

Born Learning Academies growing

By Keith Lawrence Messenger-Inquirer | Posted: Wednesday, September 10, 2014 12:00 am

Owensboro Public Schools' two "United Way Born Learning Academies, driven by Toyota," are seeing increased interest from parents of preschoolers, Superintendent Nick Brake said Monday.

Twelve families have registered to participate in the first academy at Estes this fall, and 45 have expressed interest in participating at Foust Elementary, he said.

This is the second year for the Foust academy.

"We had 10 families there who went through the whole program last year," Brake said. "We expect the numbers to grow each year."

The academies, he said, "are a good way for parents to get a head start on getting kids ready for kindergarten."

The programs, Brake said, show parents "how to enhance conversations to let children build their vocabularies. And they show how such things as letting a child help fold clothes and be involved with preparing dinner can help them learn."

He said, "I wish we had had this when my children were that age."

The program is designed to help combat the fact that 50 percent of Kentucky children are not prepared for kindergarten.

The Estes program is one of 14 statewide launching this fall with funding from Toyota manufacturing operations in Kentucky.

Toyota said it will continue to fund 20 veteran academies at schools across the state — including the one at Foust — through a five-year, \$1 million investment.

The program is now in its third year.

Toyota said it is committed to expanding to 70 schools by 2016.

The free school-based workshops "serve as a fun and innovative community resource that enable parents and teachers to collaborate in the early childhood development of future students," the company said in a news release.

The workshops at Estes Elementary, 1675 Leitchfield Rd., include a meal for participating families.

The workshops are scheduled from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Sept. 23. Oct. 28, Nov. 25, Jan. 27, Feb. 24 and March 24.

For more information and to register, contact Shari Flagg at (270) 686-1030.

Workshops at Foust, 601 Foust Ave., are also free and include a meal.

Sessions are scheduled for 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Sept. 16, Oct. 21, Nov. 18, Dec. 16, Jan. 20, Feb. 17 and March 17.

For more information and to register, contact Chris Covington at (270) 686-1060.

Brake said the academies "help kids want to learn. We'll look at every place we can expand this program in the future, if the money is available."

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