



Success By 6 Early Literacy Project Success Story

Why Education?

Metro United Way is working to advance the common good by focusing on education, income and health. These are the building blocks for a good life—a quality education that leads to a stable job, enough income to support a family through retirement, and good health.

All children deserve to be safe, healthy, nurtured and prepared to succeed in school and in life. We can achieve this through:

- Improving access to quality, affordable, child care and early learning opportunities.
- Partnering with schools, families, community groups, service providers and neighborhoods to improve graduation rates.
- Supporting after-school and mentoring programs for youth.

When children begin school prepared, stay connected with caring adults, and have empowering experiences, they are more likely to do well in school, graduate from high school, and go on to further education and success in life.

Measuring results...2018 Goals and Indicators:

MUW Goal

Children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed.

Metro United Way goal: By 2018, 100% of children score “prepared” or better on kindergarten readiness assessments. 2009 = no local measurement exists for kindergarten readiness; the UWA estimate is that 35% of our children are prepared for school success. Metro United Way will be executing a city-wide early assessment screening to determine a first ever baseline.

Indicators (Why this is important):

- Almost two thirds of low-income families have no books at all in their homes for their children.

- Children who have not developed basic literacy skills by the time they start school are 3-4 times more likely to drop out.
- 88% of children with reading problems in 1st grade will likely have problems in 4th grade. Children without reading skills by 3rd grade are unlikely to graduate.

Metro United Way wants all children in our community to experience high-quality early care and educational experiences, and works through many collaborative partnerships to increase the quality of child care.

Success By 6 Early Literacy Project-Samal's Story

Samal McNealy is one client who has benefited from the Early Literacy Project. Samal is an atypical client of Healthy Start; a single-dad to his young son, Samal II. As a single parent, Samal felt that he should look outside of his single family structure for support, so he joined the local Healthy Start Program.

Samal's home visitor provided him with helpful information and suggestions about parenting. In addition to the normal program components, he was given books for his infant son. He had read to Samal II since he was an infant, but as Samal II got older he began appreciating and responding to these special reading times. One of the books provided by Success By 6 was *Shades of Black*. The book's illustrations show the many different shades of beautiful black children. It describes each child's picture and compares them to exotic objects. Another book that Samal and his son received describes various body parts. As Samal would read the story and point to pictures, Samal II responded to the book by touching his own hair, ear, nose, etc. as his dad described the pictures in the book.

Samal II is now just over a year old, and has truly embraced a love of reading. Sometimes, Samal II shouts "book!" He runs to his bookshelf, grabs a favorite book and imitates the way his dad reads to him. Because of this new found joy of reading, Samal and his son make frequent visits to the local library. Going to the library has become such a part of their routine that when they pull into the library parking lot, Samal II realizes where they are and yells out "BOOK!" Reading is such an intricate part of their everyday lives that Samal II often grabs his books, tugs at his dad's pants leg and begs for another session of.... "BOOK!" To show his gratitude for this program, Samal is now a volunteer for Metro United Way.

In 2007, the Early Literacy project was expanded into Shelby County when Success By 6 volunteers learned about the partnership in Louisville. The North Central Health Department in Shelby County has successfully replicated the Early Literacy Project in the HANDS Program. HANDS home visitors, serve first time parents similarly to the targeted efforts of Healthy Start.

When Angie first found out she was pregnant, she contacted the North Central Health Department in Shelby County to get help from the HANDS Program. She was paired up with Connie, her home visitor, who has an appointment with her every week throughout her pregnancy in order to teach her how to be prepared for the new baby.

When TJ was born, Connie immediately enrolled TJ and Angie in the Success By 6 Early Literacy Project. For the next 5 months, Connie brought TJ a new book of his very own and worked with Angie on skills like how to read to TJ and other age-appropriate ways to play and help him learn. As the months went by, TJ fell in love with his books. Angie started buying more used books from yard sales nearby. Now 14 months old, TJ has his own bookshelf in the living room. He is now walking and likes to walk over to his bookshelf, pick out a book, and take it to his mom to read to him. He can even turn the pages by himself!

Connie will continue to visit Angie & TJ every week until he turns 2 years old. She reports that she has seen amazing progress with Angie, and is really impressed with how safe and kid-friendly their home is. In addition to TJ's book collection, Connie says that toy boxes and lots of games are found throughout the house. She says that TJ is a lucky little boy to have so many ways to play and learn with his mother.

Metro United Way Success By 6 began a partnership with the Louisville Metro Department of Health & Wellness and their Healthy Start program in 2002. Healthy Start is an example of a program that provides education, home visits, medical assistance and other services in neighborhoods where babies die more frequently before age one than in the rest of the city. Citywide, African-American babies die before their first birthday at three times the rate of white babies. Healthy Start helps women from pregnancy until their babies turn two, operating out of three Neighborhood Place locations serving families in the Russell, Shawnee, Park DuValle, Park Hill, Parkland, Portland and Algonquin neighborhoods.

Healthy Start nurses visit clients' homes to assess medical and social circumstances and find out what the client may need to attain a healthy pregnancy. Trained resource experts visit periodically, educating families about pregnancy, health, nutrition and how to prevent problems such as sudden infant death syndrome. Participants are linked to services such as doctors, parenting classes, smoking cessation and drug treatment. Healthy Start is a respected program with amazing results – there have been no infant deaths among participants since 2002.

In 2002, Success By 6 volunteers and representatives from Louisville Metro Department of Health & Wellness developed a collaboration that added an early literacy component to the Healthy Start program. The Metro United Way Success By 6 initiative provides additional resources for training, supplemental

information, and age-appropriate books for Healthy Start home visitors to give to the families they work with. Home visitors talk with parents about the importance of reading beginning in infancy. Each family receives five books to begin building a library for their baby.

Since Metro United Way became involved with Healthy Start, nearly 1,000 families have been provided books. This is just one partnership fostered by Metro United Way Success By 6. Other partnerships include:

- Early Literacy Project (Clark) – Healthy Families
- Kindergarten Countdown – Metro Government, Louisville Free Public Library, Louisville Department of Health & Wellness, JCPS, Louisville Science Center, Speed Museum, Derby Museum, Walden Theatre and many others
- Reach Out & Read (Floyd County) – Community Partnership to Promote Education – CAPE, and Dr. Nassim & Associates
- Imagination Library – Harrison County Community Foundation
- Camp Kindergarten (Clark) – Communities in Schools, the three school systems in Clark County
- Camp Kindergarten (Harrison) – North Harrison Elementary, Morgan Elementary, Harrison County Public Library

Here's how you can help:

- Participate in a Leaders for Readers training. Call (502) 292-6154 for more information.
- Join the First Book Advisory Board. Call (502) 292-5475 for more information.
- Become an advocate for children. For more information, please call (502) 292-6157.
- Give. With your donation, you will help us meet our goal of ensuring children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed in school and in life.

Suggested Props/Visuals

- A picture of Samal and Samal II.
- A copy of the *Courier-Journal* article entitled, "More families will get Healthy Start".

To live united is to understand that we are all interconnected. Metro United Way is working to advance the common good by creating opportunities for a better life for all. For more information, volunteer opportunities or to make a donation, please visit us at metrounitedway.org or call 502.583.2821.