



## Start-Up Guide

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## INTRODUCTION

Successful implementation of a Born Learning Academy requires dynamic leadership and strong commitment on the part of school and community leaders. Both components are vital to the success of the program and its sustainability. This start up guide provides a set of guidelines in order to start a Born Learning Academy. Knowing that parents are a child's first teacher, this effort was developed as a way to reach parents early and ultimately help to increase school readiness through strong community partnerships. It is important to remember that the steps along the way are critical and will greatly influence the quality of the program and its intended outcome. This document is written to inform you of the core components and to provide resources and ideas to assist along the way.

### **Partner Statements of Support**

- *“In West Virginia, we believe every child can learn. Research shows children begin learning at birth and the first and most important educators our children have in their lives are their parents. The United Way bornlearning® Academy encourages parents make the most of that opportunity, and supports a collaborative approach to early childhood development. This program helps parents engage with and learn teaching methods alongside teachers and other community members to give our children the best opportunities to succeed. I am thankful for this opportunity to expand early childhood education and development in the Mountain State.” - Governor Earl Ray Tomblin*
- *"The West Virginia Board of Education believes that assuring all young children have access to high-quality early childhood learning opportunities is critical to our state's future success. The United Way Born Learning® Academy is an innovative program that provides tools for parents of young children to create these learning opportunities in everyday moments. By engaging families in hands-on activities and discussion about what it means to be ready for kindergarten, parents are offered strategies they can use at home to maximize their child's early learning and development. We support the Toyota Born Learning® Academy as an excellent strategy to engage entire communities in the importance of education at every stage of a child's life." - West Virginia Board of Education President Michael Green*
- *“United Way Born Learning® Academy pilot program will offer many learning opportunities for West Virginia's children,” West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Cabinet Secretary Karen L. Bowling said. “The Academy is an innovative strategy that will help our children and families engage in appropriate educational activities to ensure the right path to learning.” - West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Cabinet Secretary Karen L. Bowling*

## OUR STORY

### **What is Born Learning?**

*Born Learning* is a public engagement campaign that helps parents, grandparents and caregivers explore ways to turn everyday moments into fun learning opportunities. *Born Learning* is a public engagement campaign helping parents, caregivers and communities create early learning opportunities for young children. Designed to support parents in their critical role as a child's first teacher, *Born Learning* educational materials have been available through the efforts of United Way since 2005.

In 2007, United Way of Greater Cincinnati Success By 6, Kenton County Schools under the direction of former Superintendent Tim Hanner and Northern Kentucky University partnered to develop the United Way *Born Learning* Academy. The United Way *Born Learning* Academy is a series of parent workshops that engage expectant parents and families with young children to support early learning and school readiness. With support from Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky, United Way *Born Learning* Academies are designed to increase kindergarten readiness in the Northern Kentucky area, and will undergo a national replication process to increase kindergarten readiness across the United States. Early childhood faculty members Dr. Helene Arbouet Harte and Dr. Jaesook Gilbert of Northern Kentucky University developed the parent workshop curriculum, training guide and supplemental materials.

In West Virginia, The *Born Learning* Academy program began as a pilot project Cabell, Putnam and Wayne Counties in 2014. The program is administered by The Education Alliance and is made possible through funding from Toyota Motor Manufacturing, West Virginia, Inc.

## STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Based on our experience with helping schools start Born Learning Academies, the following steps are required and are outlined to help ensure fidelity of program implementation and successful results.

- 1) Review program core components
- 2) Confirm interest and build implementation team
- 3) Review budget
- 4) Submit application
- 5) Sign a Memorandum of Agreement
- 6) Develop recruitment plan for academy participation
- 7) Collect, submit and analyze data from academy sessions.

### STEP 1: REVIEW CORE COMPONENTS AND REQUIREMENTS

These core components as well as the requirements within them need to be carefully considered as the decision making process develops.

#### Curriculum

The goal of the academy is to help parents prepare their child for kindergarten entry by providing information about what *it means* to be ready for kindergarten and by offering them strategies they can use at home to maximize their child's early learning and development. Research-based materials from the Born Learning public engagement campaign were used to create the required curriculum for the program. The short term outcome is to increase knowledge of program participants while the longer term outcome is to foster behavior change in the daily routines/lives of the families involved. Ultimately more families will form a relationship with the school and more children will be better prepared for school when they enter kindergarten.

#### Program Setting and Format

Academies must take place in an elementary school setting. If families are engaged in positive interactions in the school setting before school even begins, they are more likely to feel welcomed and remain engaged. Children are also more likely to be ready for kindergarten when parents, schools and communities work together to meet the needs of the child.

The Academies are structured around six workshop sessions. Sessions are led by the designated facilitator of the academy. Topics include:

- 1) Series Overview
- 2) How Children Learn
- 3) Nutrition & Health
- 4) Routines & Learning on the Go
- 5) Ready to Read: Building Your Child's Language Skills
- 6) Building Relationships

Each session follows the same format/agenda including:

- Greeting & Dinner
- Transition to Child Care
- Activity to introduce the topic for the week
- Pre-Survey

- Mini lecture
- Activity that exemplifies the mini lecture topic/focus
- Hands on practice of bornlearning® skills
- Post-Survey
- Families practice new skills together

## **STEP 2: CONFIRM INTEREST OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND BUILD TEAM**

The importance of convening a preliminary meeting to gauge interest and capacity for starting a Born Learning Academy should not be underestimated. The purpose is to make sure everyone understands the requirements and commitment needed to be successful. Outcomes of such a meeting may include designating the facilitator and coordinator, identification of potential funding sources or partners, forming an implementation team (see next paragraph) and establishing ties between community members.

### **Selecting a Facilitator and Coordinator**

It is essential that each Born Learning Academy have one facilitator and one coordinator per school who are seen as the primary leads for the program. It has been our experience that the quality of the academy is greatly influenced by the commitment, leadership and creativity as well as the implementation team.

The facilitator and coordinator need to be school personnel (i.e., School Counselor, Kindergarten Teacher, Principal) and their roles are the following:

#### *FACILITATOR*

- Make the sessions accessible and fun
- Use and follow the required curriculum
- Review all training modules and become familiar with the Facilitator Guide and any parent materials prior to conducting training workshops
- Observe skills of the participants and provide support as necessary
- Work with the coordinator to distribute and collect pre/post surveys
- Commit to using data to inform future sessions
- Track children participating who are also entering kindergarten the following school year. Names of students are not necessary but rather the number of participants entering kindergarten and cumulative results of their kindergarten readiness screen.

#### *COORDINATOR*

- Make copies of all necessary materials
- Review all materials prior to training
- Assist facilitator in making connections between the handouts provided
- Commit to using academy data in an on-going way for improvement
- Support the facilitator in distributing, collecting and organizing pre/post surveys
- Set up/schedule regular Implementation Team meetings
- Understand that bornlearning® is a trademark of United Way Worldwide, the Ad Council and Families and Work Institute and that Born Learning Academy or Born Learning materials may not be modified or altered in any way

## **Building Your Born Learning Implementation Team**

The establishment of a Born Learning Academy implementation team is critical to the functioning of the program. The main role of this group is to provide outreach, counsel and ongoing assistance before, during and after implementation of the program. It is the implementation team's ultimate responsibility to ensure that the program remains sustained and viable. The implementation team should be diverse, consisting of school leadership, teachers, volunteers for the program, child care providers and local partners (i.e. data evaluators, sponsors, etc.) The following is a list of some specific responsibilities typically assumed by implementation teams:

- 1) Promote Born Learning Academies within and outside of the community.
- 2) Assist in the procurement of funds and/or in-kind donations for the Born Learning Academy.
- 3) Provide input and advice regarding planning, implementation and problem solving.
- 4) Assist the facilitator and coordinator with various program needs such as ordering materials, securing donations, set-up and scheduling volunteers.
- 5) Assist the facilitator and coordinator in promoting cooperative working relations with appropriate agencies, community and volunteer groups and other early childhood/family support programs.

## **STEP 3: SAMPLE BUDGET**

### **Program Costs**

The program was designed as a low cost, high-impact strategy. Participating schools receive a \$6,000 grant in year 1 and \$3,000 grant in years 2-3. In years 4 and beyond, schools will receive technical assistance to develop a plan for sustainable funding. Depending on local partnerships and funding streams, costs can vary considerably but usually range between \$4,000 and \$7,000. Schools with lower costs generally have significant in-kind donations. There are required costs to implementing a Born Learning Academy. However, there are some suggested supporting costs to consider as well. A sample budget is outlined below and a budget worksheet has been provided.

### **Required Budget Components (costs will vary depending on in-kind contributions):**

**Curriculum:** *one-time cost.*

*Total Cost: \$300 (includes cost of periodic curriculum updates and membership to website access/hosting)*

### **Child Care and Staff Stipends (salary scales are determined by local school district and will be dependent on level of staff and number of program attendees)**

*Example:*

*\$25 for 2 hours x 6 workshops = \$300 x 2-4 Teachers (typically)*

*\$11 x 2 hours x 6 workshops = \$132 x 2 Assistants (typically)*

*Average cost ranges between \$900 and \$1500*

### **Data Entry and Evaluation:**

*Total Cost: \$250 annually if using Northern Kentucky University Center for Applied Informatics*

**Food: (dependent on in-kind donations and number of program participants)**

\$6.00 x 50 participants (dinner for adults and children) = \$300 x 6 Workshops = \$1,800

Graduation \$8.00 x 100 guests=\$800 (includes participants, guests, school leadership, etc.)

Average cost ranges from \$1,100 to \$2,200

**Supporting Budget Components: Although not required, these costs are recommended to boost attendance and enhance the program. Costs will vary depending on in-kind contributions):**

**Supplemental Born Learning Materials:** depends on the # of families who attend and how many supplemental materials are purchased. Materials below are calculated based on 30 families and rounded up.

Kid Basics \$6.75	\$ 205
Begin with Love DVD \$7.50	\$ 225
Recipes for Learning \$14.50	\$ 435
Grocery Store Tip Pads \$7.25	\$ 220
Playbook \$1.25 (sold in increments of 50)	\$ 63
Born Learning Bid \$6.00	\$ 180
Born Learning Changing Pad \$11.00	\$ 330

Total Range of Costs: \$550 (for 10 families) to \$1,650 (for 30 families)

**Participation Incentives:** depends on the # of families who attend and these are only examples. Materials are calculated based on 30 families.

*Passes to local attractions, gift cards, etc. as incentives to continuously attend sessions.*

Total Costs \$250 to \$500

**Total Range of Recommended Costs for Program Implementation: \$4,000 to \$7,000**

**STEP 4: SUBMIT APPLICATION**

The Born Learning Academy program will expand to three more West Virginia schools in 2016-17. Applications are available at [educationalliance.org/bornlearning](http://educationalliance.org/bornlearning). Interested schools should submit application by April 15, 2016.

**STEP 5: SIGN MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT**

Once all initial requirements have been met, the local school must sign a **Memorandum of Agreement**. This agreement spells out the conditions under which the bornlearning® name and Born Learning Academy materials can be used and provides the local community with the exclusive right to implement a Born Learning Academy. Start-Up Support and Technical Assistance can be obtained through The Education Alliance.

**STEP 6: DEVELOP RECRUITMENT PLAN**

The success of a Born Learning Academy hinges on your school’s ability to recruit and keep families involved in the workshops. Below is a list of recruitment best practices.

### Recruitment

- Sending flyers home on multiple occasions for each session
- Scheduling workshop times to meet the needs of participants
- Providing attendance incentives
- Making follow-up and reminder phone calls/emails to potential participants
- Providing personal invitations through phone calls/emails and home visits
- Encouraging attendees and “graduates” to bring a guest
- Using school data to identify and recruit families with young children
- Actively seeking new participants to attend throughout the year
- Collaborating with local child care centers, apartment complexes, Head Start, public preschool and other agencies
- Organizing a Graduation for parent /caregiver participation and dedication to their family
- Provide special recognition for volunteers
- Communicating success of each session to school staff, School Board, United Way, community and parents.

### Continued Engagement for Parents Who Have Participated in and Academy

- They become ambassadors for the program and future recruitment
- They are a prime group to pull from for PTO's, Site Based Councils, Classroom Volunteers, etc.
- They can serve as mentors for future classes
- They can eventually be trained and teach future sessions
- School personnel can connect families to additional resources – public library programs, health department, high quality child care, etc.
- They can form an alumni group and plan activities together
- They are recognized at events as “Born Learning Academy graduates” or (insert school name) Ambassadors.

The key is keeping them connected to the school, to local resources and to each other...helping them feel welcomed and a part of the school as time goes on.

## **PARTNERSHIP IDEAS**

### Community Possibilities

- Partner with other districts/orgs/human service agencies and split the cost
- Partner with a local church, private school or daycare
- PTA's, parent groups and Booster clubs (get them to use or raise funds)
- Civic Organizations - Rotary, Kiwanis, Knights of Columbus, Elk's Lodge etc.
- School puts on a fundraiser of its own
- Get a local business to sponsor a session or a part of the cost (i.e. food, incentives, etc.).

### Utilizing Existing or Getting Additional Grants

- Use Title I funds or current Family Resource Grant Dollars
- Use staff development funds
- Reach out to your local United Way for potential investment dollars.

## **STEP 7: COLLECT AND SUBMIT DATA FROM SESSIONS**

A foundational principle among founding partners is using data to drive decisions and continuous improvement. The Born Learning Academy materials are revised and updated in an effort to have the most effective curriculum. This is done in response to local academy data, experiences of local partnerships implementing academies and feedback from program participants. A group of advisors made up of representatives from founding partners are convened to provide guidance on all continuous improvement activities.

Your local academy data is a critical component in informing future action and improved outcomes. That is why all participating schools are required to collect data and information on their academy. They include: Pre/Post Performance, Overall Participant Feedback, Attendance Results and Demographics. Implementation Teams must use this information (and provided templates) to help inform practice and preparation for the next workshop. Outcome data is imperative in helping to continuously evaluate and improve the curriculum, training and your school's success with its Academy.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### West Virginia Partners

