



Funding Early Education For Local Children

Thousands of families in New Jersey cannot afford to provide their children with early education.

Preschool Advantage is committed to changing this—one child at a time.

Annual Update

2019-2020



PRESCHOOL ADVANTAGE

Funding early education for local children



25 Lindsley Drive, Suite 307, Morristown, NJ 07960

(973) 532-2501

www.preschooladvantage.org



Executive Director

Try to be a rainbow in someone else's cloud -- Maya Angelou

I am delighted to join the Preschool Advantage Team and feel privileged to follow Molly Dunn, an incredible leader who positioned Preschool Advantage to weather the unpredictable challenges that COVID-19 presented. The pandemic's impact on schools and families has been enormous, but Molly's clear vision, her financial stewardship, and her straightforward communication

skills allowed us to be the rainbow in this cloud for our preschoolers and their families.

In this year of challenge and change, Preschool Advantage received 108 applications (and counting), we have interviewed 55 new families, and 89 new and returning students will be attending preschool this fall. When the quarantine began, our partner preschools continued to support our current students remotely, providing instruction and guidance even when their doors were closed. We moved staff to remote work arrangements, engaged numerous volunteers both remotely and in person, and enjoyed incredible support from our fantastic donors.

The obstacles that education providers faced during this tumultuous year made two things abundantly clear. First, there really is no substitute for a qualified adult, armed with a quality curriculum, and committed to guiding our youngsters toward their full potential in a safe and appropriate environment. Second, high quality education is critical to the civic health and economic vibrancy of our communities, not just in the future when our children mature, but right now!

In my first week at Preschool Advantage, a grateful parent called me. She told me that her child's experience in preschool this past year was life-changing. Her child grew and blossomed even in a virtual setting. But in addition, she herself grew and blossomed as a parent. She learned how to guide and teach her child in new and exciting ways.

She was so thrilled to see that her child was fully ready to engage in Kindergarten this year. Without Preschool Advantage, she told me, her youngster would have begun school this fall trying to catch up to peers who had the opportunity to learn last year. I pass her thanks on to you who sustain this incredible mission, this life-changing pathway, this rainbow in the cloud.

I am pleased to join you, to bring my lifelong passion for equity in education and my experience in non-profit leadership to Preschool Advantage.

Thank you for all you do,

Nancy M. Bangiola

Nancy Bangiola

PS I hope you will look for the invitation to our virtual benefit scheduled for October 14, 2020. The link to register is PA2020.givesmart.com

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Special thanks to:

Jessie Lubow,
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PRESCHOOL ADVANTAGE

Funding early education for local children

1,100+ CHILDREN



In the last 25 years, over 1,100 3 and 4 year olds have been selected to receive the preschool education they need to succeed in school.

PARTNER PRESCHOOLS

28

in Morris and Somerset Counties deliver high-quality early education to Preschool Advantage students.



STUDENTS ATTENDING PRESCHOOL IN 2019

102



In the 2019-2020 school year, a record-breaking 102 children attended preschool at our Partner Preschools!

89

STUDENTS

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Preschool Advantage was able to review applications and interview families remotely and fund 89 preschool tuitions.

ENROLLMENT IN 2020!



ALL THANKS TO YOU!

500+



Foundations, Companies, and people like you make this possible.

Mission: To give children a fair chance to succeed in life. We raise funds to open the doors of preschool and unlock the possibilities beyond.

Vision: That all children begin school with the skills they need to learn and thrive.

Values:

Compassion and Understanding: We respect and appreciate the unique needs and talents of the families we serve, preschools, donors, volunteers and employees.

- **Commitment to Quality:** We maintain high standards in our preschool partnerships, communications, and day-to-day work.

- **Integrity:** We are guided by our responsibility to our partner preschools, our donors and the families we serve.

- **Optimism:** We believe our mission benefits the larger community.



In January, 2020 we were delighted to bring on board Lisa Krapacher, our first-ever Administrative and Program Assistant. Lisa is responsible for administrative matters covering all aspects of Preschool Advantage. She is the new face and voice of our organization, greeting everyone entering the office and calling on the telephone. Lisa brings a strong background in both client services and administration, having worked in both the sales and hospitality industries. Lisa is fluent in Spanish and has recently served as a volunteer teaching assistant at our long-time partner preschool, El Primer Paso, in Dover. Lisa earned her B.A. degree in Global Studies from Arizona State University. Lisa brings her talent and warmth to the organization at a crucial moment, keeping the workflow of the office moving forward despite the challenges of remote work.

Mission, Vision, Values

New Staff

Congrats to two exemplary preschools!

Preschool Advantage awarded its Golden Acorn award for excellence in preschool education to both The Learning Garden Academy of Pine Brook and The Treehouse of Basking Ridge.

The Golden Acorn Award is a result of a rigorous process of evaluation by Preschool Advantage's School Committee. This Committee, which is primarily comprised of numerous current and former preschool directors and teachers who care deeply about early childhood education, visit the organization's partner preschools on a three-year cycle to ensure that the quality of their programs is maintained. The partner schools have to maintain excellence in five key criteria: teacher and child interaction, curriculum, family involvement, staff qualifications, professional development, and management of the school. Once the Committee determines a partner school meets the required standards of excellence, Preschool Advantage recognizes its achievement by bestowing its Golden Acorn Award for exemplary quality in preschool education.

Golden Acorn Recipients

In March when nearly all of our partner preschools were forced to close their doors due to the pandemic, it was hard to imagine the degree of uncertainty that would continue to surround the reopening of school late into the summer. However, our partners are adapting to these ever-changing circumstances with grace, grit, and creativity.

All of our partner schools hope to re-open for the 2020-2021 school year, albeit in different forms depending on their specific circumstances. Current guidelines from the State indicate a maximum class size of ten children, which is forcing schools to rethink their schedules in order to bring in as many children as they have enrolled but perhaps in shifts if necessary.

From health screenings at drop-off, to heightened classroom cleaning protocols and utilizing outdoor spaces as never before, "back to School" will look very different this fall. The one constant across all our partner schools is their unanimous agreement that children of preschool age need to be physically together with their peers and teachers for meaningful learning to take place. Social and emotional development are at the heart of early childhood education, and these skills simply cannot be practiced remotely.

2019 - 2020 Partner Preschools

2019 - 2020 Partner Preschools

- All Saints Academy (Parsippany)
- Children on the Green (Morristown)
- Children's Circle at St. Andrew Lutheran Church (Parsippany)
- El Primer Paso (Dover)
- Hearts and Hands Preschool (Parsippany)
- Hillside Preschool (Succasunna)
- Jefferson Child Care and Education Center
- Joyful Noise Nursery School (Morris Plains)
- Learning Garden Academy (Pine Brook)
- Madison Montessori School
- Morris Plains Cooperative Play School
- Mt. Olive Child Care & Learning Center
- Mountain Lakes Country Day School
- Rainbow Montessori School (Madison)
- School of St. Elizabeth (Bernardsville)



Staff and Trustees of Preschool Place & Kindergarten at 2019 Turning Leaves

- St. John's Nursery School (Bernardsville)
- The Dogwood School (Chester)
- The F.M. Kirby Children's Center (Madison)
- The Frances & Herbert Brody Preschool of Temple B'nai Or (Morristown)
- The Nursery School of the Presbyterian Church (Morristown)
- The Preschool Place & Kindergarten (Bridgewater)
- The Treehouse (Basking Ridge)
- The Westmont Montessori School (Mendham)
- Union Hill Church Preschool (Denville)

New Partner Preschools for 2020 - 2021

- East Hanover Child Care Center
- Far Hills County Day School
- Inspirekids Learning Center (Whippany)
- Sunshine Preschool & Infant Care (Liberty Corner)

Thank You Volunteers!

YOU help read applications, interview families, run fundraisers, and oversee finances. When our offices closed due to COVID-19, YOU stepped up to help us continue “remotely”, because YOU realized the Preschool Advantage mission was more important than ever.

The most inspiring part of the pandemic is that we acquired THREE NEW volunteers. These amazing college students contacted us to share their time helping us remotely over the summer. THANK YOU Sofia, Abby, and Will!



“I am currently a rising junior at Fordham University double majoring in Communications with a concentration in Media, TV and Film with a concentration in Television. In my free time, I enjoy writing and performing for Fordham’s sketch comedy team, as well as their improv team. My hope is to either work in marketing and public relations or to be involved in pre-production for television. I was initially interested in interning at Preschool Advantage because of its mission, to bring education to children who would likely go without it. By assisting children from the earliest ages through education, Preschool Advantage creates a foundation that they can build upon for the rest of their lives. This, to me, is what makes interning at Preschool Advantage so rewarding.”

~Sofia Conlan

“My name is Abigail Marin. I am currently a sophomore at Rutgers University-New Brunswick studying IT. I love anything that involves being creative, spending time with friends and family, and discovering the latest ‘foodie’ restaurants! I am very excited to be part of the team here at Preschool Advantage. I hope to learn more about design, the organization itself, and master more skills along the way.”

~Abigail “Abby” Marin



“Hello! My name is Will Robbins, and I am a rising sophomore at The College of New Jersey studying marketing. My mom is the director of a preschool and I’ve been able to see firsthand the importance of early childhood education. This is part of the reason why I love volunteering for Preschool Advantage and giving other children the opportunity I was given to start their education at a young age.”

~Will Robbins



Board of Trustees Changes

This year our Board of Trustees bid farewell and thank you to two long-serving members, Dianne Robinson and Christina Dorando. During her years on the Board, Dianne Robinson provided wise counsel on School and Turning Leaves committees, and generously shared her energy and creativity in support of many successful Children’s Auctions at our annual Turning Leaves celebrations. Dianne’s years as a preschool teacher informed both her perspective on early childhood education, and her unwavering support of our mission.

Christina Dorando was a valued Board member when the demands of operating a network of childcare centers amidst the pandemic forced her to refocus her attention on her business. As a child care professional we were particularly grateful for Christina’s invaluable insights on the Child Committee.

Fortunately, not all Board changes have been departures. In July we were delighted to welcome Kyle Colwell of Basking Ridge to the Board, where he is serving on the Development Committee and the 25th Anniversary Committee (the latter with his wife, Emily). Kyle’s experience as a financial advisor will be an excellent asset to Preschool Advantage, particularly as we navigate these uncertain times.

2019 – 2020: A Strong Start. Turbulent Times.

Almost \$9,000 was raised at The Peck School's Pasta for Preschool Fundraiser



Turning Leaves honoree, The Peck School, represented by Head of School, Andy Delinsky



Ashley Dunker, a Preschool Advantage parent and Carol Rubnitz, director of The Preschool Place and Kindergarten were speakers at 2019 Turning Leaves



1st meeting of the Preschool Advantage 25th Anniversary Committee meeting



Stuart Lasser, founder, and Molly Dunn, Executive Director, pull winning golf raffle winner



The fiscal year that began on July 1, 2019 was filled with promise as a record number of young students (102) prepared to enter our largest ever group of partner preschools (24).

A newly formed 25th Anniversary Committee, led by trustee, Judy Pierce, was hard at work brainstorming about plans to incorporate this major milestone into the fabric of our 2020 events and communications.

Our School Committee spent the summer and fall of 2019 visiting and evaluating current partner preschools, and adding several new schools to our ranks. The additions will increase our presence in Basking Ridge, East Hanover, and Parsippany. The Committee also welcomed to our diverse list of preschool partners our first-ever independent school, Far Hills Country Day School.

October's Turning Leaves gala broke all fundraising records for Preschool Advantage. Over 350 supporters attended the festive event at Brooklake Country Club. The evening's highlights included poignant recollections from a Preschool Advantage alumni family, and a celebration of our partnership with gala honoree, The Peck School. Many members of the Peck faculty and parent community were on-hand to hear Peck's Head of School, Andy Delinsky, affirm both the importance of our mission and Peck's continued commitment to engaging its students in fundraising and volunteering on our behalf.

In November, our community learned of Molly Dunn's decision to retire in July, 2020, after an extraordinarily successful seven years at the helm of Preschool Advantage. We created a search committee to find her successor

In the first quarter of 2020 as inquiries and applications continued to grow (up 25% in 2019), we welcomed to our small staff Lisa Krapacher, our first-ever Administrative and Program Assistant.

With the 2020-2021 application season well underway, March arrived and with it, the global health and economic storm we continue to face today. Under Molly Dunn's extraordinary leadership, we continued to process applications, communicate with partner schools and apply for corporate and foundation grants, all while working remotely.

Our partner preschools also rose to the challenge of remote learning, finding innovative ways to stay connected with students and parents even as their doors were closed. (Two of our partner schools have remained open throughout the pandemic, serving the children of essential workers). We are so grateful to all of our partner preschools for their service to New Jersey's hard-working families.

Remarkably, Preschool Advantage remains on track to meet our stated goal of funding 100 children in preschool for the 2020-2021 school year. Our corporate and foundation supporters have demonstrated their deep commitment to our mission, as has our impressive network of individual donors. While we had to cancel our June Golf Invitational, the virtual event that replaced it raised nearly the same amount originally budgeted for the live event.

As the fiscal year came to a close, we were thrilled to welcome our new Executive Director, Nancy Bangiola. Through Zoom, conference calls and email, Nancy is connecting with our many constituents—donors and partner schools, trustees and volunteers. With her boundless energy and her deep commitment to education, Nancy has embraced her new role despite the turbulent times.

While the pandemic has wreaked havoc on so many, creating even more challenges for our families, Preschool Advantage is poised to see them through this storm.

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Sisters Maya (4) and Erin (3) will be attending Inspire Kids together in September. The family understands the value of education – their mother is an ABA (applied behavioral analysis) home therapist who works with autistic children. Their father currently works as an apprentice mason. Both jobs are paid hourly, so when there is no work, there is no pay. Funding from Preschool Advantage will assist with their fluctuating financial situation.

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Three-year old Lana will be attending Rainbow Montessori this fall. Lana's mother is a hairstylist and their father works for a local automotive company. They are fortunate to have family that live next door to help care for Lana when they work evenings and weekends. Lana is especially excited to attend Rainbow Montessori, just as her big sister did!

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Mark and his three year old twin sister Maria will be attending Hillside Preschool for the first time in September. Their father is a sanitation driver, and their mother currently stays at home with the children. She used to work at a local hospital, but the cost of childcare for two children was extremely expensive. The twins are excited to meet new friends, and their mom hopes to return to work in some capacity.



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Angela, who is three, will be attending Children on the Green. Angela's previous home care facility closed due to COVID-19. Angela's mother is a middle school teacher and sole household supporter. Angela must occupy herself most of the day, as her mom teaches remotely from home. They are both excited for the start of the school year in September!

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On behalf of the families we serve, we sincerely thank you for your support. We worked hard to ensure that the information presented here is accurate. If you have any questions, comments, or corrections, please let us know.

Supporters

Hope is four and excited to start soon at a new preschool, Mt. Olive Child Care & Learning Center. The family recently moved to a more affordable community, but they no longer have access to a free public pre-k program. Hope's mother is an accounts receivable clerk and her father stays at home. They are all excited Hope will be able to continue preschool, where she was very social!

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Marisa & Pete Chandler
Rona & Mark Cohen
Barbara & Steven Colin
Gary Curtis

Peggy & Doug Shurts
Henry Slack
Kay & Perry Sutaria
Tisbest Philanthropy
Robert Toner
Michael Turner
Tara Utter
Kristen & Richard Vail
Paul Yarosz

List reflects donations made between
7/1/2019 - 6/30/2020





Molly Dunn: Thank You and Farewell

Last fall, Molly Dunn announced that she would retire from Preschool Advantage in July, 2020, following the completion of the 2020-2021 application cycle. After an extremely successful seven years at the helm, it was hard for many of us to imagine Preschool Advantage moving forward without her.

By now many of you have met our new Executive Director, Nancy Bangiola (either virtually or by way of written introduction) and we can confidently say that, under Nancy’s leadership, Preschool Advantage is most certainly moving forward and continuing to fulfill its mission. Therefore, we want to take this opportunity to reflect upon the incredible legacy Molly leaves behind.

Since joining Preschool Advantage in 2014 as its third Executive Director, Molly has led the organization through a period of exceptional growth, not only in terms of the number of children served (over 1,000 in total—over 400 of these during Molly’s tenure alone) but also in our network of partner schools, donors, and volunteers.

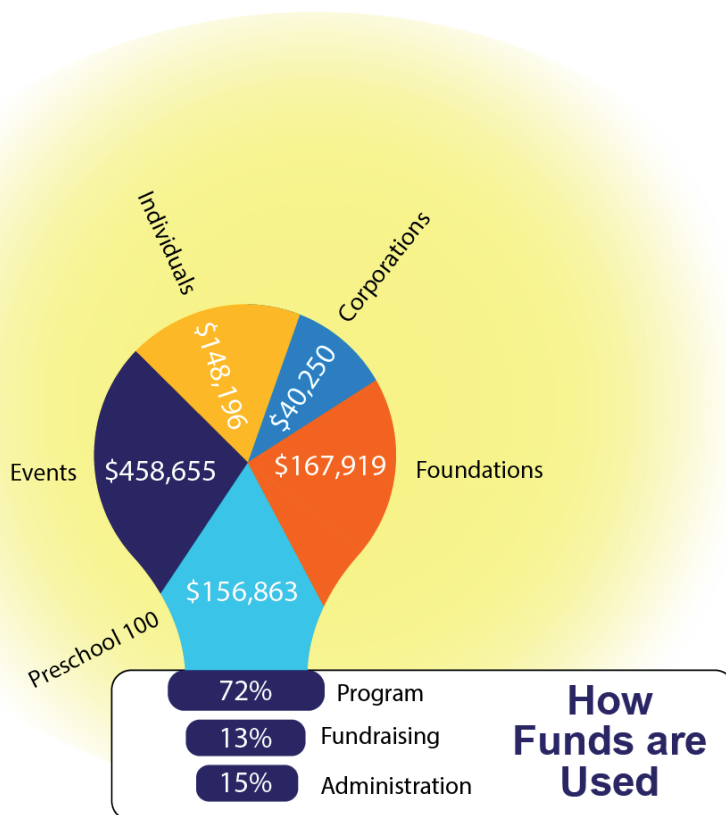
When Molly arrived at Preschool Advantage, we partnered with 14 preschools. In 2020 that number has doubled to 28, allowing us to serve significantly more children through a variety of schools that ensures an excellent fit for each child.

Under Molly’s direction, foundation support more than doubled to \$167,000 annually, and Preschool Advantage completed its first-ever capital campaign. Major Giving from individual donors grew from \$12,000 in 2014 to an impressive \$128,000 in 2019. Both attendance and revenue from our annual Turning Leaves gala and Golf Invitational have more than doubled since 2014.

Molly has guided the organization through two critically important strategic plans, overseen the revision of our mission, vision, bylaws and employee manual, and presided over a complete redesign of our website. Under Molly’s guidance we have greatly expanded our presence on social media and undergone a full modernization of all marketing practices.

That these changes, among so many others, occurred in just seven years is a tribute to Molly’s incredible work ethic and to her vision for a strong and stable future for Preschool Advantage. Along the way she has touched so many individuals—from the families served on her watch to the preschool directors, staff, donors, and volunteers she welcomed into the Preschool Advantage community with open arms.

Molly leaves the organization significantly stronger than when she found it, despite the crisis that looms over the present moment. Thanks to Molly’s leadership we are ready to support the families who need us better than ever. Molly will be missed. She leaves behind an organization that is strong, resilient, and filled with gratitude for her years of service.



2019 Sources of Income