

Focus on the Future: Kentucky, Toyota Expand Early Childhood Academies

April 24, 2015

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Frankfort, Ky. (April 24, 2015) – Preparing parents helps prepare students...which leads to a prepared workforce.

Today half of the children in Kentucky arrive at kindergarten unprepared. The United Way Born Learning Academies meet a critical need in Kentucky communities: helping parents turn everyday moments into learning opportunities to help prepare their kids for kindergarten and beyond.

Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear, Toyota and United Way today announced the expansion of innovative early childhood academies to 36 more schools across the state. The initiative is funded by Kentucky's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge federal grant and Toyota's manufacturing operations in Kentucky. The state is in year two of a four-year \$1.4 million expansion while Toyota is in its fourth year of a \$1 million investment.

"Race to the Top funds allow us to take another step toward helping every child in the Commonwealth enter kindergarten ready to succeed," said Gov. Beshear. "We are proud to partner with United Way and Toyota as we engage families and communities to support and foster educational opportunities at the earliest level. Our effort at this stage will build a firm foundation as we prepare our students for success in school and the workforce."

Today's announcement brings the total number of statewide academies to 105, with 50 funded by Race to the Top, 41 by Toyota and 14 schools that are part of the original Kentucky contingent, operated with funding through United Way of Greater Cincinnati – Northern Kentucky. With support of the Governor's Office of Early Childhood (KYGOEC) and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, along with the Division of Family Resource and Youth Services Centers, Born Learning Academies will grow to 220 total schools over the next four years.

The academies include six free, monthly workshops that teach parents and caregivers of children from prenatal to five years old how to turn everyday moments into learning opportunities.

"For me, this program has been about creating teaching moments in daily life," says parent participant Leea Martin Slinker of Hiseville, Ky. "It's understanding opportunities with what a kid is already doing, like talking about patterns by having my daughter choose striped pants or polka-dot pants. It's creating moments out of what's already there. You don't have to buy anything, you don't have to stop and think about it, but it's about not letting these opportunities pass you by."

Investing in quality early childhood education – including early childhood parental education – offers substantial benefits. Experts say that every dollar spent on preschool and early childhood education programs carries a return on investment ranging from \$2 to \$17. According to the Prichard Committee, children who attend high-quality preschool are more likely to be employed and have higher earnings as adults.

Beginning this year Family Resource and Youth Service Centers (FRYSC), a division of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services that work to remove nonacademic barriers to learning as a means to enhance student academic success, will partner with the KYGOEC and Toyota to provide staff support for the United Way Born Learning Academies.

"FRYSCs have an established record of success in improving academic outcomes and meeting the specific needs within their communities," said Melissa Goins, director of the Division of Family Resource and Youth Services Centers. "We are pleased to begin this partnership to help families be their child's best first teacher."

The Born Learning concept, created by United Way Worldwide, provides a community resource for parents and teachers to collaborate in early childhood development so that children are better prepared to learn. The academies were created through a unique partnership that includes Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky,

United Way of Northern Kentucky Success by Six, United Way of Kentucky and the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.

“By offering these workshops before children enter school, we help them avoid playing catch-up from the start and provide a much greater chance of success throughout their school years,” said Kevin Middleton, president, United Way of Kentucky.

“When my two daughters were young, we read to them every night, providing them with language skills while building on the parent-child relationship,” said Mike Price, vice president of administration, Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky. “We know those early moments are important, and that is why Toyota made this commitment to early childhood education. We want to be part of raising successful students who become tomorrow’s equipped and competitive workforce.”

Toyota Academies

Anderson	Sparrow Early Learning Center
Boyle	Junction City Elementary
Carter	Heritage Elementary
Franklin	Early Learning Village
Kenton	Miles Elementary
Lawrence	Louisa West Elementary
McCracken	Clark Elementary
Nelson	Foster Heights Elementary
Pike	Bevins Elementary
Woodford	Simmons Elementary

Kentucky All-STARS Funded Academies

Bath	Owingsville Elementary
Fayette	Breckinridge Elementary
Fayette	Liberty Elementary
Fayette	Tates Creek Elementary
Grayson	Lawler Elementary
Greenup	McKell Elementary
Hickman	Hickman County Elementary
Jackson	Tyner Elementary
Jefferson	Cochran Elementary
Jefferson	Coleridge-Taylor Montessori Elementary
Johnson	Flat Gap Elementary
Kenton	River Ridge Elementary
Knott	Emmalena Elementary
Knott	Hindman Elementary
Lee	Southside Elementary
Lee	Beattyville Elementary
Logan	Lewisburg School
Montgomery	Mapleton Elementary

Nelson	Bloomfield Elementary
Russell	Jamestown Elementary
Shelby	Heritage Elementary
Shelby	Simpsonville Elementary
Spencer	Taylorsville Elementary
Wayne	Walker Early Learning Center
Webster	Providence Elementary
Wolfe	Campton Elementary