



703 Grant Avenue, Altoona, PA 16602

Scholarship Information

January 27, 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Thank you for inquiring about our Pre-K Counts scholarship program as administered under the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Office of Child Development and Early Learning! The scholarship program consists of an exceptional early learning environment, highly qualified teaching staff, and a developmentally appropriate program. Your child's participation will prepare him/her for a smooth transition to the formal school setting. Before completing the application, please carefully read the following policies and procedures, and seriously consider if your family will be able to abide by them.

Please return the enclosed application by Friday, May 22nd, 2020. Accepted applicants will tentatively be notified by Friday, June 26th, 2020. We are anticipating that the 2020-2021 school year will begin in late August. If your child is selected, further enrollment information will be provided. If you have any questions or need assistance completing the Scholarship Application, please call Chelsea Hallinan, Director of Programs, at 814-941-0606 or email her at challinan@beginwithus.net.

Thank you,

Jolie L. Cover
Executive Director

Enrollment

Research Based Rationale: Children's potential for growth and development is maximized through participation in a high quality environment. The development of relationships with teachers and peers, along with consistent learning experiences that build on each other day to day, come from regular attendance in preschool settings.

Intent: The intent of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) is to provide children with one or two years of high quality preschool programming immediately prior to their eligibility for kindergarten.

Enrollment Policy: Children must be three on or before the date used by the local school district's kindergarten age-eligibility deadline date as follows:

Altoona Area School District: September 1st
Bellwood Antis School District: August 31st
Hollidaysburg Area School District: September 1st
Spring Cove School District: September 1st

Five year olds who are age eligible for kindergarten are not eligible to remain in the preschool setting funded by this scholarship. **Begin With Us** will support parents in exploring other options if parents feel that their child should not enter kindergarten when they are age eligible.

Length of Day

Length of Day Policy: At least five hours of instructional time must be provided for full-day programs. Children expected to arrive on time and attend for the duration of the program day. The program's operational hours are Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 3:00pm or 9:00am to 3:30pm, as assigned.

Wrap Around Care: Wrap around services are available at a private pay rate for children who need care before and/or after the program day. Parents are encouraged to contact the Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) at 814-515-1223 and request to receive a subsidy that will help to defer or cover the cost for wrap around services.

Attendance

Intent: OCDEL realizes that young children, particularly in group settings, are susceptible to illness and may miss days of school. In addition to childhood illness, there may be other legitimately-excused absences that could be identified. The development of good attendance practices by families must be established in order to maintain full enrollment in the program.

Attendance Policy: Children who are selected to attend the program are to adhere to the “Attendance and Absence” policy located in the *Begin With Us Child Care and Preschool, Inc. Handbook for Parents*. When a child is absent from the program, a written excuse is required within 3 days of the absence. Additionally, after 5 consecutive days or an accumulation of 15 days of absence, children will be required to provide a physician’s excuse for all absences. Absences that total 10 consecutive days will be grounds for dismissing a child from the program.

Excuses must be provided in writing and signed by a parent. Acceptable excused absences include illnesses, religious holidays, health care appointments that cannot be made during non-school hours, and family emergencies. Unexcused absences include but are not limited to: non-educational vacations; and visits, or routine appointments that could be scheduled during non-school hours.

When a child is absent, the following procedure must be followed:

- 1) Parents must telephone the office to report a child’s absence by 9:00am each morning.
 - 2) Parents must return a child to school with a written excuse to verify each absence.
 - 3) In the case of an extended absence of 5 or more consecutive days or an accumulation of 15 days or more during the school year, parents must provide an excuse from a physician, physician assistant or nurse practitioner.
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Program Operational Days

Program Operational Days Policy: 180 days of instructional services must be provided. *Begin With Us* will distribute and follow a school year calendar and schedule that are specifically designed in the best interest of the children in the program.

Reporting Individual Child Outcomes

Intent: Children who are selected for the program are receiving state funding for a pre-kindergarten educational program. The state legislature relies on individual child data to be collected for all children in Pre-K Counts programs. The purpose of a statewide process for measuring child progress is to provide a higher quality of data. This data will allow comparisons across programs in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania has made a large investment and commitment to early childhood by funding high quality pre-kindergarten education. In return, we must be able to document the results of this investment and show benefits for children and families. Collecting and reporting on children’s progress on achieving early learning outcomes is one way to demonstrate these results.

Individual Child Outcomes Policy: Children enrolled in the program will be measured according to their progress 3 times per school year. For the 2020-2021 school year, the Work Sampling System will be used as a child outcome measurement tool which is aligned to the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards. Information obtained from child observations, portfolio work, and assessments will be used during curriculum planning for setting children’s individual goals. Mandatory conferences with parents will occur 3 times per school year. Information gained through all outcomes will be reported to the state.