



**LEARN**  
**CREATE**  
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Regional YMCA of Western Connecticut  
ESCAPE to the Arts

## **After School Program Handbook**

### **Contact Information**

ESCAPE to the Arts

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## Program Structure

ESCAPE to the Arts is an arts-centered after-school program targeted at Danbury's middle-school youth (grades 6, 7 and 8). The program runs Monday through Friday from 2:30 to 5:00 pm, concurrent with the academic school year.

The Y believes that all youth deserve the opportunity to discover who they are and what they can achieve. ESCAPE uses visual and performing arts as a foundation to attract youth, and provides a safe nurturing environment in which they can learn, grow and thrive.

Students can now enroll in classes 1 – 5 days a week depending on their schedule and interests. New classes and days may be selected each session.

## Philosophy & Mission

**ESCAPE to the Arts** is a program site of the Regional YMCA of Western Connecticut providing high quality arts education to culturally and economically diverse families of the region, enabling participants to explore creativity, learn artistic technique, build self esteem, and develop academic, cognitive and problem solving skills.

The Regional YMCA values and supports youth programs and understands the importance of arts and education for children. It is through the unique blend of programs at ESCAPE to the Arts that we can make a positive difference for the youth in Danbury.

The Regional YMCA is a community service organization committed to strengthening communities. We strive to serve all, regardless of financial or physical need. The Y is for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

### **ESCAPE to the Arts Mission:**

To support youth development through participation in the arts and humanities.

We hope that through our After School Program, youth will value lifelong learning, develop stronger character and feel empowered.

## Enrollment Information

To register for the program, parents must:

1. Complete the registration packet with all paperwork
2. Read this handbook with your child
3. Complete a financial assistance application (if applying for scholarship)
4. Meet with an ESCAPE director (parent & child must be present)

Registration will be on a first come first served basis until enrollment is full. To withdraw your child from the program during the school year, please notify the Teen & Youth Director.

Students who are enrolled in the After School Program **MUST** provide a copy of their Interim Report Cards and Quarterly Report Cards to an ESCAPE Director. If parents would prefer to share their Power School access code instead, we can check their grades online.

# Payment Information

Each child is required to pay a \$25 registration fee.

COST: Tuition is on a sliding scale based on the Financial Assistance Application. Without financial aid, the program is \$15 a day. The value of the program is actually \$27 a day.

Financial assistance is available for those who qualify and can be provided after fully completing a Financial Assistance Application.

**If there is no program, there is no charge.** However, if your child is absent from the program, you are responsible for tuition payments regardless of the reason (including sickness, school suspension or program suspension).

A child may not continue into the next session with an outstanding balance owed.

Payments can be made with cash, check or credit card to the Administrative Assistant. Payments will first be applied to past due balances before being applied to current balances.

**Checks MUST be made payable to: Regional YMCA of Western CT (not ESCAPE to the Arts).**

# Program Information

## **Getting to the Program:**

Students are picked up at dismissal time from the middle schools. They are transported on 14-passenger white YMCA mini vans. Students should be ready to go at dismissal to get the van. Two trips are made from each school to ESCAPE to the Arts (depending on enrollment). **Students may NOT walk from their school to the program.**

## **Arrival:**

When students arrive at ESCAPE, they must check in at the front office with the Administrative Assistant. A snack is available for students.

## **Homework Time:**

Monday through Thursday from 3:00 to 3:45 is Homework Time. This is a quiet time for everyone. Students should be prepared to show staff their planner or agenda book with homework assignments. **If a student does not have homework, he/she is expected to either bring a book to read or read one available in the Learning Center.**

## **Classes:**

After Homework Time, students have class from 3:45-5:00. Classes are in the visual arts (drawing & painting, ceramics, etc.), and performing arts (theater, etc.). Students may select classes of their choice. In most cases students can be placed in their 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> choice class.

## **Physical Activity:**

On Mondays and Fridays, students who select the gym or pool will go to the Greenknoll YMCA from 3:45-5:00. Parents may pick up their child at Greenknoll on the days they are there.

## **Absences:**

Please notify us if your child will not be at the program. It is for their safety that we are keeping track of where they are from 2:30 to 5:00.

## **Sickness:**

If your child is home sick from school, please notify staff at ESCAPE. Please do not send them to the program that day. Give him/her time to properly recover and keep from spreading germs to others.

### **School Suspension:**

If your child has been suspended from school, please notify staff at ESCAPE. Please do not send your child to the program. This is a punishment for a severe offense and it carries into our after-school program as well.

### **Pick Up Procedure:**

The program ends at 5:00 pm each day. Please report to the front office to pick up your child. Your child will be called on the speaker for dismissal. If your child is at the Greenknoll YMCA that day, you may pick him/her up there.

If you are unable to pick up your child by 5:15, please arrange for someone else to pick him/her up. ESCAPE staff must be notified of other people picking up your child.

If you prefer your child to walk or ride a bike home at the end of the program please indicate that on the registration form. They will not be dismissed before 5:00 unless permission is granted from a parent.

Every child must be checked out by staff each day.

## **Safety**

The health and well-being of our students is very important. The After School Program is designed to be a safe environment for middle school students. We expect everyone to work together to make this possible. Students who can not comply with this philosophy may need to seek another type of program. ESCAPE to the Arts has the right to refuse a student into the program and/or expel a student from the program if deemed a threat to the safety and well-being of others.

## **Discipline/Behavior Policy**

### **Positive Behavior System:**

The YMCA's core values (respect, responsibility, caring and honesty) are promoted and **expected** at ESCAPE. In June the top students are presented with awards at the Evening of the Arts.

When necessary, staff members complete Misconduct Reports for students who interrupt the learning process for others, show disrespect, or partake in other behaviors that are not acceptable in the program. The Teen & Youth Director addresses the misbehavior with the student and the parent.

Consequences for offenses may include verbal warnings, temporary removal from class, confiscation of an object, cleaning the van, parent notification, suspension from program, expulsion from program, contacting the police, and other consequences deemed appropriate to the offense.

## **YMCA Van Policy**

Students **MUST** wear seatbelts on the van. The same rules apply on the van as in the program. If your child can not comply with these rules, he/she will be suspended from riding the van home.

## **Code of Conduct**

ESCAPE to the Arts will follow same Code of Conduct as set forth by Danbury Public Schools.

Modifications have been included where applicable. The following are NOT acceptable at ESCAPE to the Arts:

#### Safety, Freedom from Fear

- Assault
- Fighting
- Weapon possession or facsimile (including fireworks)
- Arson, false alarm, bomb threat
- Threatening, theft by threat, intimidation, instigation
- Using, selling, possessing, distributing controlled substances: alcohol, drugs or paraphernalia
- Bullying
- Gang colors, decoration or attire
- Smoking or chewing tobacco
- Bus misbehavior

#### Respect and Courtesy

- Harassment
- Sexual discrimination and harassment
- Racial or other discriminatory slurs
- Blackmail
- Obscene, vulgar, abusive, inflammatory or disrespectful language, gestures or attire
- False accusation
- Verbal or gestural abuse toward staff
- Insubordination
- Refusal to identify self when asked, inappropriate behavior
- Lying to avoid blame or responsibility
- Cheating

#### Respect for Personal and Public Property

- Theft or possession of stolen goods
- Vandalism
- Tampering with ESCAPE records/lists
- Littering
- Throwing objects
- Criminal mischief

#### Respect for Orderly Teaching/Learning Environment

- Disruption of the educational process
- Gambling
- Trespassing
- Bringing unauthorized visitors to the program
- Use of electronics from 3:00-5:00
- AWOL from the program (or class)
- Attire inconsistent with teaching/learning environment
- Tardiness
- Failure to sign in on arrival
- Leaving ESCAPE during the program (walking out)

#### Technology

- Illegal transfer of software, changing installed software, install or use without proper license or permission
- Duplicate copyrighted software, video & other materials
- Give out confidential information, ie. passwords, phone numbers, etc.
- Use email for illegal activity
- Intentionally introduce a software virus, damage system or damage any information on system, tamper with hardware
- Send obscene or threatening messages
- Use computer to harass others
- Visit inappropriate computer websites
- Use network for financial gain

## Dress Code

We will follow the dress code for both of the Danbury Middle Schools. Students are expected to dress in a manner that is appropriate, safe and not distracting to other learners.

1. Sneakers with wheelies, flip flops, and sandals are not allowed.
2. Shorts and skirts must be mid thigh length, which means the edge of the article of clothing must reach the student's fingertips when their arms are hanging at their side.
3. Tops must have sleeves and must cover the shoulders and the length of the shirt must be long enough to cover midriff and back. Tank tops, off the shoulder tops, halter tops, tube tops, and revealing necklines are not allowed.
4. Pants must be worn at the waist. Pajama pants are not allowed.
5. Undergarments, including bra straps, must not be visible.
6. Students may not wear articles of clothing displaying inappropriate language or having references to drug/alcohol, tobacco or violence.

## Other Rules

### Cell Phones/iPods/Cameras/Electronics

- **Cell phones/iPods/Electronics may be used until 3:00. At 3:00, all must be turned off and put away. Electronics used after 3:00 will be taken and kept for the rest of the day.**
- **No iPods during class. Some teachers allow students to listen to the classroom radio.**
- **Picture taking at ESCAPE is only allowed by staff (unless for photography class).**

### Food/Drink/Candy/Gum

- There will be a snack available upon arrival at the program. Snack time is over at 3:00.
- You may bring your own snack if you like.
- If you wish to bring a drink, you may bring bottled water only, no cups.
- The following are NOT allowed: Hot foods & delivery; candy & gum.
- If you arrive late to the program with a valid excuse, you will be given snack upon arrival.

### Bathrooms/Drinks

- The classroom pass must be used to go to the bathroom/drinks
- One at a time leaving a classroom
- Please treat the bathroom with respect by throwing your trash in the garbage, flushing the toilet & alerting staff if the toilet becomes clogged
- The water fountain is for drinking water only

## Evaluation

At ESCAPE to the Arts we place great value on the success of our program. In order to evaluate the impact we are having, we collect data from a variety of sources.

All youth complete pre and post surveys. Results from surveys help give us an indication of how students really feel about the program, themselves and their place in the community, and the impact the program has on them.

Search Institute has identified the building blocks of healthy development that help young people grow up healthy, caring and responsible. These are the 40 Developmental Assets. At ESCAPE we work hard to help youth build these assets through the content of our program curriculum, encouragement and guidance from our professional staff, and youth opportunities to demonstrate leadership. Each June, we administer the YMCA Teen Survey on Asset Building to all students in our program. All ESCAPE participants ages 11-18 are surveyed.