

# More Kids Closer to Kindergarten-Ready Thanks to Toyota, Born Learning Academies

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**GEORGETOWN, Ky. (June 27, 2016)** – Kentucky is getting another boost to early childhood education. Today, Toyota, with United Way and the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood, unveiled plans to expand the United Way Born Learning Academies, adding 63 schools to the kindergarten readiness program’s growing lineup.

The program kicked off in 2012 with a \$1 million grant from the automaker, and was later strengthened with an additional \$1.2 million investment by the state via its Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge federal grant. As a result, beginning this fall a total of 161 academies will offer learning resources to parents and caregivers of pre-K children throughout the Commonwealth.

### ***Improving Kindergarten Readiness***

Today, an estimated 50% of Kentucky’s children are not prepared for kindergarten, according to the Kentucky Department of Education. Taking aim at this deficiency, United Way Born Learning academies are designed to help parents and caregivers improve their children’s kindergarten readiness with free monthly workshops hosted at local schools. Through hands-on activities, parents and caregivers of children under five years old are trained to turn everyday moments into practical learning opportunities.

When Kimberly Young, principal of Frankfort’s Westridge Elementary and mother to a two-year-old, participated in the program at her school, she picked up new ways to create learning moments in every day places like the car or the grocery store.

But that wasn’t the only benefit to the six-month program. “Parents and children form strong connections within the school community through Born Learning,” Young said. “Not only do they forge parent-to-parent support systems, but they also get to know our teachers and staff well before their child enters kindergarten.”

### ***It Takes a Village***

Born Learning Academies are made possible with support from both private and public partners.

Toyota launched the program in 2012 with a five-year commitment of financial support totaling \$1 million. “Just as early learning experiences are vital to future success in school, they are important to preparing our state’s future workforce,” said Wil James, president of Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky Inc. (TMMK).

“Investing in opportunities for our young people to learn and grow is an important philanthropy focus for us. We believe that every child should have a chance at success, and we are proud to collaborate with community partners to help make that happen.”

In 2014, the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood matched Toyota’s grant and some, with the goal of opening 150 new academies over a four year period. “The United Way Born Learning Academies show the impact of private and public collaboration to ensure families and children are supported to succeed in school and life,” said Terry Tolan, executive director of the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood (GOEC). “Our commitment to invest in early childhood benefits young learners, families and communities.”

In addition to the program’s major supporters, Family Resource and Youth Service Centers (FRYSC), a division of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, serve as an integral program partner, providing teaching staff support for every academy across the state.

“We are pleased to partner with Toyota and the state, as well as communities across Kentucky to expand this important program,” said Kevin Middleton, president of United Way of Kentucky. “Parents are their child’s first teacher and we know this program is helping give young children a sturdy foundation before they start school.”

### ***Money Well Spent***

Investing in quality early childhood education offers substantial benefits. In fact, according to economist James

Heckman with the University of Chicago, every \$1 spent on early childhood education carries a 7-10% return on investment.

According to the Prichard Committee, children who attend high-quality preschool are more likely to be employed and have higher earnings as adults.

*A list of the 2016 Born Learning Academies follows.*

### **2016 Toyota-funded Schools**

School	County
Adair County Primary Center	Adair
Summit Elementary	Boyd
Jennie Rogers Elementary	Boyle
Brooks Elementary	Bullitt
Clinton County Early Childhood Center	Clinton
Rosenwald Center for Families and Children	Franklin
Elkhorn Elementary	Franklin
Second Street Elementary	Franklin
Dry Ridge Elementary	Grant
Harlan Independent Elementary	Harlan
London Elementary	Laurel
Whitley Elementary and Pine Knot Primary	McCreary
Morganfield Elementary	Union
Warren Elementary	Warren
Erlanger Early Learning Center	Kenton
James E. Biggs Preschool	Kenton

## 2016 State-funded Schools

School	County
Bourbon Central Elementary	Bourbon
Morgantown Elementary	Butler
Liberty Elementary	Casey
Pembroke Elementary	Christian
Deer Park Elementary	Daviess
Lansdowne Elementary	Fayette
E.P Ward Elementary	Fleming
Prestonsburg Elementary	Floyd
W.D. Osborne Elementary	Floyd
Bridgeport Elementary	Franklin
Collins Lane Elementary	Franklin
Farmington Elementary	Graves
Clarkson Elementary	Grayson
Argillite Elementary	Greenup
Greysbranch Elementary	Greenup
Helmwood Elementary	Hardin
Bonnieville Elementary	Hart
Stinnett Elementary	Leslie
Hustonville Elementary	Lincoln
McKinney Elementary	Lincoln
Waynesburg Elementary	Lincoln
Adairville School	Logan
Madison Kindergarten Academy	Madison
Waco Elementary	Madison
Glasscock Elementary	Marion
Morgan Elementary	McCracken
Calhoun Elementary	McLean
David T. Wilson Elementary	Meade

Flaherty Primary	Meade
Botts Elementary	Menifee
Menifee County Elementary	Menifee
Mt. Sterling Elementary	Montgomery
East Valley Elementary	Morgan
Nicholas Co Elementary	Nicholas
A.B. Combs Elementary	Perry
Buckhorn School	Perry
Leatherwood Elementary	Perry
R.W. Combs Elementary	Perry
Robinson Elementary	Perry
Russell Springs Elementary	Russell
Salem Elementary	Russell
Russell Primary School	Russell
Painted Stone Elementary	Shelby
Franklin Elementary	Simpson
Taylor County Elementary	Taylor
Lost River Elementary	Warren
Parker-Bennett-Curry Elementary	Warren
T.C. Cherry Elementary	Warren
Clay Elementary	Webster
Sebree Elementary	Webster