Early Intervention for Success

One of the key factors contributing to the success of the YWCA’s Early Education and Care program is its commitment to the social-emotional learning (SEL) of the children in its care. SEL helps children develop the ability to manage their emotions, respond appropriately to classroom situations, build self-confidence, and develop the resilience to overcome obstacles.

Through the Second Step Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) teacher training program, YWCA educators gain tools to help children learn how to listen, pay attention, manage their behavior, and get along with others. The positive results of this program are seen throughout the YWCA’s Early Education and Care center. The benefits of SEL are especially important for children who have lived with difficult circumstances. Sometimes these children have difficulty managing their emotions and interacting with other children and their development is delayed.

One little girl who came to the program a few years ago seems to have benefited from our approach. Her family included older brothers and a stepbrother that her mother was raising while their father mostly lived in Africa. The little girl was only at the YWCA a short time when the Department of Children and Families (DCF) intervened and removed the child from her mother’s care and withdrew her from our program. The YWCA was never informed of the full story, which involved possible neglect.

After about a year and a half, the mother regained custody of the child and enrolled her in the YWCA’s toddler program. Most of the staff working with the child were not even aware that she had been in the program as an infant. The child adjusted quickly to the toddler program, and responded positively to the center’s commitment to SEL. By her 30-day screening, she was achieving beyond her age (2 years and 1 month old). Usually when DCF is involved and the child faces the trauma of moving, even if they were not abused, delays are apparent, but not in this case. She continued to thrive, transferred to preschool, and will be entering Kindergarten soon.

Overcoming even a short adversity can be hard. This family, with a little help from our YWCA Early Education and Care Program has done extremely well, and the little girl who once was removed from the program is now a well-mannered, smart little girl who appears to be almost always happy.

Your gift to the United Way of Central Massachusetts helps to fund early childhood intervention programs administered by the YWCA that helped this little girl get back on the right path. This is only one of many examples of how your donation is invested in our community. Please consider making a gift today to the United Way of Central Massachusetts. You will be helping the people in your town, those in our community and those most vulnerable among us.