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## **Goodwill Industries of Arkansas Partners with Little Rock School District to Boost Early Childhood Education**

### *MOU Will Provide Focus and Support on Early Childhood Literacy*

**LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (November 25, 2024)** — Goodwill Industries of Arkansas (GIA) and the Little Rock School District (LRSD) Early Childhood Department announce a partnership aimed at supporting early childhood education and workforce development in the community.

This innovative collaboration leverages the strengths of both organizations to create generational impact. The partnership focuses on three key areas: expanding access to quality early childhood education, enhancing professional development opportunities, and fostering a supportive learning environment for both children and adults.

"We're thrilled to partner with LRSD to create a clear pathway for our employees and Excel Center students to pursue careers in early childhood education," said Edie Stewart, GIA Sr. vice president and chief mission officer. "One of the most beneficial wrap-around services provided by The Excel Center is our drop-in center that provides free childcare. This partnership not only benefits our students but maybe more significantly impacts their children who are seeing the importance of education being modeled by their parents."

"The LRSD and Goodwill partnership will provide families the support needed to make their dreams a reality," said Ester Jones, director of Early Childhood Programs for the Little Rock School District. "We will work together to find pathways for families to connect to the appropriate resources and ensure their children receive a quality education."

GIA will assist in promoting LRSD's PreK program to Goodwill families and the broader community, ensuring more children have access to quality early education. The partnership also provides a clear pathway for GIA employees and The Excel Center® students to obtain Child Development Associate (CDA) certifications, potentially leading to teacher licensure. LRSD will offer professional early childhood development training for The Excel Center's drop-in center attendants, elevating the quality of care and training attendants are able to provide. The Excel Center's drop-in center will emphasize early literacy, supporting parents continuing their education while ensuring their children receive foundational learning experiences.

The collaboration also includes organizing events where LRSD PreK program personnel can directly engage with students and employees, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose.

### **About Goodwill Industries of Arkansas**

Goodwill Industries of Arkansas is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to changing lives through education, training and employment. In the last fiscal year, our career services team helped 498 people find work at companies around the state. Through our various education, training and employment programs, GIA provided services to 6,345 Arkansans. Since opening in 2017, 190 adults in Arkansas have graduated high school and earned their diplomas through The Excel Center®, Goodwill's high school for adults 19 years or older. The Academy at Goodwill, licensed by the Arkansas State Board of Private Career Education, is a trade school that provided training and certifications to 2,524 individuals in FY23 to secure new employment and advance careers. Goodwill also offers reentry services for those coming out of justice-involved situations to help train and find employment. Visit [GoodwillAR.org](https://www.GoodwillAR.org) for more information.