



**MAYOR ALVIN BROWN
CITY OF JACKSONVILLE
EDUCATION INITIATIVES**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Education and the City of Jacksonville	3
The Need	4
Challenges	5
Mayor Alvin Brown's Educational Goals	5
Mayor Alvin Brown's Educational Initiatives	6
Mayor's Mentors	6
Learn2Earn	9
Educational Summit	11
Conclusion	14

EDUCATION AND THE CITY OF JACKSONVILLE

With a population of more than 860,000 people spread among more than 840 square miles, Jacksonville is Florida's largest city in terms of city-limits population and surface area. Nearly 24% of that population is under the age of 18 and the Duval County Public Schools system claimed more than 125,000 students in 2012. The public school system accounted for 75% of school aged children in Jacksonville, as another 25% attended private schools or were homeschooled.¹

Jacksonville, Florida Mayor Alvin Brown took a significant step toward enhancing and emphasizing the city's education system and establishing a national example for lifelong learning when he signed an executive order creating Jacksonville's Education Commissioner's Office on August 19, 2011 (City of Jacksonville, 2011). The office represents a partnership between City Hall and Jacksonville University to enhance the quality of learning for people of all ages and economic dispositions under the larger argument that setting the foundation for a smarter city carries a multitude of long-term economic rewards.

Despite having no fiduciary or statutory authority (Mitchell, 2009) – i.e., neither funding nor administrative power – the Education Commissioner has been instrumental in setting a cradle-to-grave tone for the benefit of education in Jacksonville. Initiatives for the first six months of the office include:

- Raising \$200,000 in private funding to preserve the Junior Officer Reserve Training Corps (JROTC) programs at four public high schools for nearly 480 students.
- Raising \$236,000 in private funding to allow interscholastic football programs at 25 public middle schools to continue.
- Establishing “Mayor’s Mentors,” a program to pair over 500 highly-qualified, screened adults with young people to develop the next generation of leaders.
- Partnering with universities to launch “Learn to Earn,” a unique program to immerse more than 500 high school students in a collegiate experience with a target of raising the high school graduation rate and increasing the number of Jacksonville residents with college diplomas.
- Partnering with financial institutions to launch “Jacksonville MoneyWi\$e (sic) Week,” a program with financial literacy sessions free of charge for people of all

In 2012, Dr. Donnie Horner, the Mayor's first Education Commissioner, and David Hunt presented a case study entitled *Lifelong Learning: City of Jacksonville as a Case Study*. Excerpts from that study are included here in Education and the City of Jacksonville and The Need section of this presentation.

ages concerning a variety of topics from savings habits to mortgage applications and estate planning.

- Jointly sponsoring “Mayor’s College Student Aid Workshop”, a program offering college-bound students with free, one-stop support for completing and filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form, with the Jacksonville Indo-US Chamber of Commerce and local colleges and universities.

Through these programs, it became increasingly clear that education is a commodity for economic development that assumes various shapes and forms. By establishing a baseline for an overall smarter city beyond the public school system, the Education Commissioner reinforces the broader concept that education is truly a great equalizer empowering people to compete on a more advanced economic playing field.

THE NEED

When a city has a robust predilection for and commitment to education, it has a stronger foundation for economic success.

The Brookings Institution ranks Raleigh, North Carolina, as the Number 6 metro area in the nation in terms of the percentage (41.5 %) of residents age 25 and up with a bachelor’s degree. Austin, Texas, ranks eighth in the nation with a 38.2 % attainment rate (Berube, 2012: 108). Jacksonville’s bachelor’s degree attainment rate for people age 25 and up is 25.2%(Jacksonville Community Council, 2011B: 7). While the U.S. Census Bureau shows relatively small shifts in the level of median household incomes in these three cities, the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that a higher percentage of people in Jacksonville have been without work. The metropolitan unemployment snapshot recorded in the three cities in December 2011 showed Jacksonville at 9.2%, Raleigh at 8% and Austin at 6.3%.

Low unemployment, low crime, greater income potential and easy access to cultural activities helped to make Pittsburgh number one in the *Forbes* rankings of America’s most livable cities. (Levy, 2010). The U.S. Census shows that 34.1% of people above age 25 living in Allegheny County, the area surrounding Pittsburgh, have a bachelor’s degree or higher. It’s nearly eight percentage points above the statewide number.

For a substantial part of the previous decade, Jacksonville had a reputation as “the murder capital of Florida” (Florida Times-Union, 2006). In 2006, that reputation peaked at a time when the dropout rate was 6.6% and the four-year public high school graduation rate was 59.8%. Each of those figures has improved in recent years, but there remain significant challenges in the education system that require the public’s attention.

The racial gap is noticeable. In Jacksonville, 15.5% of African Americans older than 25 hold a college degree compared to 28.3% of whites and 21% of Latinos. Only 18% of African-American 10th graders in Jacksonville’s public schools are reading at grade-level, compared to 49% of whites. (Jacksonville Community Council, 2011B: 7).

CHALLENGES

The most recent data published by the *United Way of Northeast Florida*² illustrates the need to help our community's students at-risk for dropping out of high school. It also identifies working with this group of young people as an area that holds the possibility of "doing the most good for the greatest number of people."

- Duval County's high school dropout rate is twice the statewide dropout rate.
- High school dropouts will earn on average \$270,000 less than a high school graduate.
- More than 60% of accused murderers in Jacksonville are high school dropouts.
- 1 in 3 high school students in Duval County does not graduate with their class.
- Florida dropouts cost taxpayers an estimated \$12.1 billion annually in lost wages.

Additional challenges our students face include complex social problems.

- 65,000 students, or 55% of those enrolled in public school, are registered for free or reduced lunch (Duval County Public Schools, 2012).
- In Duval County, nearly one-third of girls between the ages of 15 and 19 are pregnant (NE Florida Teen Pregnancy Task Force, 2011)
 - 17%, or nearly one in five teenage pregnancies, represent the second or third child to a teenage mother.
 - Teen pregnancies represent 9.5% of all births in Duval County.

MAYOR ALVIN BROWN'S EDUCATIONAL GOALS

The Bureau of Labor Statistics, the U.S. Department of Treasury, and the U.S. Department of Education all agree. The higher the education level attained, the lower the unemployment rate. Individuals with a bachelor's degree currently have about half the rate of unemployment as those with a high school diploma. College graduates are earning about two thirds more than their high school counterparts. Simply put, education and economic development go hand in hand. A city with rich, vibrant educational opportunities transforms into a city with rich, vibrant economic opportunities. Mayor Alvin Brown has a clear goal for education in the city of Jacksonville. That goal that includes every child graduating from high school ready for the work force, the military, or college. In addition, Mayor Brown seeks to develop a work force that includes 50% of the population attaining bachelor's degrees. To help accomplish these goals, he has developed three signature programs. These include Mayor's Mentors, Learn2Earn, and an annual Education Summit.

² United Way of Northeast Florida, 2007. *What Matters: Helping Children and Youth Achieve Their Potential: Achievers for Life*.

MAYOR'S MENTORS

Mayor's Mentors launched December 7, 2011 (*Mayor's Mentors*, 2011) through a collaborative effort with organizations such as United Way of Northeast Florida, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Florida, Communities in Schools of Jacksonville, and the Jacksonville Children's Commission. Mayor Alvin Brown appealed to the community, successfully recruiting nearly 600 volunteers to a number of vacancies in already-existent mentoring programs. Specific attention was concentrated on at-risk sixth-graders and the United Way's *Achievers for Life* program.

OVERVIEW

Mayor's Mentors is a partnership program, specializing in pairing new, highly qualified mentors with students in need in Duval County Public Schools. The program stems from the Mayor's vision to enhance the educational experience for the good of our community's students and the entire city. Through Mayor's Mentors, the mayor deploys dedicated volunteers into mentorship programs with proven performance records and metrics, ensuring the best support for Jacksonville's youth.

THE NEED

In Jacksonville, a student who does not promote on time to seventh grade has an 85% chance of dropping out of high school. This is one area where mentors are making a tremendous difference.³

When the Mayor issued a city-wide call for mentors, the response was an overwhelming success. Programs like *Achievers for Life* have a presence in ten middle schools in Duval County, working with students who are at the greatest risk of dropping out. The program is a full service dropout prevention program targeting at-risk sixth-grade students. Community mentors play an integral role in the success of this program, providing students with academic support, and a one-on-one mentor. *Mayor's Mentors* works in collaboration with programs like *Achievers for Life*, providing qualified, screened, and trained volunteers that serve as mentors to these students.

TARGET POPULATION

Mentors may volunteer at any school of their choice. However, a concentrated effort is being made to encourage mentors to volunteer at one of the ten middle schools where *Achievers for Life* has a presence working with students at risk of dropping out.

COMPONENTS

Each year 75 sixth-graders in the ten participating schools need mentors, for a total demand of 750 mentors annually. Plans to expand the program would increase this number.

³ Communities in Schools, Jacksonville

MAYOR ALVIN BROWN ANNOUNCES MAYOR'S MENTORS

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

Mayor Calls On Citizens to Give One Hour a Week to Mentor Jacksonville Students

JACKSONVILLE, FL, December 7, 2011 – Jacksonville

Mayor Alvin Brown announced today the launch of the Mayor's Mentors, a public-private partnership to train and place 500 new school-based mentors with Duval County Public School students by April 1 at no cost to taxpayers. The Mayor's goal is to recruit, train and match mentors with Duval County Public School students to increase on-time, next grade promotion and graduation rates. For more information on becoming a Mayor's Mentor, the public may call United Way's 2-1-1.

"An aspect of improving our education system is giving young people every tool possible to promote their success, both in and out of the classroom," said Mayor Brown. "Mentors are a big part of this success. Our job as mentors is to be the role models who inspire kids to overcome obstacles and learn. Mentors model the way. My Mayor's Mentors program is what happens when organizations that have proven track records link caring mentors with kids to motivate our young people to become the role models of tomorrow."

The Mayor's Mentors public-private partnership is comprised of the following organizations: United Way Northeast Florida, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Florida, The Bridge of Northeast Florida, Communities In Schools of Jacksonville, Duval County Public Schools, The Jacksonville Children's Commission, Take Stock In Children, Duval County Public School's "Read it Forward Jax" program, Jack & Jill of America, Inc. Jacksonville Chapter, the Jacksonville Kappa League, Northside Community Involvement, Inc., the First Coast Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Asian American Chamber of Jacksonville. These organizations have the infrastructure already in place to recruit, train and match mentors for school-based and community- and faith-based programs in Jacksonville.

United Way of Northeast Florida has agreed to serve as the coordinating organization ensuring that all mentors are provided a timely orientation, training and background screening in order to be matched with a mentee in a school based environment. Training will be provided by the Jacksonville Children's Commission in addition to the training and orientation provided by the individual mentoring organizations.

The Mayor called on the 300 people attending the luncheon at the Jacksonville Main Library to find an hour each week to be the positive, caring adult influence that has been shown to improve student academic success. The National Mentoring Partnership reports that more than half of students with mentors are less likely to skip school and get better grades and 86 percent more likely to seek higher education.

The Mayor's Mentors initiative is a continuation of Mayor Brown's campaign commitment to improve education in Duval County by supporting student academic success and personal development. Research shows that students with mentors are also less likely to use illegal drugs and alcohol, had better relationships with peers and family members and had higher levels of self-confidence. "Successful partnerships like this begin with a vision, and then everyone pitching in for the common good," said Connie Hodges, president of United Way of Northeast Florida. "The Mayor's Mentors initiative provides important visibility to the need for recruiting mentors to give Jacksonville's children the best possible support for academic success.

LEARN 2EARN

A Mayor Brown Administration college immersion program to promote post-secondary education through public-private partnership in Jacksonville, Florida

OVERVIEW

Learn2Earn is part of the hands on approach Jacksonville, Florida Mayor Alvin Brown is taking to boost the overall quality of education, inspire self-sufficiency in young people and build a stronger workforce to meet the challenges of the 21st Century economy.

The program hosts rising high school sophomores and juniors for an immersion experience in student life for one week on a residential college campus. The pilot year of Learn2Earn (2012) contained the necessary infrastructure to accept 200 students on a nomination basis from all areas of the city with a special focus on Title 1 (free or reduced school lunch) students and those from low-to-moderate income households. The students took part in classes, lived in dormitories and worked on-campus jobs under the supervision of highly qualified instructors that the City of Jacksonville recruited and screened from the already-vetted ranks of local Take Stock in Children and Teach for America efforts.

THE NEED

Learn2Earn serves a critical mission to boost the number of college-educated people in Jacksonville, a city where 25 percent of people ages 25 and up hold a bachelor's degree or higher. That percentage puts Jacksonville behind other cities in the Southeast – for example, the 46 percent attainment level in Atlanta – as well as the national average of 30 percent.

There are 34,502 high school students in the Duval County Public Schools system with thousands more in private schools and home school settings. A chief concern of the Brown Administration is raising the graduation rate well above the 71.2 percent recorded by the Florida Department of Education in 2010-11. Learn2Earn aspires to reverse the tide of dropouts by taking matters a step further to inspire college enrollment.

TARGET POPULATION

Learn2Earn is a summer program designed for high school students who are on summer break awaiting their sophomore or junior years. Students entering senior year may be granted exception to enroll. Learn2Earn is open to all students in public and private schools as well as home-schooled students.

Students of all geographic and economic backgrounds in Jacksonville are eligible, but Learn2Earn will place an emphasis on empowering the less well-to-do to work toward a college education. Sixty percent of the ranks will be filled by students who are Title 1-eligible or who come from low-to-moderate-income households. In Jacksonville, 55.3 percent of public school students receive free or reduced lunch, per capita income is \$25,948 and median household income is \$47,002. Both income numbers are below the national average. The city has a slightly higher poverty rate, 15.3 percent, when compared to the national average.

Students must have a GPA of 2.5 or higher, and they must have an acceptable disciplinary record, both in and out of school. Each student accepted into Learn2Earn will be nominated by a sponsor who can explain the student's potential. This sponsor may be a school administrator, parent or any other community leader who demonstrates an ability to objectively identify the student's strengths and weaknesses in terms of character and critical thinking skills. Students also may self-nominate, but must have one adult reference.

COMPONENTS

There are three residential college campuses in Jacksonville Florida: The University of North Florida, Jacksonville University and Edward Waters College. Learn2Earn is possible through the partnerships Mayor Brown has built with each. Learn2Earn would utilize the dormitories and facilities of these campuses for several weeks in June while high school students are on summer break and the majority of college students have temporarily moved out.

For six days, from a Sunday afternoon until dismissal the following Friday, the students will be immersed in the college experience. They will visit classrooms and be given course instruction as well as tips to more effectively study.

The experience is meant to fully mimic collegiate life in order to set reasonable expectations and reduce apprehensions at an optimal point in each of the students' high school careers to begin researching universities and submitting applications. Learn2Earn is designed to serve as encouragement and a unique alternative to "senior days" as well as the guided recruitment tours typically hosted on university grounds. In the first year of Learn2Earn, there are two planned weeklong sessions to accommodate 100 students apiece.

INITIAL ROLLOUT

Eighty percent of the first Learn2Earn students were aiming to become the first in their family to go to college. Of the students, 82 percent qualified for free or reduced lunch, 76 percent were African-American, 4.5 percent were Hispanic, 2.5 percent were Asian and 10.5 percent were white. Two-thirds of the students were female. In total, the students represented 25 Jacksonville ZIP Codes, all 21 public high schools and nine private schools.

Teach for America helped to create curriculum with guidance of mayor's staff and education professionals who volunteered to consult on the overall efforts. Teach for America led efforts to host the first sessions on the Jacksonville University campus in June 2012 and Take Stock in Children was instrumental in hosting the second set of sessions in July 2012 at the University of North Florida. About 100 students attended each. Course curriculum focused on practical college rights-of-passage such as entrance essay writing and interview etiquette. The mayor made frequent appearances to encourage the students.

Lacking state and city funding, this inaugural effort was funded through \$160,000 generated through successful public-private partnership. The hope is to expand the program to up to 1,000 students in 2013 with a potential budget of \$715,000. The expansion also is proposed to help connect Learn2Earn to the Mayor's Summer Jobs Program, meaning that qualifying students would not only benefit from the educational experience, but they would have an opportunity to also earn work experience through a variety of job opportunities.

The Brown Administration's position is that increasing levels of college education helps greatly to build a stronger workforce and support the social fabric of any community. Learn2Earn is an innovative component that should compel the public sector's support because it is a proactive approach to evening the educational playing field for all students.

Data is being collected in cooperation with the students and the school system to track progress of Learn2Earn students. The Education Commissioner is in receipt of the student's first-quarter 2012 report cards. The Commissioner's Office will continue quarterly collection for comparative data on grades and discipline. As part of follow-up efforts, the city's Public Affairs Office and Education Commissioner's Office has incorporated social media as an avenue for the students to remain engaged with one another as well as the officials from the program.

A reunion was held in December to reiterate the city's support of the students' drive and energy for post-secondary education. The alumni were presented with a chronological map of what students need to do to prepare for college admission in each grade level.

EDUCATION SUMMIT

On October 22, 2012, Mayor Brown announced that he would host an annual two-day education summit in cooperation with Duval County Public Schools and other stakeholders to focus our community on education issues. The theme of the 2013 Summit was *Increasing Parental Involvement*. That theme will be further developed during the 2014 Summit which will focus on increasing high school graduation rates. At the Mayor's direction, the audience will remain diverse and inclusive. The audience, participants and programs will reflect his vigorous support of K-12 education (public, private, charter and home-schooled) and creating a college-going culture for all students in the City of Jacksonville

OVERVIEW

The City of Jacksonville's strong Mayor form of government affords the presiding officer substantial influence in the community. For many years Jacksonville's Mayors have encouraged students, parents and educators. Mayor Brown's predecessor's administration focused on early-learning and hosted a book club for three and four year olds throughout the county. Mayor Brown campaigned on a more demonstrative and robust education agenda. In addition to developing a mentoring corps and creating a college-going culture by connecting high-school students and colleges, he committed to annually convening a summit where members of the community could discuss improving education outcomes.

EDUCATION SUMMIT

DAY ONE

Famed comedian, actor and education activist Dr. Bill Cosby visited with students throughout the city. Dr. Cosby visited First Coast High School, Raines High School and LaVilla School of the Arts as part of his tour. Day One of the summit was capped off by a performance by Dr. Cosby at the Florida Theatre.

The opening act for Dr. Cosby was a Drum Line Competition featuring teams from four local schools: Duncan U. Fletcher High School, First Coast High School, Jean Ribault Middle School and William M. Raines High School.

Bill Cosby is well known for his commitment to education. He emphatically believes that the best assurance for a satisfying and rewarding life begins with knowledge. Dr. Cosby went back to college long after he had achieved much of his success to obtain a master's degree as well as a doctorate, and applied this further education in his professional life.

EDUCATION SUMMIT

DAY TWO

The summit's second day was hosted at the Jacksonville Public Library's Main Branch, and focused on the theme of parental involvement. Florida Times-Union Editor Dr. Frank Denton moderated a panel discussion including Gary Chartrand, chair of the State Board of Education, several Duval County Public School Board members and other community leaders. Duval County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Nikolai Vitti gave a special presentation on establishing a parent academy as a means of increasing parental involvement.

Tony Miller, the deputy secretary and chief operating officer at the U.S. Department of Education, was the keynote speaker at the event.

The afternoon session featured five workshops exploring specific ways of enhancing education in Jacksonville. These workshops included topics such as mentoring, energizing community and faith-based organizations, building a culture that values and celebrates young women, developing "early early" learning strategies from cradle to preschool, and promoting tools to help parents become more involved. The workshops concluded with chair and co-chair reports, and then the summit wrapped up with a call to action from Mayor Brown.

THE NEED

Because the Mayor represents all residents of Duval County and the City of Jacksonville, he does not represent exclusively public or private education. Additionally, because local economy depends on an educated workforce, the Mayor is particularly well suited to facilitate a conversation on education. Mayor Brown has a personal passion for education opportunities for all.

TARGET POPULATION

The Mayor's specific goal for the target population is to include organizations and people who contribute to education but are not usually offered a seat at the table. He also values the substantial contribution of those who are always included in education conversations and encouraged their participation.

DATA COLLECTED

Attendance

- Day one:
 - First Coast High School – 175
 - Raines High School – 950
 - Lunch – 140
 - LaVilla School of the Arts – 700 (not including closed circuit television viewers)
 - Bill Cosby at the Florida Theatre – 1,907
- Day two:
 - Overall attendance – 467
 - Mentoring workshop – 160
 - Girl Matters workshop – 105
 - Community and Faith Based workshop – 183
 - Parents and advocacy workshop – 257
 - “Early, early” learning workshop – 158
- Participant Feedback/Ratings of the Summit Goals:
 - The summit built on the current excitement and maintains momentum for public education – 88.2% agree or strongly agree
 - The summit helped me better understand major education initiatives while hearing from senior community educational leaders – 91.6% agree or strongly agree
 - The summit encouraged collaboration among organizations and initiatives – 93.7% agree or strongly agree
 - The summit facilitated an exchange of ideas on increasing parental involvement – 86.3% agree or strongly agree
 - The summit explored the value of establishing a parent academy as a specific element of increasing parental involvement – 100% agree or strongly agree
 - The summit facilitated the exchange of ideas regarding specific mini-workshop topics in the context of increasing parental involvement – 92.2% agree or strongly agree

MAYOR’S POST-EDUCATION SUMMIT MEETINGS

- Mayor and staff reconvened one week after the event to discuss the After Activity Report and strategies to improve next year’s summit
- On April 4, 2013, Mayor Brown hosted a post-Education Summit meeting in the Mayor’s small conference room in the St. James Building, City Hall.
 - Attendees included all workshop chairs, Education Commissioner Dr. Donnie Horner, and staff.

- They debriefed and proposed a second meeting inviting summit attendees who self-identified on contact cards that they were willing to assist in a particular area.
- On May 16, 2013, Mayor Brown hosted a meeting of workshop chairs and summit attendees at Landon Middle School. The participants were selected because they self-identified on contact cards at the summit that they were willing to assist in a particular area.
 - In addition to connecting workshop chairs and volunteers, the group viewed a documentary produced by WJCT of the two-day event.
 - Mayor Brown recognized and thanked the principals whose schools participated in Dr. Cosby's tour on Day One.
 - The Mayor's staff distributed the final draft of the *Report-out by Workshop Chairs and Co-Chairs*

CONCLUSION

Mayor Alvin Brown is actively taking significant steps towards enhancing the education system of Jacksonville, FL with specific and deliberate attention designed to increase the graduation rates of the city. Through executive order he created the Education Commissioner's Office, representing a public-private partnership between City Hall and Jacksonville University. With no funding or administrative power, the Education Commission has been instrumental in leading educational initiatives through public-private partnerships while enhancing the education experience and opportunities for the community. These include establishing Mayor's Mentors, launching Learn2Earn, and conducting an annual Education Summit. Through these innovative programs, Mayor Brown had demonstrated his commitment to improving the graduation rates while creating a smarter more successful city committed to lifelong learning.

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