



Helping children reach their full potential...

“I have forever been changed, not only as an Early Childhood Education teacher but as a person...I feel more well-rounded and more experienced. I don't think I would have ever gotten the chance to experience the level of professional development that I have, if not for the Excellence Academy.”

- **Leann Sutter, Dorman Preschool Center**

“I finally feel respected and acknowledged in the field of Early Childhood Education. I know that what I do every day is important. I consider myself a teacher, not a babysitter...and I am quick to correct those who do not refer to me as a teacher of young children!”

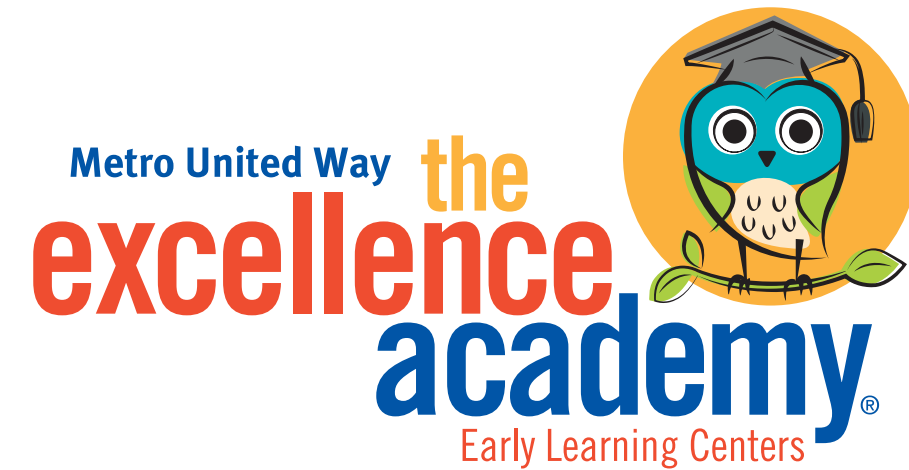
- **Shaunta Miller, Keystone Learning Academy**

“The Excellence Academy has provided our center with a renewed commitment to the early childhood learning experience. It has pushed our teachers to achieve a higher quality of care for our children and families.”

-**Michelle Cissell, Goodwill of Southern Indiana**

“I have respect for myself and what I have chosen to do as a profession. Even more, my children are so proud of me and my achievements! My plaques, my certificates...we celebrate my achievements together as a family! I am proud that I can be a role model for them.”

- **Thressa Fredrick, Keystone Learning Academy**



Helping Preschool Kids and Teachers Shine
In partnership with Community Coordinated Child Care and the Lift A Life Foundation

Outstanding Results Mean a Brighter Future

Our vision is to expand Excellence Academy early learning centers and best practices throughout the community with the ultimate goal of ensuring at least 77% of our community's children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed by 2020.

If our kids are prepared their first day of kindergarten, their chances of succeeding in high school, college, work and life increases dramatically. But most of all, the Excellence Academy program is about children who have a better chance of becoming all they can be, and lifting us all up with their success. And we all win when that happens. Visit metrounitedway.org/ea to learn how to help us grow excellence.





There are preschool classrooms alive with laughter and discovery. Small children learn colors, shapes and motor skills by tearing, shaping and molding “flubber.” Wide-open eyes watch earth worms wiggle on the science table. And, tots interact closely with a teacher who reads stories that inspire them to dream big.

Metro United Way’s Excellence Academy program - in partnership with Community Coordinated Child Care (4-C) and the Lift a Life Foundation - is an innovative early education program designed to help children from families with lower incomes to achieve social, emotional, physical and cognitive milestones to enter kindergarten ready to succeed.



In our Excellence Academy learning centers, we want to help our students, teachers and administrators achieve our values to love learning, build communities and transform lives.

Creating Excellent Classrooms

Research shows that higher quality child care classrooms lead to better outcomes for children and that the design and layout of the physical environment impacts the children’s learning and teachers’ ability to support these early learners. High-quality classrooms support a child’s interaction with space, objects and people.

Inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood, a research-based interactive system founded on best practices for early childhood programs, we consider the classroom as the “third teacher.” This includes elements like neutral colors, homelike touches, natural materials and intentional invitations to learn so that children’s curiosity can develop organically within a supportive environment. And natural playgrounds allow teachers to bring the classroom outdoors, helping children connect what they’re learning to the outside world.

By promoting the love of learning and creativity in children, we are helping them build lifelong critical thinking and problem-solving skills stimulated through play, exploration and discovery. The process of learning together invites opportunities to develop and refine social and emotional skills that set the foundation of a successful life.

Training Excellent Teachers

Ensuring that young children have involved and intentional teachers is one of the most critical elements to achieving school readiness. Our teachers and their classrooms are evaluated to ensure they meet a consistently high level. Teachers receive hands-on mentoring through a partnership with 4-C to help improve quality in their individual classrooms.

Opportunities are provided for teachers to learn from a mentor and to collaborate with participating centers. Through quarterly trainings, center visits, cohort groups and celebration events, the teachers are able to connect and share best practices with their colleagues which allows them to develop and refine lessons and activities that stimulates learning.

Achieving Excellent Results

Children with high-quality early care experiences, like those in our Excellence Academy centers, score higher on measures of physical, cognitive and socio-emotional competencies compared to their peers. In fact, recent findings indicate that our EA kids are two times more likely to be ready for kindergarten than their like peers who did not attend one of our EA early learning centers. We’re also proud to say that 24 of our teachers have now received their Child Development Associate Certificate advancing their professional development.

Preparing Our Kids For Success

These are Metro United Way’s Excellence Academy classrooms, thanks to the vision of Metro United Way, Community Coordinated Child Care (4-C) and the Lift a Life Foundation to ensure that children achieve the developmental milestones necessary to successfully enter kindergarten.

At Metro United Way, we believe that early education is the cornerstone for success in work and life - and it benefits the whole community! Education starts day 1. Children who live in healthy, vibrant communities that offer rich learning opportunities have a better chance of entering kindergarten prepared, which sets them on the path for lifelong success.

Research shows that children who start behind, tend to stay behind. In fact, nearly 2/3 of students who reach 4th grade without proficient reading skills end up on welfare or in prison. All kids deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential and become the next leaders in our community!

Metro United Way has spent over a decade working collaboratively in early childhood education through programs like our Ages & Stages Questionnaires and by partnering with community organizations, local government, school systems, families and more.

