

GM Foundation's \$500,000 Grant Helps Detroit Kids Get Off to a Good Start

The General Motors Foundation is making a quality preschool education possible for 256 children in Detroit's most challenged neighborhoods.

Foundation spokesperson Maria Mainville said the GM arm is making a \$500,000 grant in support of the Education Achievement Authority (EAA) of Michigan.

"Early education is a critical factor in the long-term success of our children," said EAA Chancellor John Covington. "This very generous gift from the GM Foundation will make a huge difference in the lives of our children, and we are very grateful for the support."

Established in 2011, the EAA took over and is turning around 15 persistently failing schools in Detroit, Mainville said.

The GM Foundation funding enabled the EAA to expand its reach into early learning and create 16 new "GM Foundation Early Learning Classrooms" within the following six Detroit elementary schools:

- Nolan Elementary-Middle, 1150 E. Lantz St. - five classrooms;
- Law Academy, 19490 Carrie St. - three classrooms;
- Burns Elementary, 14350 Terry St. - two classrooms;
- Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary, 8145 Puritan St. - two classrooms;
- Brenda Scott Academy for Theatre Arts, 18440 Hoover St. - two classrooms;
- Phoenix Multicultural Academy, 7735 Lane St. - two classrooms.

The 16 classrooms each comprise 16 students, one teacher and one paraprofessional, Mainville said. Each student in

the program is now in class four full days each week.

Fridays are reserved for parent conferences and home visits to give students and families critical support.

The Michigan Department of Education's Great Start readiness program is funding staffing for 12 of the 16 classrooms, and the EAA has requested staffing for the four additional rooms.

Mainville said, according to United Way for Southeastern Michigan, Detroit has an estimated population of 738,223, with 51,872 children ages 4 and under. It is estimated that 41,093 of these children are from families of high need.

Of the 222,655 children age 3 or older enrolled in school, 5.3 percent attend nursery or preschool and 4.8 percent attend kindergarten.

The unemployment rate among adults is 26.4 percent, well above the statewide rate of 12.3 percent. The mean family income of \$39,327 is notably below the state average of \$64,478.

Only one in 20 Detroit children evaluated, or 5.3 percent, scored in the 75th percentile on all five scales of the Early Development Instrument, and 16.3 percent scored in the 75th percentile on four or more scales - the key benchmark associated with overall kindergarten readiness, Mainville said.

"Given these facts, it is imperative that we continue our work with the Education Achievement Authority, United Way and educators to do all we can to reverse this startling trend," said GM Foundation President Vivian Pickard.

"We are determined to reach

students at their earliest years to be sure they have every opportunity to succeed in school, and in life."

The Michigan Education Excellence Foundation supports specific opportunities and initiatives to develop the educational success of Michigan students.

That includes the startup money for the Education Achievement Authority and other initiatives that promote innovative and transformative solutions that can improve Michigan's underperforming schools, Mainville said.

This partnership of volunteer business, foundation, nonprofit and government leaders is engaged in raising more than \$100 million to support these initiatives.

Foundation Chair Steve Hamp said the organization "is excited about the General Motors Foundation's ongoing support of education and its funding of the early childhood classrooms, which may be a life changer for the most vulnerable among us."

The GM Foundation Early Learning Classrooms will foster a student-centered approach to teaching and learning focused on mathematics, science, social studies, critical thinking, social-emotional development, language/literacy and creative development, Mainville said.

In addition, the rooms will be infused with technology to help prepare students for the learning platforms they will experience in kindergarten and beyond.

United Way's "Living Social" program will be incorporated into the schools to provide performing arts lessons and feedback to students twice a week.

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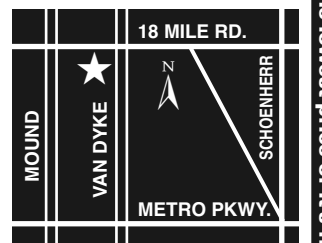
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