

OUR MISSION

Changing lives through the power of work

A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

The MERS Goodwill Excel Centers continue to transform lives across Missouri. While our 2024-2025 annual report demonstrates our impact statewide, each student we serve has a unique story.

We are an accredited, in-person learning program that offers a traditional seated diploma, not a GED, for Missouri residents. All our students are assigned a Life Coach, who guides their path through Missouri's graduation requirements and addresses barriers impacting their school experience. We also have College and Career Readiness Specialists who help students prepare their runway toward further education or success in the labor market. Our students have opportunities to earn dual college credit and/or Industry Recognized Credentials (IRCs). In addition, we have daycares at all our campuses so parents can attend classes, both day and evening, with peace of mind. Our certified teachers provide tutoring on Fridays where students can catch up on assignments or receive individualized attention. We are proud to provide this life-changing program and support system free of charge to our students.

This report provides some in-depth information regarding our annual outcomes and our progress. At the time of publication, we celebrated our program's 7th year and the opening of our seventh school in Kansas City, Missouri.

Lastly, we appreciate the support from our Board of Directors, our Missouri legislators, our community partners, and all our key stakeholders. We are grateful for all those who champion our work near and far. We look forward to hosting you for a tour in the coming year.

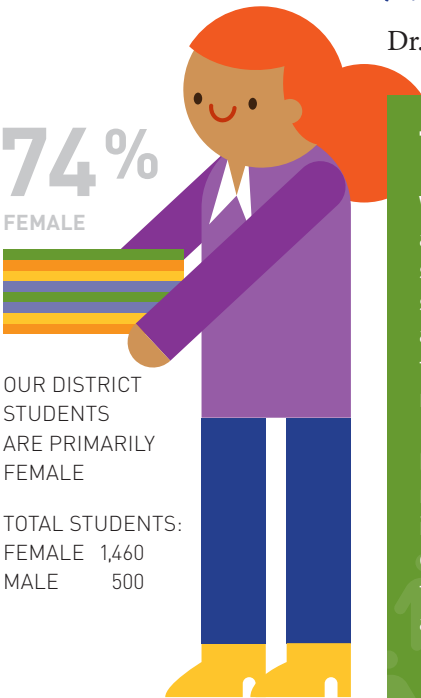
Sincerely,

Robyn Wiens

Dr. Robyn Wiens



Dr. Robyn Wiens
SUPERINTENDENT
OF SCHOOLS



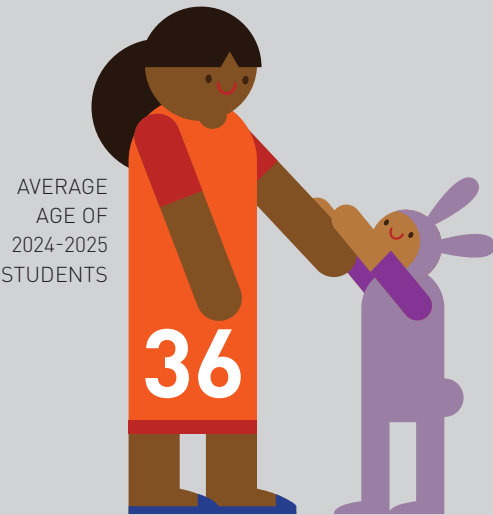
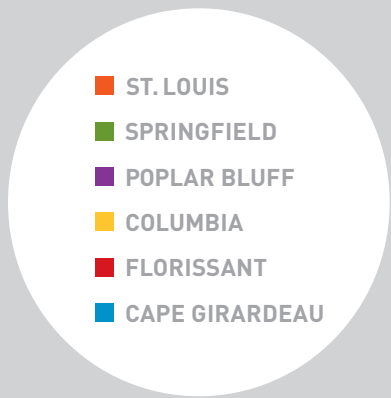
1,492

The Goodwill Excel Centers are a different model.

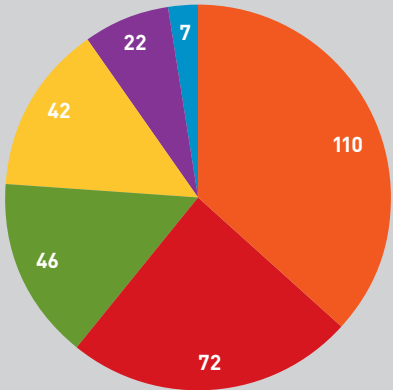
TOTAL EXCEL CENTER GRADUATES THROUGH 2024-2025

We meet with prospective students, age 21 and older, and discuss their barriers, work schedules, family responsibilities, past high school credits, career goals, and college aspirations. We look at high school transcripts to determine how many of the 24 credits required by Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) they have completed. We administer reading, math, writing, and vocational interest tests to determine the student's current skills and we develop a plan to help the student complete their degree. Classes are taught by Missouri Certified Teachers,

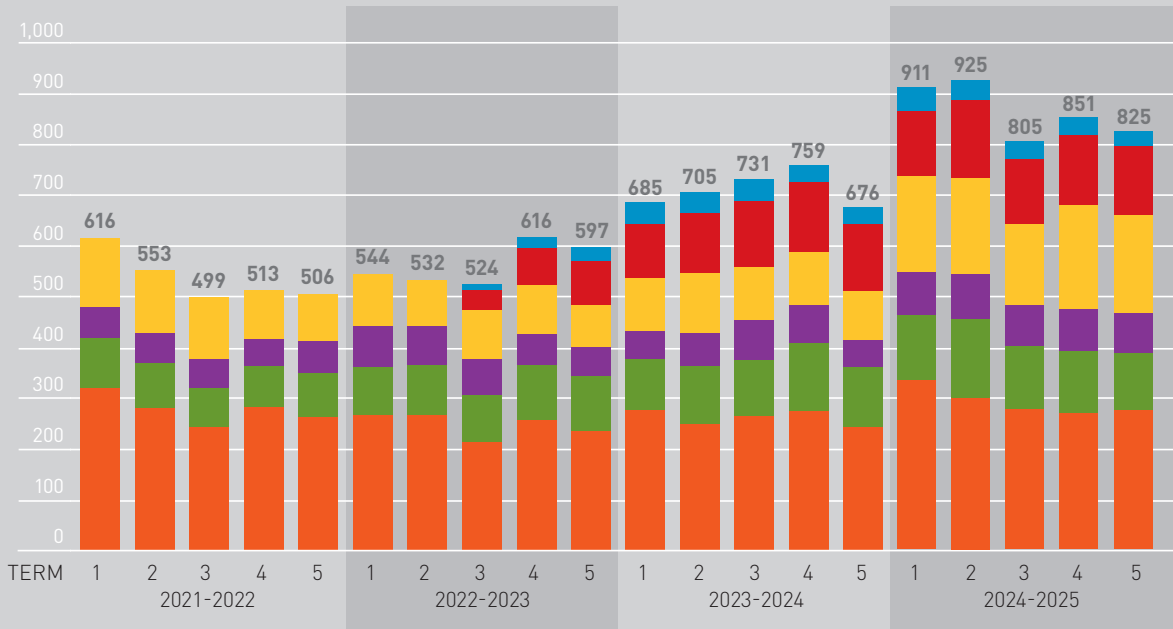
are typically classroom based, and students can sign up for as few as one class or as many as six classes per term. We are a year-round school with five terms of approximately eight weeks each. Classes are available in the morning, afternoon, and evening so that adults can attend school around their work and family responsibilities. We know that child care is one of the major barriers to completing school so we provide free childcare on site for children up to 12 years old.



TOTAL GRADUATES 2024-2025
299 STUDENTS, BY SCHOOL



ENROLLED BY TERM AND SCHOOL
NUMBER OF STUDENTS



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Natalie Giles’ story is one of reclaiming her time and turning a second chance into a personal victory. After raising five kids and pouring herself into family life, she decided it was finally her turn. While scrolling Facebook one day, she spotted an ad for the Excel Center’s SkillUp program promising a free high school diploma. Intrigued, she called the number, walked in, and started classes in August 2023. Now, two years later at 45, she’s an Excel Center graduate—a milestone that once felt impossible.

That first week back in class was a shock. Having been out of school for decades, Natalie was terrified she couldn’t keep up, picturing younger students with sharper minds leaving her in the dust. But the Excel Center eased her in, meeting her where she was with no judgment. The teachers rallied around her, offering help whenever she stumbled, and soon she realized she could do it. Thirty years after leaving eighth grade, she picked up where she left off and kept going.

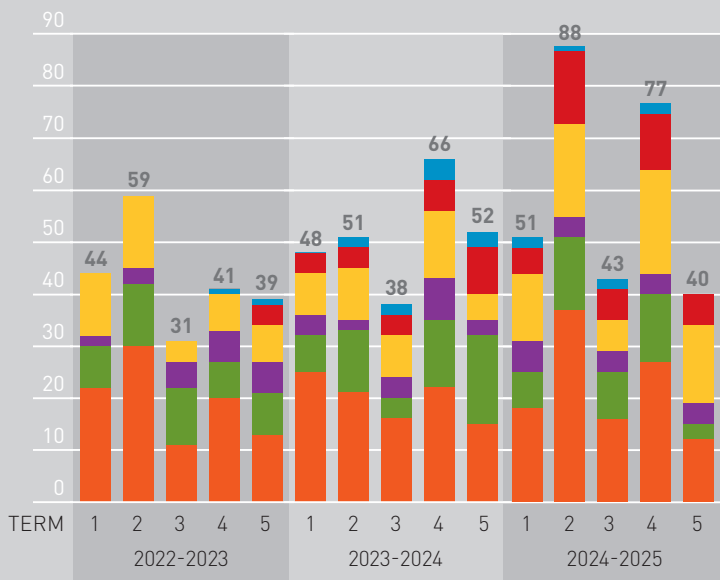
Her kids and their spouses are her biggest fans, cheering every milestone like passing biology. Natalie’s drive isn’t just for her; it’s for them too, showing them quitting isn’t an option. When she feels that “spirit of quit” creeping in, she resets and pushes on, a lesson she hopes they’ll carry.

To anyone eyeing the Excel Center, Natalie’s advice is blunt: “Do it. You have nothing to lose.” She calls it a friendly walk in the park—not easy, but doable with the right support. That support came from teachers who patiently helped her throughout her time at the Excel Center.

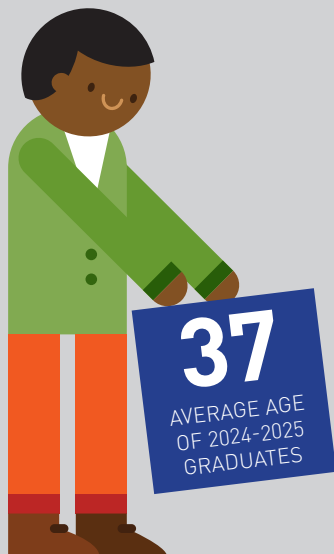
Natalie’s so sold on the school she hands out cards at her farmers market booth—where she sells candles and body products—urging strangers to take the chance she did. For her, it’s simple: if life hands you a second shot, you grab it and run.



GRADUATES BY TERM AND SCHOOL NUMBER OF STUDENTS



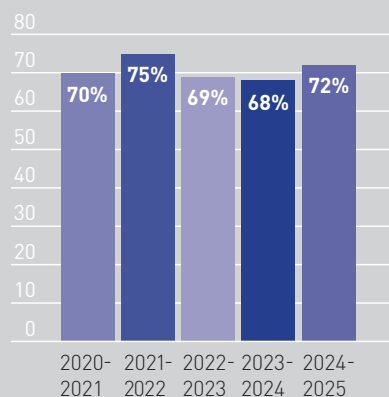
■ ST. LOUIS
■ SPRINGFIELD
■ POPLAR BLUFF
■ COLUMBIA
■ FLORISSANT
■ CAPE GIRARDEAU



STUDENT PERSISTENCE RATE THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL YEAR

PERCENT OF STUDENTS

Our goal is for 75% of students who haven't yet graduated, to continue their education from term to term.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Adam Plott walked across the stage at the Excel Center's June 2025 graduation, a moment marking significant turnaround in his life. After dropping out of high school due to poor decisions, Adam tried self-paced HiSET programs but found them isolating and difficult, lacking the structure to ask questions or learn actively. In 2019, a counselor friend introduced him to the Excel Center, where the classroom setting, supportive teachers, and flexible structure changed everything.

The eight-week accelerated classes kept Adam motivated, and the ability to take breaks without losing progress was a game-changer, unlike other programs where he'd have to start over. Small class sizes also helped, as he often knew a few classmates, making the environment feel familiar and comfortable. Initially, Adam considered careers as a chef or in healthcare but after a class field trip to a local funeral home—Adam's new career path revealed itself. Now, he's a funeral assistant, crematory operator, and helps prepare bodies for services—a role he finds fulfilling.



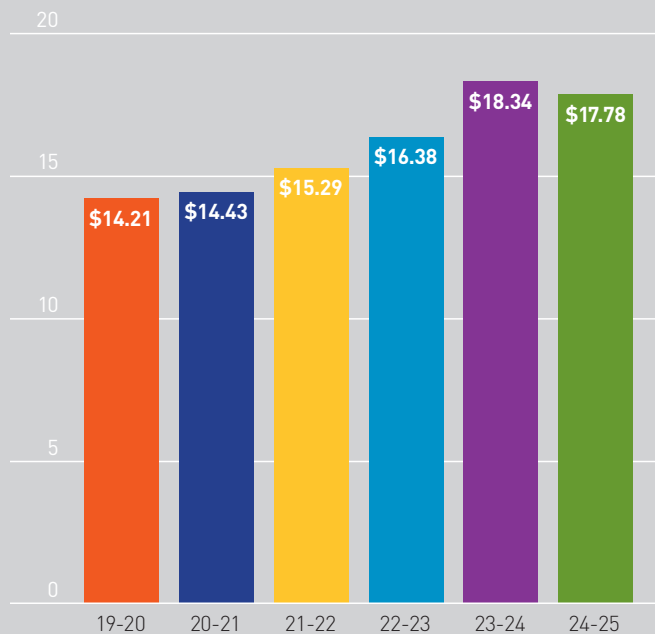
Adam's diploma led to immediate rewards: within a week of graduating, his boss offered a raise and enrollment in additional certifications. Since then, he's encouraged two friends to enroll at the Excel Center, both now students. He believes fear of the unknown and test anxiety hold people back from high school equivalency programs, but the Excel Center's manageable finals and flexibility make it accessible. He advises anyone hesitant to enroll: "You need to come to Excel."

Adam celebrated graduation with a large support system, including his probation officer, colleagues, and others who've cheered him on. He credits the Springfield Excel Center team's support for his success. Adam's journey shows how the Excel Center's tailored approach helps students overcome past mistakes, gain confidence, and build a foundation for a brighter future. For him, the diploma isn't just a piece of paper—it's proof that hard work pays off, opening doors to a career and a higher quality of life.

WAGE HOURLY RATE

The average hourly wage of our graduates within six months after graduation is \$17.78.

The average hourly wage of our graduates is 29% higher than Missouri's current minimum wage of \$13.75.

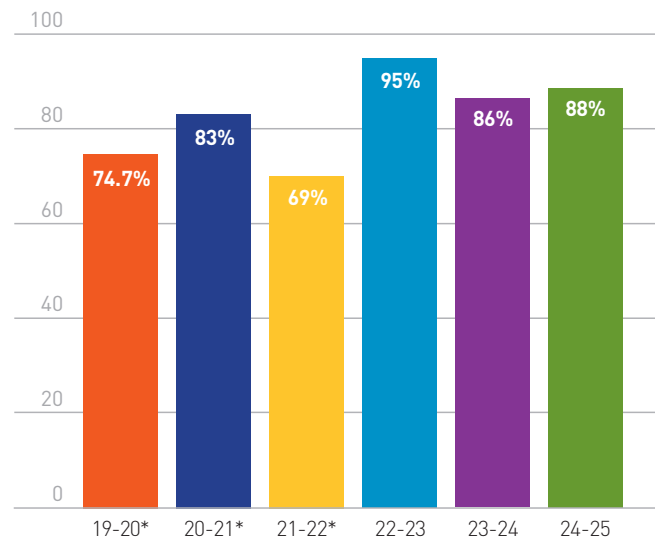


Students are able to earn high school credit by

completing Industry Recognized Credentials (IRC) such as Microsoft Office, phlebotomy, medical assistant, pharmacy technician, CDL-A, etc. We also offer some dual credit courses that yield both high school and college credit. Our goal is for students to graduate with their high school degree, an IRC, college credits, and be ready for work or continued education in college.

EMPLOYMENT, COLLEGE AND OTHER CERTIFICATIONS PERCENT OF GRADUATES

88% of our graduates were employed or enrolled in college or other certification programs within six months after graduation. 58% were employed and 87% were enrolled in college or other certification programs. Our goal is to provide opportunities that lead to success in the labor market.



* Employment only



St. Louis Excel Center

1727 Locust St.
St. Louis, MO 63103
(314) 241-3464

Springfield Excel Center

1514 S. Glenstone Ave.
Springfield, MO 65804
(417) 862-5005

Poplar Bluff Excel Center

2233 N. Westwood Blvd.
Poplar Bluff, MO 63901
(573) 686-6004

Columbia Excel Center

101 N. 4th St.
Columbia, MO 65201
(573) 499-1220

Florissant Excel Center

3180 N. Hwy 67
Florissant, MO 63033
(314) 967-2005

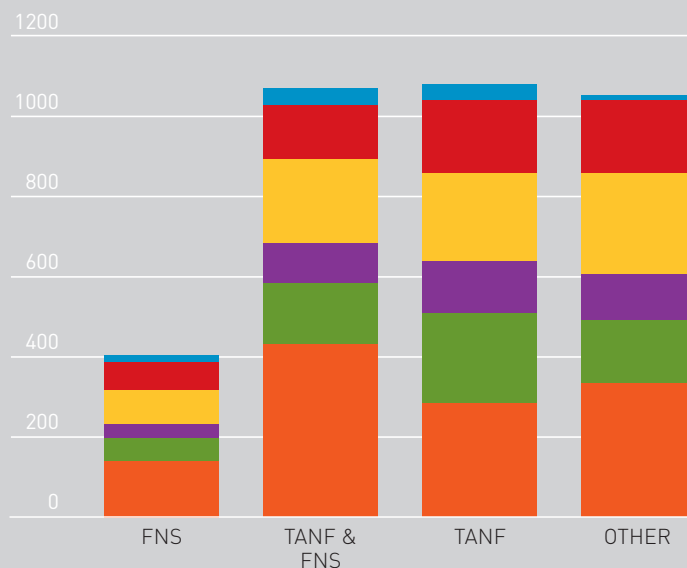
Cape Girardeau Excel Center

2106 William Street
Cape Girardeau, MO 63703
(573) 271-5220



FUNDING ELIGIBILITY NUMBER OF STUDENTS

71% of our students were eligible for either TANF funding, federal food & nutrition subsidies, or both, indicating they are well below the Federal Poverty Level.



- ST. LOUIS
- SPRINGFIELD
- POPLAR BLUFF
- COLUMBIA
- FLORISSANT
- CAPE GIRARDEAU