

Smart Start Play Time Parent Handbook

Bedford Park District

Program Philosophy

Smart Start Play Time is a play-based, structured program for 3- and 4-year-olds. We believe young children learn best through curiosity, exploration, and guided play. Our goal is to support social, emotional, physical, and early academic growth in a nurturing environment.

Equal Opportunity Policy

The Bedford Park District provides equal opportunities for participation in all programs and activities regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability.

Curriculum Overview

Our curriculum balances structured activities with free play to encourage creativity, independence, and school readiness. Children participate in:

- Circle time (songs, stories, weather, calendar)
- Hands-on learning centers
- Fine motor activities (cutting, writing, art)
- Gross motor play (indoor and outdoor movement)
- Social-emotional learning (sharing, cooperation, routines)

We use positive reinforcement and consistent routines to help children feel secure and confident.

Meet the Staff

Miss Alexis - Lead Facilitator

A college student studying education, Miss Alexis brings a fresh perspective and enthusiasm. She has worked as a summer camp counselor for several years and loves engaging children in learning through play.

Miss Norma - Program Aide

With over 20 years of experience in the playschool setting, Miss Norma brings consistency, care, and deep knowledge of early childhood development.

Nikki Mrkacek - Recreation Supervisor

A mom of three and experienced homeschool educator, Nikki has designed and led many successful educational and recreational programs. She brings expertise in creating engaging, play-based learning environments.

Kathy McMullin - Executive Director

A lifelong resident of Bedford Park! She has been employed by the Bedford Park District for 20 years. Kathy finalizes the district's budget, oversees all personnel matters, and has the final say in all disciplinary matters related to participants in park programs.

Program Information

- **Ages:** 3 & 4 years (must be fully potty trained)
- **Schedule:** Monday-Friday, 8:30 AM - 11:30 AM
- **Drop-off:** No earlier than 8:25 AM always at horseshoe
- **Pick-up:** Begins at 11:25 AM
- **Mon/Wed/Fri:** Pick up in horseshoe at Community Building
- **Tue/Thur:** Pick up at Swanson Center
- **Location:** Playschool Room, Community Building
- **Calendar:** Follows School District 104 holiday and closure schedule
- **Enrollment:** Maximum of 16 students. Waitlist begins once full.

Children may enroll mid-session upon turning 3 if space is available.

Enrollment Requirements

- Child must be 3 or 4 years old at the start of participation.

- Child must be fully potty trained. Pull-ups and diapers are not allowed.
- If a child has 3 bathroom accidents, they will be removed from the program for one week to revisit toilet training at home.

Health & Safety

Medical Information

Parents must inform staff of any medical conditions including allergies, medications, asthma, physical limitations, dietary needs, or cultural restrictions.

Illness Policy

- Children with a fever of **100.3°F or higher** must stay home.
- Children must be fever- and symptom-free for **24 hours** before returning.
- If illness develops during the program, parents may be asked to pick up their child.
- Children with lice must be picked up immediately and may return only after being cleared by staff or with a doctor's note stating child is lice/nit free.
- Parents will be notified of contagious illnesses in the classroom via Brightwheel. Child names will not be disclosed.

First Aid

Staff provide basic first aid (soap, water, antiseptic wipes, bandages, ice packs). Accident reports will be completed. All staff are CPR and AED certified.

Mandated Reporting

All staff are state-mandated reporters of suspected child abuse or neglect. Reports are made directly to proper authorities as required by law.

Arrival & Dismissal

- **Horseshoe Policy:** Drop-off and pick-up occur in the horseshoe.

- **Parking:** If you must enter the building, park in the east lot near the pool. Vehicles may not park or wait in the horseshoe.
- **Drop-off:**
 - Arrive no earlier than 8:25 AM.
 - Guardian must exit vehicle and sign child in using the Brightwheel app.
- **Pick-up:**
 - Arrive no earlier than 11:25 AM.
 - Guardian must exit vehicle and sign child out using Brightwheel.
- **Authorized Pick-up:**
 - Only approved contacts in Brightwheel may pick up.
 - Non-parent/guardian pick-ups will be assigned a Brightwheel code for kiosk sign-out, they will not be required to download the app.
 - To add a new contact, send written notice via Brightwheel.
 - Identification will be required for anyone staff do not recognize.

Late Pick-up Policy

- \$10 fee if not picked up by 11:40 AM
- Additional \$5 for every 5 minutes after
- Fees must be paid by the next business day for child to return

Emergencies

If you cannot arrive on time, call the Park District office at **708-458-2265**. Communication reduces stress for your child.

In cases of severe weather or emergencies, Smart Start Playtime follows District 104 closures. Families will be notified through the Brightwheel app. No make-up days are provided for closures.

Snacks & Supplies

- Children bring their own small snack daily.
- Attire should be comfortable play clothes and gym shoes (no dress shoes or sandals).
- Label all outerwear with child's first and last name.
- Provide a **labeled gallon Ziploc bag** with a full change of clothes (shirt, pants, underwear, socks).

Parent Communication

We use the **Brightwheel app** for sign-in/out, messaging, and program updates. Please check regularly for announcements, illness notices, and important reminders.

Program Reminders

- Be on time for drop-off and pick-up.
- Keep child home if sick.
- Communicate changes in pick-up plans through Brightwheel.
- Children bring their own labeled snack.
- Provide change of clothes in case of accidents. (child must be able to change themselves)
- Support potty training readiness before the first day.

 **We're excited to partner with you in your child 's early learning journey!** 

Brightwheel & Authorized Pick-Up Policy

To ensure the safety of all participants, Bedford Park District will utilize Brightwheel for Smart Start Playtime communication and child pick-up authorization. Please carefully review the following policies:

1. Brightwheel Requirement

- At least **one parent/guardian MUST have an active Brightwheel account** for communication and sign-out purposes.
- All authorized pick-up individuals must have a designated 4-digit code to sign out a participant.

2. Preferred Sign-Out Method (QR Scan)

- Authorized pick-up individuals will scan a QR code through the Brightwheel app and enter their 4-digit code to sign out the child.

3. Alternative Sign-Out Method (Kiosk Mode)

- If unable to use the QR scan, the authorized pick-up person may use kiosk mode, entering the designated 4-digit code on a park district device. This method is less preferred but available as a backup.

4. Adding an Authorized Pick-Up Person During Program Hours

- If a parent/guardian needs to add an authorized pick-up person during the day, they must send a message through Brightwheel or email Nikki at Nmrkacek@bedfordparkdistrict.org
- The message must include:
 - First and last name of the pick-up person
 - Relation to the child
- Once received, a response will be sent with a unique 4-digit code assigned to the new pick-up person.

These policies are in place to prioritize camper safety and ensure a smooth pick-up process. Thank you for your cooperation!