 music activity
10:15 outside or to the playroom
10:35 inside for directed free play
10:50 snack
11:05 story time and closing activity
11:30 dismissal

4-Year Olds

9:00 arrival
9:10 circle time
9:30 arts & crafts activity
10:00 music activity
10:15 outside or to the playroom
10:40 snack
10:55 kindergarten readiness
11:15 story time and closing activity
11:30 dismissal

These schedules are not inclusive of all of the activities in which your child will be involved, nor is it set in concrete. Actual schedules depend on themes, special activities, goals, interests, weather, etc. The above schedules are intended only to give you an idea of what your child's day will be like.

Free Play

After the parent departs, the child selects an activity from the various learning centers, taking his/her own initiative. When given this freedom, he/she is more likely to choose an activity that is age-appropriate, and his/her interest and motivation will be high so that his/her learning potential is great. The teacher's role is to expand and guide his/her play by expressing an active interest and asking questions which are challenging.

Clean-Up Time

Children are given a five-minute warning to give them a chance to complete their activities and prepare for a transition. Even the youngest child is encouraged to clean up, although no one will be punished or shamed for nonparticipation. Teachers emphasize cooperation, and use singing, conversation, and learning games to make it a positive experience.

Group or Circle Time

This is an opportunity for everyone to relax together and share a story, songs, a presentation or activity with each other. Children are given listening opportunities as well as being actively involved. The theme for the day may be introduced, children may have a chance to share important happenings, and a new play material or concept may be demonstrated. The focus may also be on special activities, such as language, arts, music, or a guest speaker.

Teacher-Initiated Activities

These are special activities designed for small group participation and are planned in advance by the teacher, who will use the interests and abilities of the children as a guideline. In our art activities, we try to focus for the most part on the process rather than the product, and provide the children with open-ended exploration of a wide variety of media. Other activities include science activities, music activities, and activities which enhance hand-eye coordination.

Large Motor Play

The playroom will be used for creative movement and large muscle activities. In the playroom, there will be climbing, creative movement activities, and riding toys. Also, during music time there will be structured movement activities.

The outdoors will provide space for climbing, digging, walks, and running. The children will go outside every day unless it is either raining or very cold. If a child is well enough to attend the program, she is well enough to participate in the program and go outside. Please do not ask to have your child remain indoors – we do not have the extra staff to accommodate such requests.

Please send appropriate outdoor clothing for your child which can be used with as little help from an adult as possible.

DISMISSAL TIME

The children are all ready and waiting when the doors are opened by the teachers. The parent/authorized person is greeted by the teachers, and each child will be individually called for dismissal.

Please try to be prompt when dropping off and picking up your child. Children coming into the classroom late in the day can have a hard time getting into the routine and feeling comfortable. Also, it is disruptive to the other children and teachers. Children left waiting after everyone else has been picked up can become frightened, worried, hurt or embarrassed. Also, our teachers need to clean up the rooms and get home to their own families and other responsibilities, and having a child there waiting can make this difficult. Of course, occasionally, we can all be a little late, and this is understandable. However, we would appreciate your being for the most part punctual. Please refer to the following section.

LATE PICK-UP POLICY

The Pre-School has the following policy concerning the late pick-up of a child:

The second time a child is not picked up at the close of his program:

A grace period of 15 minutes will be given.

Between 16 and 30 minutes late will result in a fine of \$10.

Between 31 and 45 minutes late will result in a fine of \$20.

Between 46 and 60 minutes late will result in a fine of \$30.

Any other times a child is not picked up at the close of his program:

Between 5 and 15 minutes late will result in a fine of \$10.

Between 16 and 30 minutes late will result in a fine of \$20.

Between 31 and 45 minutes late will result in a fine of \$30.

Between 46 and 60 minutes late will result in a fine of \$40.

If there are more than three offenses, the child's enrollment may be ended.

When a child is picked up late, it is inconvenient to staff, hurtful to the child, and illegal for the program. Please plan ahead for traffic, parking, etc. If on occasion when you know that you will be late, make arrangements with a friend or relative listed on the Pick-Up Authorization form to pick up your child. And remember to let us know of your plans.

CLOSINGS

The Pre-School follows the Ramapo Central School District calendar (with a few exceptions). If the district closes due to weather conditions we will also close. If the School District delays opening, we may or may not cancel our morning programs, depending on the weather prediction. In any case, please listen to WHUD, 100.7 FM in the morning for an announcement, or call the Pre-School for a recorded message.

If weather conditions or another emergency necessitates the closing of the Pre-School during the course of the day, parents or the designated alternative emergency contact will be called and asked to pick up their children immediately.

PRE-SCHOOL TOILETING PROCEDURES

Children will have access to bathrooms as needed. They will be required to wipe themselves and wash their hands after using the toilet each time. We also encourage the children to use the toilet at regular times such as before snack, and before and after outdoor play. Children will be assisted as needed, but please try to dress your child with independence in mind.

If a child wets his clothes, he will be gently directed to the bathroom to try again. Clothes will then be changed. The teacher will explain in a non-threatening way that “accidents happen to everyone”, it is not a big deal, but that when he does feel the need to go, he should not wait too long, and tell the teacher. A child will never be treated in a derogatory or negative way by the staff. If a child soils his clothes, the parent/caregiver will be called and asked to come and change the child.

CLOTHING

Do not dress your child in special clothes that you want kept clean. Please dress your child in comfortable clothing, which can take splatters from paint, dirt, and glue so your child can participate fully in our programs. While we do use smocks, they don't always completely protect the clothes. And also, the children will play outside. **The YMCA is not responsible for clothing soiled by the child's participation in our programs!**

Please make sure clothes are easy to get on and off. We encourage the children to be independent, and the teachers don't have a lot of time to work with buckles and belts when getting a child to the toilet.

Please make sure shoes are safe, and slip-proof. Rubber soles are a plus. Sandals should not be worn. The children will be running, hopping, skipping, jumping, and climbing and we want them to be able to do so safely.

****Please label all outerwear to prevent loss and confusion****

Please do not let your child wear valuable jewelry since it can get lost or broken. Also, no dangling earrings or necklaces since they can get caught on climbing apparatus.

ITEMS FROM HOME

Do not bring in food for your child only.

Cuddlies (i.e. teddy bear, blanket, etc.) are welcome if they ease separation. After the child has settled in, he/she will be asked to place the item in the take home box. Please label all items from home with your child's name.

We ask that no toys or other belongings are brought from home without special arrangement with the teacher. They can be lost, broken, or go home with the wrong person, leading to upset all around.

The YMCA is not responsible for any lost or broken personal items!

SNACKS

The children enjoy sharing with each other. It is also very special to be the snack person for the day. If you would like to provide a snack for the class, a sign-up sheet will be posted outside the door on the bulletin board. We will provide the milk & water to drink. Healthy snacks only please!!! Any food allergies? Be sure the teacher is aware of them.

Here are some suggested snack items:

Fresh fruit or vegetables with or without dip, dried fruit, raisins, mild cheeses, spreads with crackers, mini-muffins, rice cakes, bagels, pretzel sticks, and granola bars.

NO PEANUT BUTTER SNACKS OR ANY SNACKS THAT CONTAIN NUTS PLEASE!

Please avoid sugar, salt, preservatives, and artificial ingredients. We prohibit candy or gum from being brought into the school. Please do not bring any chocolate snacks or any sugar type treats. We will have to send them back home, and this can be upsetting to your child.

Extra foods such as crackers are always on hand in case a child cannot eat the food provided for health or religious reasons.

All children will sit "family style" for snack at a table with at least one staff person sitting with them. Children will not be forced to eat anything.

Snack is a part of the educational program. We will be discussing food sources, nutrition, colors, textures, tastes, etc.

BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays are a very special event in the life of a young child. Since we believe each child is special, we wish to recognize individually each child's birthday. Parents are welcome to send in a special treat. Please make arrangements at least one week in advance with your child's teacher.

PLEASE DO NOT hand out party invitations at the Pre-School unless the entire class is going to receive one. Children's feelings can be hurt. Your child's teacher will be happy to provide you with addresses.

DISCIPLINE

The Pre-School's approach to guidance is a positive one which encourages self-control, self-esteem, and cooperation. Consistent, clearly-defined rules are given which assist in the smooth, healthy function of the class. Since children lack experience in expressing their feelings constructively and resolving conflict, we show and encourage them to express anger, sadness, frustration, and other emotions through words. We do not permit hitting, pushing, biting, or any other acts or threats of physical aggression by both adults and children. When a child displays such behavior, we acknowledge his/her right to feel mad, frustrated, or upset, and gently remind them that we use words not our hands, and show the child better ways to accomplish their goal, or ask the child to show us a better way (e.g. asking to share, telling another child to stop bothering him/her, ask an adult for help, etc.). At times, it may be necessary to separate a child from the group if her behavior continues to be unacceptable. What this means is having the child sit in a chair for a few minutes (one minute for each year of the child's age). If a child does not respond to such feedback after repeated incidents, we may need to refer the parents elsewhere. Please refer to the section concerning withdrawal and discharge.

Teachers will avoid the use of competitive situations, comparative remarks, threats, shaming or labeling. At no time will hitting, spanking, shaking or slapping be used, nor will children be deprived of meals or toilet use as a means of punishment, nor will any child be confined in an enclosed area.

The best motivation for encouraging positive behavior is modeling, praise, high expectations, and the child's own inward satisfaction.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

We recommend each parent becomes involved in his child's experience at the Pre-School to the best of his/her ability. It makes the child's transition into school easier, and parental involvement has been shown to parallel success by the child in school. Parents are welcome to visit anytime. Parents are encouraged to share their knowledge and talents with the children, be it an art experience, a song, a game, a recipe, a career, etc. Please let us know if there is something you would like to share with your child's class.

Occasionally, a teacher is unable to come in due to illness or emergency. At times, we need to ask a parent to come in and volunteer if a substitute is unavailable. Please let us know if you are available to come in when your child is in class.

PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Conferences are held in January. This is a brief meeting to discuss the program, your child, and future goals. Please bring with you any questions or concerns you may have about the program or your child. Conferences may be scheduled at other times if the parents or teachers feel it is necessary or desirable.

Some of our most valuable communication concerning the child comes at drop-off and pick-up times. Please feel free to express concerns, ask questions, comment, or let us know of any changes anytime.

If there are any happenings at home, please let the teacher know, even if you cannot say what those happenings are. “Things have been stressful at home” can be enough to let us know to expect behavior changes in the child, or to understand why the child is acting differently. We can be of immense help to your child, assisting him in any adjustments, if only we know enough to be able to help. Even what to an adult is considered a change for the better (e.g. Grandma is visiting; a new bed; etc.) can result in a difference in behavior which can surprise and perplex the staff if we don’t know why it is occurring. Try to keep us informed.

NOTICES

Newsletters and notices will be sent home with your child. Please take the time to read these so you don’t miss any special activities or events. Remember – if it weren’t important, we wouldn’t bother telling you about it.

BUILDING ENTRANCE AND EXIT

****THE CHURCH HAS REQUESTED THAT CHILDREN & PARENTS PLEASE ENTER AND EXIT THROUGH THE DOWNSTAIRS SCHOOL DOOR, NOT THE UPPER CHURCH DOOR.****

**ONLY CHILDREN ASSIGNED TO THE UPSTAIRS CLASSROOM
MAY USE THE UPPER CHURCH DOOR.**

PARKING

The following rules have been put into place to ensure the safety of the children in the parking lot. To avoid a tragedy, we ask everyone to adhere to the following:

1. Enter parking lot **SLOWLY** following arrows in and out.
2. Pull into space straight and fully.
3. **Do not park along the curb, as it is a FIRE ZONE.**
4. **Park in designated parking spaces only.** Wait for a spot or park in the street if the lot is full. We will always take good care of your child while they wait.
5. Please make sure to hold your child's hand in the parking lot **at all times.**
MRS. McCARTHY'S RULES!!!
6. **WATCH FOR CHILDREN AT ALL TIMES.**
7. **Pick up your child at designated times. Please do not loiter after arrival & dismissal, as this is a main contributor to the congestion in the parking lot. Also, children tend to run into the parking area or woods.**

YOUR FULL COOPERATION & PATIENCE IS REQUIRED. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT OUR CHILDREN ARE SAFE.

*** Please note: If you are dropping off/picking up more than fifteen (15) minutes from your scheduled class time, please check in at the office first.

CLOSING COMMENTS

We are excited about meeting new friends and families! Please be assured that the staff is a group of very qualified, loving concerned individuals, who have your child's best interests at heart. Remember, communication is a must. Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time about your child's development.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Very truly yours,

Janey McCarthy

Janey McCarthy
Director