



Victory Learning Center: A Mighty Micro-School

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In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic shifted learning in schools overnight. What was clear is that online learning was not the best way for some students to learn. Additionally, due to online learning, parents were able to get a closer glimpse into what instruction was really like at their

children's school. This led parents across the United States to seek out other options. Tucked away in Indianapolis, a micro-school called Victory Learning Center (VLC) was born out of the hearts of passionate parents and educators.

My neighbors, who I have known for over a decade, informed us they were going to switch their children's school enrollment to a multi-age school and their children would be three of the founding students. My neighbors are college-educated talented individuals so surely they would not put their children into a school they had not thoroughly vetted. Even with vetting, it was new but they, along with other parents, were willing to take a risk. The risk paid off.



Victory Learning Center Parents being acknowledged by Director Victoria Wheaton

This afternoon, I had the great joy of attending VLC's graduation/promotion celebration which began with the history of the school from director Victoria Wheaton. Wheaton is a master's degree level teacher licensed in grades K-6. She left her teaching job during the pandemic to start the school in an all-season sunroom in the back of her house. Later, the school moved its location to Community of Christ, Indianapolis, and this is where the ceremony took place.

This micro-school had seven students this school year who ranged from the grades preschool to second grade. Micro-schools are typically schools that have less than 150 students. Seven VLC students are Black and one is white. Additionally, all students were reported as being above grade level in both reading and math. Since having a spiritual foundation was important to the parents, students learned about Christianity and how to develop good character in addition to academics.

Despite being a micro-school, the children were taught by trained professionals. They have two classroom teachers, a science teacher, a Spanish teacher, a physical education teacher, and a chess teacher. They also take field trips. It was also clear the students loved lunch, too. Side Street Catering, a company owned by Wheaton's husband prepares all the snacks and meals. Children audibly cheered when he was mentioned. When is the last time you heard children cheer about school food?

In the back of the room were science projects from each child. Also, each child had more than one opportunity to speak to the audience whether that was to recite a poem or scripture. Students, even the youngest at three years old, memorized all speaking parts.

If that wasn't enough to get your attention and raise your desire to learn more about this school, it was the ending of the celebration that made it hard to keep a dry eye. Four students were promoted to the next grade and three completed the program since VLC ends at grade two. When the director started reading the certificate of completion, she started tearing up. When my neighbors' oldest daughter, who is completing the program, came down to receive her certificate there were tears in her eyes. She hugged the director and held her for a moment.

What was palpable in the air more than character and more than the academics was the love. It was clear that the children loved their teachers and their school and the teachers loved them fiercely in return.

As the conversation continues about Black students struggling academically and being one or more years behind in grade level, I want to enter into evidence that Victory Learning Center has shown that is it possible and that all children can learn when there are strong academics, strong character building, and unshakeable love.