



Young Professional Achievement Award

Jameela Allen '97

Jameela Allen is the Founder and CEO of Themba Creative Early Learning Center LLC, a 2015 Chambers of Commerce finalist for the “Best Small Business in Prince George County, Maryland.”

The very idea of Themba has its roots on this very campus some 25 years ago. During, a work study job at the WVSU Child Development Center in the 90's, Jameela became inspired to become an educator from watching how the director, Ms. Delores Davis, operated and cared for the children at the childcare center. While under Ms. Davis's supervision, Jameela changed her major from fashion design to elementary education. This was Jameela's beginning of a lifelong career in educating young children.

In 1997, Jameela received a Bachelor of Arts Degree from West Virginia State University, followed by a Special Education certification from the University of the District of Columbia in 1999, and a Master's in Public Administration from Southeastern University in 2002. Jameela became a member of Nu Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., while attending WVSU.

Immediately after college, Jameela worked as a Special Education teacher for the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) from 1998-2008. In 2005, she was named Teacher of the Year for the district school system.

At a watch night service on the eve of 2007, Jameela was inspired by a message about “stepping out on faith to fulfill [ones] dreams.” The vision of owning and operating her childcare center were beginning to get into motion. Taking that leap of faith, and with a home equity loan from her house, Themba Creative Learning Center was founded. The challenges

were significant during the first few years. But through persistence, and aligning herself with a strong team – while being committed to continued training, and adhering to best practices, Jameela slowly, and steadily navigated pass each challenge. With every success, the company grew stronger and provided opportunities to build on systems and processes that would become the bulwark for the successful operations of Themba Creative Early Learning Center LLC.

Nationally accredited every year since 2009, Themba currently employs 25 childcare professionals, and service 136 families in the Maryland and DC areas, with a two month waiting list for most of the classrooms. With revenues growing on average of 18% per year for the past five (5) years, Jameela has transformed this business from \$300k a year during the first few years, to \$1.5 million in 2016.

Not one to remain passive, and rest on her laurels, Jameela continues to explore ways to expand and improve on her business practices while hoping to inspire other young entrepreneurs to be encouraged and follow their dreams.

