

Welcome! We are delighted that your child will be a part of **BRIGHT BEGINNINGS**, the Williamsburg James City County Schools Early Childhood Program. The Bright Beginnings staff is truly committed to working in partnership with you and your child to provide for the highest quality early childhood experience.

We know, especially if this is your first school experience, you will have many questions. In this handbook we hope to have anticipated some of your concerns and answer some of your more general questions; **please keep it in a convenient spot for future reference.**

Your child’s teacher will send home class newsletters, notes, monthly family activity calendars and other reminders. Please check your child’s backpack every day to make sure you don’t miss out on important information.

At Bright Beginnings, we...

...believe that our children benefit from a strong relationship between family and school. Our program is based on the spirit of “community” where children, parents and staff feel a strong sense of partnership and belonging.

...recognize the unique qualities of individual children and feel that children learn best by being active, experiential learners.

...provide a rich environment where children have the opportunity for discovery and growth.

...encourage the love of learning and the development of an inquisitive mind.

...believe that children deserve to grow at their own rate in a warm, nurturing and supportive environment.

Please respect instructional time for children and understand that classroom teachers will generally not answer their phone during the time they are instructing and supervising children in the classroom.

If you have an emergency, the school office will be able to get a message to your child’s teacher.

Clara Byrd Baker Elementary	221-0949
DJ Montague Elementary	258-3022
J. Blaine Blayton Elementary	565-9323
Laurel Lane Elementary	229-7597
Norge Elementary	564-8721, Option 2

Emergency Information

Parents/Guardians are responsible for updating the Emergency Information Card and Preschool Transportation/Pick-Up Permission Form whenever there is a change in phone numbers, address, etc. These are two of the most important documents we have about your child. For your child’s safety and well-being, please be sure to keep this information current. If your family has any court-ordered custody arrangements, we must be provided with a copy of the documents.

ATTENDANCE

School is a wonderful opportunity for your child to learn new skills and establish relationships with other children and adults. Your child's learning and sense of security are supported by consistent attendance. It is important that our children learn early in life the importance of attending school every day. Bright Beginnings will adhere to the following WJCC policies:

- Monthly reporting of all absences to parent/guardian
- Parent/Guardian signature each month to verify absences have been reported
- Attendance Improvement Plans will be developed if determined necessary by teacher or BB Administrator
- Student withdrawal after 15 consecutive days absent from school

Absence from School

The Williamsburg-James City County attendance policy defines a legal absence as one "caused by illness, quarantine, religious holiday, death in one's family, floods, hurricanes, and storms", or educational family trips not to exceed 5 school days and for which **at least 5 days prior notice has been given in person by the parent to the child's teacher or the Preschool Principal**. Families are encouraged to limit their vacations to times that do not interfere with their children's education. In addition, parents/guardians shall contact the school to indicate a reason for student absence. Upon returning to school, a student who is absent must bring a note signed by the student's parent or guardian stating the date(s) and reason for the child's absence.

When Your Child Is Sick

When your child is sick, please see the guidelines suggested in "***Is My Child Well Enough to Go to School?***" listed below to decide if you should send your child to school or keep your child at home.

- If your child has a fever, he must stay at home for 24 hours after the temperature returns to normal without medication.
- If your child has vomited or has diarrhea, he must stay home for 24 hours after the vomiting or diarrhea has stopped.
- If your child has a runny nose and the discharge is yellow or green in color, they should not be in school until after they have seen the doctor and are released to come back to school.
- After your child has been ill, please do not send them back to school until they are back to a normal activity level and are symptom free for 24 hours.

If your child will be staying home due to illness, we ask that you call the Transportation Department (757.565.0808 ext 2) so they can alert your child's bus driver.

When your child is well enough to return to school, a **WRITTEN NOTE** must be sent to the child's teacher stating the date(s) and reason for the child's absence. We have included standardized absent notes for your convenience.

Serious Allergies

More and more children are seriously allergic to peanuts and other nuts. These allergies can be life threatening. In order to ensure the health and safety of all children, **all Bright Beginnings classrooms are peanut and tree nut free.**

If you send your child's lunch to school, please do not send peanut butter sandwiches, peanut butter crackers, cookies, or cakes with peanuts or other nuts or candy that may have peanuts or nuts in it.

Bright Beginnings follows the WJCC Wellness Policy requiring any food that is shared with the entire class follow School Nutrition Guidelines. *If you want to bring food to share with your child's class*, please talk with one of our nurses or your child's teacher first. There is NO change or restriction on what can be packed in a child's individual lunch.

Dress Your Child for Safe and Active Play

- In order for children to fully engage in hands-on learning, they need to be dressed in washable, comfortable, and safe clothing and footwear.
- Remember, painting and outdoor play are daily activities in preschool so please send your child in clothing that can be washed easily.
- Children's clothing should be uncomplicated so that they can easily use the bathroom by themselves.
- Please *label* all sweaters, jackets, coats, school bags, backpacks, etc. with your child's name. Often a child will have a garment identical to someone else's in the classroom.
- Tennis shoes are preferable. Dress-up shoes, sandals and flip-flops can be dangerous for active play.
- Jewelry and strings on hoods can also present safety hazards for young children.

Items from Home

We discourage children from bringing toys from home. Some classes have a scheduled "show and tell" experience where children can bring items from home. Please make sure that everything brought in is LABELED, and that no belonging is extremely valuable. Also, please make certain that no toy weapons are brought into school. We do appreciate when parents send in a book or item that is relevant to a topic that the children are focusing on. However, let the teacher know that you are sending an item in.

Early Childhood Staff

All of our WJCC early childhood teachers are licensed by the Virginia Department of Education and endorsed in early childhood and/or early childhood special education. The majority of our early childhood teachers have completed a master's degree in early childhood education. Instructional assistants vary in their educational background from those who have completed high school to those who have completed a master's degree. Instructional assistants work under the direct supervision of the classroom teacher. All of our staff members have a wealth of experience working with young children. Early childhood staff members are required to continue their education with ongoing participation in early childhood conferences, workshops and training sessions. Early dismissal dates allow our staff to participate in professional development activities.

Early Childhood Curriculum

Our classroom instructional framework is based on the *Creative Curriculum*® model and the Virginia Foundation Blocks for Early Learning (developed by the Virginia Department of Education). The *Creative Curriculum*® is a comprehensive model that promotes positive outcomes for all children, including English-language learners, children with disabilities, and children who are gifted. It is currently the country's leading scientifically based, comprehensive curriculum for programs serving children from birth to age 5. Our curriculum model is supplemented with materials from Houghton-Mifflin PRE-K, developed by nationally recognized experts in early childhood development and education.

You will receive formal, detailed progress reports of your child's development in January and June of each school year. More informal reports are shared with parents on a regular basis throughout the school year.

Behavior and Discipline

One of the most important aspects of growth for young children is to develop self-control (sometimes called self-regulation). Development of self-regulation skills allows children to relate appropriately to others and express their emotions in acceptable ways. Self-regulation skills also allow children to make positive choices, to enter and exit peer groups with increasing skill and satisfaction, and to learn to live in a respectful and cooperative manner.

The WJCC Preschool Program follows the guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). These guidelines recognize that each child is a unique person with an individual pattern and timing of growth, as well as individual personality, learning style and family background.

While some behaviors are typical for a specific "age and stage", we recognize that children learn appropriate social behaviors at different rates. Children are guided in their behavior through clearly stated expectations, modeling of appropriate behaviors, positive reinforcement, correction, and redirection.

We believe in "positive discipline" which focuses on good behavior, rather than bad. We may need to redirect a child and speak with them about appropriate behavior. When necessary, we speak to a child with a firm, but caring voice. At times, it may be necessary to remove the child from the rest of the group.

If inappropriate behavior persists, we will involve one of our Preschool Resource Teachers, the child's parents, and other early childhood professionals to determine the causes of the behavior and a plan for supporting the child as he or she learns more appropriate behaviors.

Family Involvement

We share a very important common interest – your child! It is important to establish and maintain positive relationships through communication, cooperation, and collaboration. Children are the ones who benefit most from healthy, reciprocal relationships between teachers and families. Families may request an interpreter for meetings or school events.

Each month you will be expected to participate in a home visit and one other family involvement activity.

Examples of parent involvement activities include: parent meetings, public library events, field trips with your child's class, volunteering in your child's classroom or school, adult education activities or other community events focused on parenting or young children. You and your child's teacher may agree upon other options as well.

Your child's teacher will arrange a mutually convenient time for home visits. If your child, or someone else in the household, is sick on the day of a home visit please let the teacher know as soon as possible so that the home visit can be rescheduled.

Some ways to help in your child's classroom:

- Help children with routine tasks. Children should be encouraged to do things independently, but sometimes they will need a bit of encouragement

with such things as removing coats, tying shoes, finding their own materials to work with, etc...

- Read stories to the children...in small groups or just one or two at a time.
- Help children to mix paints or make play dough.
- Supervise or work with individual children or small groups.
- Share your special talents with the children...teach a dance, a song, play a musical instrument, share a special collection.
- Save "throw-away" items for use in the classroom. Some things to save are: ribbons, bottle caps, toilet paper and paper towel rolls, scraps of material, yarn, egg cartons, shoe boxes, etc.
- Be aware of classroom rules and procedures, and help the children follow them.
- Learn songs, finger plays, etc...that the children enjoy. Join in at circle time with the children.
- Help the teacher with preparation of materials.

Visitors and Observers

All visitors must sign in at the school's main office before entering classrooms or the playground space. Please sign out when you leave the school campus.

From time to time we may have observers from local universities, the community, or other preschools visit our classrooms. They may make general observations of children and teaching staff. However, if a specific child is to be observed the parents of the child must give **written** permission to the Preschool office for the observation to occur.

Parents are welcome and encouraged to visit their child's classroom. The best interest of the child and class are taken into consideration when determining the length of time or frequency of visits. If there are custody issues, it is the parents' responsibility to inform the school administration of any visitation restrictions.

To make a change in your address, phone number, email, bus pick up or drop off:

Any changes or additions to you or your child's contact information, home or mailing address, employment, medical need, etc. must be submitted on the **Preschool Information Change Form**. These forms can be requested from your child's teacher or by calling the Bright Beginnings office at 757.564.8721 (ext 2).

TRANSPORTATION

PICK-UP AND DROP-OFF PROCEDURES:

Parents/Guardians are responsible for knowing their child's bus schedule and should be watching for the bus ahead of time. Parents/Guardians should be at the designated bus stop location 10 minutes before the scheduled bus arrival time.

All children must have one specified location to be picked up and dropped off each day. Make sure that you have introduced the bus driver to any adult who is authorized to take your child off the bus.

How do I add/remove an adult who is allowed to pick up/drop off my child from school or the bus?

Only adults (18 years of age or older with photo ID) listed on the Preschool Transportation/Pick-Up Permission Form are authorized to pick up your child from school or bus stop. Changes in the adults permitted to take your child on and off the bus or pick your child up at school, can only be made in writing by filling out the **Preschool Transportation/Pick-Up Permission Form**. Please contact the Bright Beginnings Office at 757-564-8721 ext 2 for assistance.

Please follow the guidelines below:

- Complete the form adding or removing the name of the adult (*Parents cannot be removed or prohibited from picking up a student unless specified by a court order*).
- Be sure to list ALL adults that remain able to pick up your child.
- Return the completed form to your child's teacher or the Bright Beginnings Office as soon as possible.
- The Transportation Department requires up to 48 hours to make these changes, meaning the change will not take place the same day the Office receives a completed form.
- Any changes made during the beginning of the school year may take up to two weeks.

How do I change the pick up or drop off location for my child?

A request to change your child's pick-up or drop-off location can only be made in writing by completing the **Preschool Information Change Form**. We are unable to make bus stop changes for preschool students on short notice or inconsistent amounts of time for your child's safety. All requests for preschool transportation must be consistent and the same for each day your child attends. Please contact the Preschool Office at 564-8721 ext. 2 or contact your child's teacher. A **Preschool Information Change Form** will be sent home in the child's backpack or sent to you via email. Please follow the guidelines below:

- Complete the form specifying the address of the new requested pick-up/drop-off location. (*Please note that there are some cases in which a transportation change may require a change in preschool if the new address is out of the current school zone*)
- Return the completed form to the Bright Beginnings office or your child's teacher as soon as possible.
- The Transportation Department requires **72 hours for processing most requests sent by the Bright Beginnings Office**, meaning the change will not take place the day the request is received.

NOTES:

- ***An adult will not be added to the pick up permission form the same day as the request.***
- ***All transportation and/or pick up permission changes must be in writing and cannot be taken over the phone.***
- ***This is to ensure your child's safety.***

TRANSPORATION DOs AND DON'Ts:

DO...

- For your child's safety, hold your child's hand while waiting at the bus stop and as they board the bus. Please hold the child's hand immediately upon exiting when they arrive home.
- If you plan to pick your child up at school, please arrive at least 10 minutes before bus dismissal time to sign your child out. If you have not arrived by the time buses are loaded, your child will be put on the bus to go home.
- As a courtesy to our bus drivers, contact the Transportation Department @ 757-565-0808 ext. 2 if your child will not be riding the bus that day
- Remember, you may not drop your child off at school early. If your child arrives before the scheduled class time, the adult who brings the child to school will be expected to stay until class starts. Our teachers are busy getting activities prepared for the day and are not available to supervise children before school.
- Inform your child's babysitter or day care provider of the preschool transportation DOs and DON'Ts.

DON'T...

- Expect bus drivers to blow their horn or wait for children who are not ready for school.
- Ask the bus driver to come back for your child if he or she is not ready. This makes the driver late for every other child on the bus route and the bus drivers are not allowed to do this.
- Allow children to take food or drink on the bus. Do make sure that all food and drink is contained in a bag or lunch box.

IF AN AUTHORIZED ADULT DOES NOT MEET THE BUS

If an authorized adult does not meet the bus, your child will be returned to school. You will be called and asked to come to school and pick up your child immediately. Also, you will receive written warning of consequences.

1st Occurrence: A written warning will be sent home.

2nd Occurrence: Your child may lose bus privileges for three days. You will be expected to transport your child back and forth to school during that time.

3rd Occurrence: If another instance of not meeting the bus occurs, bus privileges will be lost for one week. Again, you will be expected to transport your child back and forth to school during that time.

FIRST TWO WEEKS OF SCHOOL:

Changes made during the beginning of the school year may take up to two weeks to take effect.

LAST THREE WEEKS OF SCHOOL:

There will not be any changes allowed for bus pick-up or drop-off during the last three weeks of school.

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS PROGRAM
CONTACT INFORMATION

Principal

Amy Gulick
amy.gulick@wjccschools.org
757.565.9323

Assistant Principal

Julie Cretacci
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Special Education Coordinator

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757.564.8721 ext 1

Senior Administrative Assistant at J Blaine Blayton Elementary

Caitlin Whisenant
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757.565.9323

Administrative Assistant at Norge Elementary

Shayna Gregory
shayna.gregory@wjccschools.org
757.564.8721 ext 2

Central Point of Entry Coordinator

Beth Burkhalter
beth.burkhalter@wjccschools.org
757.565.9363

Transportation Department
757.565.0808 (dispatch ext. 2)