

Early Education

Goal: Every child enters Kindergarten ready to learn

SMART Targets: Increase fall FAST scores of Kindergarteners on free/reduced lunch from 48% (120 children) in 2023 to 73% by fall of 2030 (164 children). Fall 2024 at 53%.

Early childhood education plays a vital role in children's development, providing a strong foundation for academic, social, and emotional growth. Between ages 3–5, children absorb new information at a remarkable rate, and access to quality preschool programs paves the way for future learning.

After the reorganization of Early Childhood Iowa in 2024, Muscatine County was left without local leadership to coordinate early childhood and family programs. AIM stepped in to ensure these vital services remained intact for families. With Muscatine now part of a 5-county region, the absence of a local director jeopardized access to preschool tuition and transportation funds. United Way Muscatine County: Aligned Impact Muscatine (AIM) assumed responsibility for managing these funds and preserving equitable access to preschool for local families.

Through this work, AIM supported 8 students with tuition and 13 with transportation scholarships, ensuring they could attend quality preschool programs. Tuition partners included Zion Lutheran Preschool in Wilton, Saint Mary & Saint Mathias Guardian Angel Preschool, Lone Tree Community Preschool, and Durant Preschool. While not all these preschools are within Muscatine County, all students receiving tuition scholarships live in the county.

For transportation, AIM partnered with Non-Emergency Transport (NET). NET not only provided rides but also created a safe and fun environment where students sang songs, counted cars, and learned colors on their way to school. Parents shared how much the program reduced stress and allowed their children to reliably access preschool.

Parents from the program have said that the program relieved a lot of stress and has made it possible for their kids to get to and from school. One parent said they would have had to quit their job if the program had not been available because she had no other way of getting her child to and from school. Another parent highlighted how great NET has been and the open line of communication with them was so nice. They stated that she feels good about sending her child with NET because she knows how caring and kind they are with the kids. Another parent said they had moved far from her child's preschool, so walking wasn't an option anymore and that the transportation program helped reduce that stress, so she wasn't missing time at work.



Preschool classroom