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IBM teams with center to widen computer access to all children

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IBM Corp.'s KidSmart program has provided access to its Young Explorer computer learning centers for more than 200,000 preschoolers in North Texas, mostly in Dallas. Now it's adding a focus for children with disabilities.

IBM is working with the [University of Texas at Dallas](#) **Callier Center for Communication Disorders** toward a goal of providing equal access to technology for all children, with and without disabilities.

Young Explorer computers are housed in brightly colored, kid-hardened Little Tikes furniture and equipped with educational software that helps children learn and explore concepts in math, science and language.

They also have features such as scanning and closed captioning that can help Callier use the learning centers to help preschoolers build skills for future academic success.

"The acquisition of computer skills and familiarity with technology is a vital part of our well-rounded curriculum," said Dr. [Thomas Campbell](#), executive director of the Callier Center.

"Because of IBM's generous donation, our students who are deaf and students who are hearing can access the Young Explorer computers and learn to communicate with one another."

The computer centers help children learn important socialization skills such as sharing.

The KidSmart program also includes teacher and parent training material.

"This program uses technology, but it's not about technology. It's about effective early childhood education and learning," said **Bruce Church**, IBM's Dallas-[Fort Worth](#) senior location executive.

United Way of Metropolitan Dallas, IBM's philanthropic partner since the inception of IBM's KidSmart program 10 years ago, has distributed more than 850 Young Explorer stations in this region, valued at \$1.8 million.

"For many years, IBM has been a rock-solid supporter of United Way and those we serve," said **Gary Godsey**, United Way of Metropolitan Dallas president and chief executive.

"Early childhood development is imperative to the success of our community, and the KidSmart Young Explorer program is right in step with our goal of ensuring children are prepared to start and stay in school."

KidSmart computers have been donated to Dallas programs at **Head Start of Greater Dallas Inc.**,

ChildCareGroup, Mi Escuelita, Educational First Steps and pre-K classrooms in the [Dallas Independent School District](#).

IBM developed the KidSmart program to help reduce the digital divide, especially in urban areas, where it was becoming apparent that children from less affluent backgrounds could benefit from access to specialized technology tools and educational materials to better prepare them to enter school.

Worldwide, IBM has donated 42,000 computers worth more than \$100 million, and more than 100,000 teachers have been trained to use the programs.