

Transcript of Think Small Scholarship Application Presentation

Slide 1:

Welcome, and thank you for your interest in Monarch Montessori School. We are excited to announce that we have received our 4 star rating through Parent Aware, an organization administered through the State of Minnesota. Starting July 2021, qualifying families with their children enrolled at Monarch Montessori School will be eligible for child care assistance through Think Small. These scholarships are intended to help families pay for the cost of childcare for children ages 3 and 4. In this presentation, we will discuss what resources are available to families and walk through the application process.

Slide 2:

Our Mission statement at Monarch Montessori School is to create a nurturing school community, grounded in Montessori pedagogy, accessible to families of all incomes, that places the needs of the children first.

Our organization's leaders know these scholarships are valuable to parents seeking child care, which is why we felt, as an organization, it was important that we received a 4 star Parent Aware rating. We will be going into further detail about Parent Aware and Think Small shortly.

At any point during this presentation, you will be able to stop, go back, and fast forward through different sections. You can find this slideshow, transcript of this presentation, as well as additional resources for financial assistance at MonarchMN.org.

Slide 3

Let's dive in! You might be asking yourself at this point, "What child care financial assistance is actually available for my family?"

Today we are discussing the Pathway 1 Early Learning Scholarships through Think Small and Parent Aware. These two organizations, under the umbrella of Minnesota's Department of Human Services, offer qualifying families up to \$7,500.00 per child per year to help cover the costs associated with child care. Parents can use these funds towards costs or tuition at any Parent Aware child care provider. To summarize: Think Small is the organization that administers the scholarships, and Parent Aware ensures that participating child care centers are providing quality care for scholarship participants. Child care providers must meet a certain set of standards, outlined by Parent Aware, in order to be able to accept these scholarships from families. If an organization is not Parent Aware rated, families cannot use their scholarship funds at that child care provider.

We do want to acknowledge that Think Small's website does state that, due to the high demand of applications, they cannot award every family a scholarship. However, at Monarch Montessori School, we encourage every family that has an interest in these scholarships to apply.

Slide 4:

Let's quickly go over which families are able to receive these scholarships. These scholarships are only available to families with children ages 3 and 4 years old. If your child is 5 years or older, they do not qualify for these scholarships, for these scholarships are for children going through Pre-K, not Kindergarten.

Families must reside in in Ramsey or Hennepin county.

The scholarships must be used at a Parent Aware rated child care provider. Monarch Montessori School received their four star parent aware rating in July 2021, so we are able to accept Think Small scholarships from families. However, if you are looking at enrolling your child

in another childcare program, that provider might not be able to accept the scholarships. If you would like to learn more about Parent Aware rated programs near you, you can use the search feature on Parent Aware's website, www.parentaware.org.

Slide 5:

Parent Aware awards scholarships to parents based on the Parent Aware child care program they choose. Again, Monarch Montessori School is happy to announce that we are a 4 star Parent Aware rated program. Because we are 4 star rated, we can accept up to \$7,500.00 per child, per year of Think Small scholarship dollars. This table is from Think Small's website, and shows the scholarship amount a family can receive based on their enrollment in a Parent Aware program.

Slide 6:

The last requirement to highlight before we move onto the application process is the Financial Eligibility Requirements. In order to receive funds from Think Small to use towards a child care program, families must show they fit the financial criteria. This table shows the breakdown of the financial criteria based on the household income and household size of the family. If you are a family of two individuals (ex: a parent and a child), your yearly income would need to be less than \$31,894.00, and this continues on for increased family sizes. If you participate in an additional assistance program, such as MFP, CCAP, Free and Reduced Lunch, or any of the additional programs listed on this slide, your family is also eligible to receive Think Small scholarships. If you are unsure that your family meets the financial requirements, we encourage you to reach out to the Think Small staff. The Think Small Office's contact information is listed on our website, and I will include the contact information at the end of this slideshow.

Slide 7:

Let's dive into the application process! On the website, you are able to select which type of application you want to complete: a paper application or an electronic application. The electronic application is available in a PDF format. You can print off at home the electronic application if you would like to complete it as a paper copy. Applications are accepted year-round, and there is no deadline to submit your application. And applications are available in English, Hmong, Somali, and Spanish.

Slide 8:

If you would like a paper application to complete, but you do not have a printer at home, you can fill out a request form to receive your application. Paper applications will be mailed to the address you put on the request form. This link is on the Think Small Pathway I Scholarship website, but Monarch Montessori school will also have this link on our website.

Slide 9:

After you download or print off the application, start going through the form and fill out the information requested. All areas that have an asterisk need to be filled out. Towards the end of the application, you will need to fill out your family's financial information, including your household income. After filling out the application, you need to read and sign/date the Tennessee Warning. On Monarch Montessori's website, there is an example application our staff filled out for the Butterfly family. You can use this example application as a guide for filling

out your application.

Slide 10:

As mentioned in the previous slide, you will need to verify your household's income. The application asks you to describe your household income or your participation in a publicly funded program. In addition to filling out this information on your application, you will also need to submit corresponding documentation to prove your family's household income or participation in a publicly funded program. If you are emailing your application, you can attach these supplemental documents to the email in addition to your application. If you are mailing your application, you must print off or have hard copies of these documents stapled to the back. Information about what qualifies as a supplemental document to verify your income or eligibility are found on Page 5 of the application.

If you participate in a publicly funded program, you must submit with your application one of the following documents: official notice on program letterhead; application with program approval or signature, an authorization form from the public program; a current bill or receipt from the program, or a screenshot from a program's official system of record. Proof of participation must have the name of the parent or guardian and the name child or children. It must be dated, and it must be valid at the time of the Think Small scholarship award.

If your household income qualifies you for a Think Small scholarship, you must submit one of the following documents: a W-2 form, two most recent pay stubs, a financial aid statement, or a statement from an employer on company letterhead. Pay stubs must be dated within six months of the Think Small scholarship award. If other types of documentation are not available, the previous year's income tax filing documents may be used. The tax documents must be a copy of the signed version submitted to the IRS or include the confirmation notice if submitted electronically. Include proof for all types of income earned. If the household has no income, one of the adults in the household must complete the Household Declaration of No Income at the end of the application.

Again, this information is found on Page 5 of the application.

Slide 11:

After you have completed your application, please review the documents to make sure you have completed every required section. There is an application checklist available for you to review. Remember to attach any supporting documents to your application. If you are submitting your application by mail, you will need to staple the additional documents to the back of your application. If you are submitting your application through email, remember to include your additional documents as well. The mailing address to send your application to is Think Small, Attn: Early Learning Scholarship, 10 Yorkton Court, Saint Paul, MN 55117. If you are emailing your application, please send it to ApplyELS@thinksmall.org.

Slide 12:

After submitting your application, Think Small will begin reviewing your documents. The Area

Administrator will send you a letter to let you know the status of your child's Early Learning Scholarship application status. If you have any additional questions or want updates on your application, please contact the Area Administrator.

Slide 13:

Here are some additional resources available to families interested in applying for the Think Small scholarships. We encourage all of our families to visit Think Small's website, which we have listed on the Monarch Montessori School's website.

Slide 14:

Thank you for your interest in Monarch Montessori School and the Think Small scholarship program. We are excited to meet new families with our 4 star Parent Aware rating. If you have any additional questions about the Think Small/Parent Aware scholarship application or process, please do not hesitate to reach out to our executive director, Julia Kallmes, at the phone number or email listed here. You can email our board of directors at monarchmontessoriboard@gmail.com. Thank you!