Name: Jacksonville Community Council Inc.

Subject: Public Education Reform:

Phase Two — Eliminating the Achievement Gap Study

Date: Summer 2004

A Report to the Citizens of Jacksonville

PUBLIC EDUCATION REFORM
Eliminating the Achievement Gap

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

> [Ours] is a free school system. It knows no distinction of rich or poor…it throws open its doors and spreads the table of its bounty for all the children…Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the equalizer of the conditions of men; the great balance wheel of the social machinery.
>
> *~ Horace Mann (1796-1859)*

The American Dream is built on opportunities for every citizen. These opportunities are inextricably tied to education. Free public education is America's promise of opportunity for all children, regardless of income or background. Without quality education for all, the American Dream means nothing.

This study examines how Jacksonville fulfills its promise of quality public education using student performance as a primary measure of quality.

Test scores, graduation rates, and other measures of student performance in Jacksonville's public schools show an alarming achievement gap. Instead of limiting discussion of the achievement gap to race or family income, this report looks at why individual students fall behind, be they rich, poor, white, black, or any ethnicity or national origin.

Of the 38,332 Duval County students who failed to read at grade level in 2003, 35 percent were white, 57 percent were black, and seven percent were Hispanic or Asian. These children face one or more of a variety of obstacles, many of which lie outside school. Eliminating the achievement gap requires helping students overcome these obstacles.

The committee found that the achievement gap begins even before students start school. An infant's brain development begins in the womb. A child's learning is rapid through age three, when a child has developed either a small or large vocabulary. His or her early learning experiences are influenced by parents, guardians, and childcare workers who may or may not be aware of early brain development and how it influences school performance later. By the time children enter kindergarten, a significant gap already exists.

As a child grows older, new obstacles may compound the problem. They may lack adequate physical and mental health care. Their access to books and reading material at home may be limited, which places them at a disadvantage as well. Some low performers are held back at critical points–namely, third, sixth, and ninth grades–and do not recover from it. Teachers' and parents' expectations set a mark to which students will work, and many low performers simply are not expected to excel in school. In addition, students may move in and out of schools frequently, disturbing their education. The overall quality of a student's' educational experience, including teacher quality and how well the school engages parents, also makes a difference.

The study report looks at what assistance is available to help students overcome obstacles and evaluates how well the schools and community succeed in that effort. Some students are not expected to perform to grade level because of major physical, emotional or intellectual problems. The study looks only at those students who have the capacity to perform to grade level, and asks, "Why are they failing?"

Only 29 percent of our public school ninth graders are reading at grade level. This alarming achievement gap, involving tens of thousands of students, affects the economic growth and stability of Jacksonville. This problem is bigger than the public schools and the solutions must go beyond reforming schools. This requires a full community effort.

To meet this challenge, we must leave behind blame and defensiveness and enter a new partnership. This partnership should bring together educational and community leaders for facilitated discussions about the achievement gap. The community-wide effort should focus on students, the obstacles they face, and how the schools and community can remove those obstacles.

Highlights

Major Concerns

- Jacksonville lacks an ongoing, structured dialogue in which citizen input and educational expertise can meet, without blame and defensiveness, to improve student performance.

- Childcare facilities do not adequately prepare all children for kindergarten.

- Teachers are not compensated for the challenging work of bringing low performers up to grade level.

- In the middle and high school levels, too many students fail the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test and do not receive extra academic help.

Recommended Solutions

- The Alliance for World Class Education should convene an action group to initiate and maintain a city-wide dialogue on education issues.

- The Mayor should increase funding for early learning to fully fund quality pre-kindergarten education.

- The Duval County School Board and Duval Teachers United should adopt contract provisions so that teachers and principals who take on the most challenging jobs and succeed in them are compensated for their work.

- The Duval County Public Schools should provide academic assistance to all students not performing at grade level.

Findings

Findings represent the information received by the committee. They are derived from published materials, from facts reported by resource people, and from a consensus of the committee's understanding of the opinions of resource people.

Why this study?

Phase One of this two-year study found that many students in Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) do not meet the community's expectations for academic success. The current study, Phase Two, is charged with finding ways to eliminate the gap in individual achievement levels. Since many of the obstacles facing low performers lie outside the school system's influence, the community is in a position to assist DCPS and students in addressing these obstacles.

In fall 2002, JCCI began a two-year study of public education reform in Jacksonville. The first report, *Public Education Reform: Addressing Change* (referred to as Phase One), examined ten years of reform efforts and educational outcomes. It concluded that the primary challenge to Duval County Public Schools is closing the achievement gap among students. Nearly 36 percent of ninth graders in Jacksonville public schools in 1999 did not graduate four years later. [1] Seventeen percent of 2001-02 graduates of Duval County Public Schools who enrolled in Florida's public colleges and universities were not ready for college-level reading assignments and 34 percent were not ready for college-level math. [2] Students who do not graduate from high school or are not prepared for college are less successful when it comes to finding a well-paying job.

Phase One stated that many of "the social and economic issues that interfere with a child's ability to learn represent a failure of a community, not the school system." Community-wide problems, such as low family income, frequent moves, and lack of parental involvement and literacy skills, affect students' learning in school. These problems, while larger than schools, have effects in the schools, where many students are falling behind.

The study's charge to the second phase, *Public Education Reform: Eliminating the Achievement Gap* (referred to as Phase Two), was: *How can the community and the Duval County Public Schools eliminate the gap in individual achievement by ensuring all students achieve at the highest levels possible?*

Each state in the nation is in the process of developing or has developed standards (what students should know) and standardized tests (measuring how well they know it).

> **Standardized tests** are tools for comparing performance of an individual student to a larger group of students, including a school, a school district, and state. Examples of standardized tests include the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT).

In Duval County, more than half of all public school students taking the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in 2003 scored a 1 or a 2 on a scale of 1 to 5, with level 1 being the lowest and Level 3 considered grade level expectation by the State. All Florida communities have students who score a 1 or a 2. However, Phase Two of JCCI's *Public Education Reform* asks why so many DCPS students perform below expectations. Raising a significantly larger portion of low-performing students' test scores closes the achievement gap, which is the study's stated goal.

What the achievement gap looks like

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test is a measurement tool for determining how many students are falling behind their peers and not meeting the State's expectations for learning. Data describe two aspects of the achievement gap. First, the gap exists before students enter school. Second, the gap increases as students grow older.

One tool for measuring the achievement gap is FCAT test results because they offer a standard for comparing students' performance. However, many in the community do not agree with how FCAT results are used. The Florida Department of Education uses FCAT results to grade schools and as a requirement for promotion to 4th grade and for a high school diploma.

All students in grades 3-10, with some exceptions for students with disabilities and with limited English proficiency, take the FCAT in February and March each year. They take two tests, one each in reading and math. In addition, students in grades 4, 8, and 10 take a writing test and grades 5, 8, and 10 take a science test.

> ### SAMPLE QUESTIONS
> #### FROM 10TH GRADE FCAT TESTS - 2003-04
>
> **Math**
> The *Spartan* satellite is in the shape of a cube that measures 5 feet on each edge. If the satellite weighs 24 pounds per cubic foot on Earth, what is the total weight in pounds of the satellite on Earth?
>
> Answer: 3,000 lbs.
>
> **Science**
> A ball is dropped from a height of 20 meters above the ground. As the ball falls, it increases in speed. At what height above the ground, in meters, are the kinetic and potential energies of the ball equal?
>
> Answer: 10 meters

Source: Florida Department of Education, http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/fcat.htm

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[1] Florida School Indicators Report, http://info.doe.state.fl.us/fsir/
[2] Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program, http://www.firn.edu/doe/fetpip/

For the purposes of this study, students scoring at Levels 1 or 2 are considered low performers. A Level 3 is considered grade level performance as defined by the State.

In 2004, Duval County's FCAT test results were similar for both Math (45 percent low performers) and Reading (44 percent low performers). The 2004 test scores also reveal:

- 38,332 students, or 51 percent of all third through tenth graders, scored at Level 1 or Level 2 on FCAT Reading;

- 39,722 students, or 53 percent of all third through tenth graders, scored at Level 1 or 2 on FCAT Math;

- sixty-two percent of sixth graders scored at Level 1 or 2 in mathematics in Duval County, compared to 48 percent statewide; and

- seventy-one percent of ninth graders scored at Level 1 or 2 in reading in Duval County, compared to 68 percent statewide.

FCAT test scores also show that older students perform below grade level more frequently. In 2004, 67 percent of fourth-grade students were reading at grade level. The percentage of students reading at grade level decreases through the 9th grade, when less than one-third of students are reading at grade level.

In comparison to students statewide, Duval County students score slightly lower on the FCAT.

**FCAT Reading scores for Duval County and Florida, 2003-04**
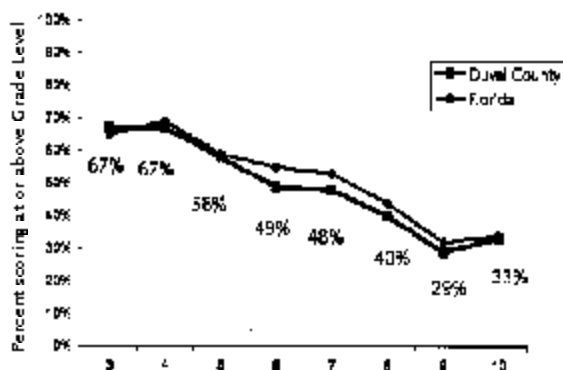
FCAT Math scores for Duval County and Florida, 2003-04
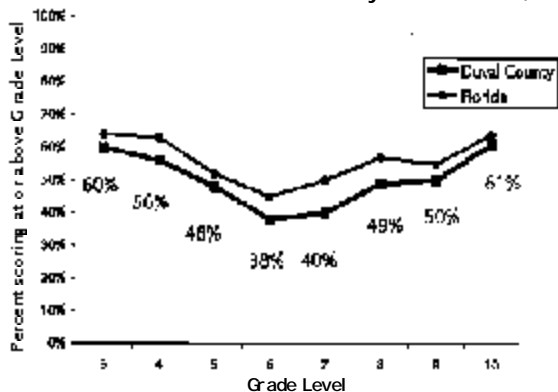
Source: Florida Department of Education, Adequate Yearly Progress Reports, http://web.fldoe.org/nclb/

FCAT scores are one indication of low performance. Other indicators are the drop out rate and the graduation rate. Of Duval County's ninth-graders in 1999, a little less than two-thirds, or 64 percent, graduated four years later. About five to six percent more students take five years to graduate.

High School Graduation Rates in Duval County
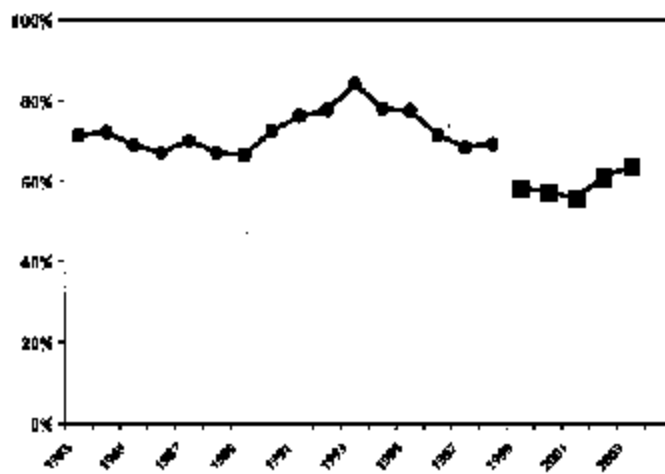
Source: Florida Department of Education; Florida School Indicator Reports, http://info.doe.state.fl.us/fsir

Note: Before 1999, the graduation rate was determined by dividing the number of high school graduates in the school district by the number of students starting ninth grade four years earlier, in the same district. Now the graduation rate is calculated by tracking individual ninth graders. This allows for a more accurate figure. Because of the change in calculation method and changing graduation requirements, graduation rates before 1999 cannot be compared with those after.

In 2002-03, approximately 1,500 high school students, or 4.6 percent of all high school students, dropped out of school. Dropping out affects students long after they leave school. Of Duval County dropouts in 2002, only 21 percent continued their education and 22 percent were employed the following year.[3] The impact on their future earnings, and thus the long-term effects of the achievement gap on the local economy, is significant. Of 1,300 Duval County dropouts surveyed in the fall of 2002, 28 percent held a job that paid at or above minimum wage. Of 4,500 Duval County graduates surveyed, 36 percent held a job at or above the minimum wage. The average annual earnings for a 2002 graduate of DCPS in the fall of 2002 is $9,484 and the comparable figure for a dropout was $7,960.[4] Over a lifetime, a high school graduate's earnings increase faster than a dropout's earnings, surpassing total earnings by more than $300,000.[5]

While the earnings potential for dropouts and graduates is calculated for individuals, the impact of the higher earnings extends beyond the individual and his or her family. The community benefits from the higher lifetime earnings potential as well. A better-educated workforce is a higher-paid workforce which benefits everyone in Jacksonville.

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[3]Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program, http://www.firn.edu/doe/fetpip/
[4]Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program, http://www.firn.edu/doe/fetpip/
[5]"Education Pays: Stay in School," Employment Policy Foundation, http://www.educationpays.org/

Characteristics of DCPS students and low performers

Low performers are in all schools and come from all types of families and neighborhoods. While data such as race and family income level describe characteristics of many low performing students, the data do not explain why some students fail to perform to expectations, nor explain why some students with the same characteristics excel in school.

The achievement gap is often discussed in terms of black and white students' test scores and the gap between low-income students and those who are not. The study committee found that the achievement gap in Duval County is more complex than a single issue. While the achievement gap is measured in test scores, the story behind those test scores is complex. Students who are low performing might have trouble getting along with other students, have difficult relationships with authority figures, lack effective decision making skills, or might move frequently from school to school. The barriers to academic achievement are interrelated.

Data on students who score at Levels 1 or 2 on the FCAT are broken down by race, gender, disability, and family income. For the purpose of this study, the percent of low-income students is measured by participation in the federally-funded free and reduced-price lunch program. Eligibility for the program depends on family income, which is often reported for a family of four. A family that earns less than 130 percent of the poverty guideline qualifies for free lunch. A family that earns less than 185 percent of the federal government's poverty guideline qualifies for reduced-price lunch. In 2003, a family of four that earned less than $18,400 was considered "living in poverty." In contrast, the median family income in Duval County in 2003 was $54,900.

Income guidelines for families "living in poverty,"* "low income,"* and median household income, Duval County, 2003
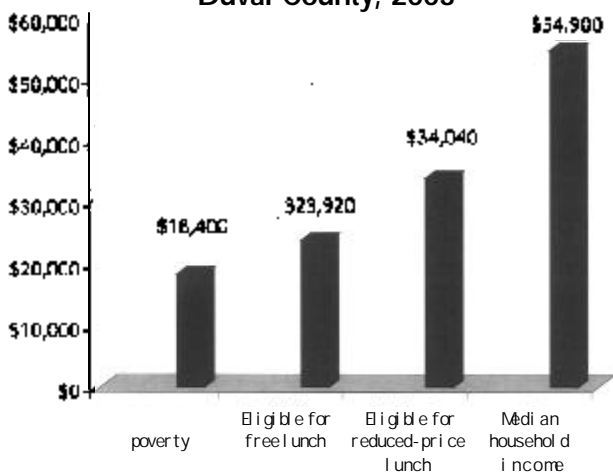
Source: United States Department of Agriculture, http://www.usda.gov; Federal Financial Institutions Examinations Council, http://www.ffiec.gov
For a family of four.

The most accurate number for calculating the percentage of low-income students is at the elementary level rather than higher grade levels. More than half of all elementary students, or 53 percent, participated in the free and reduced-price lunch program in 2002-03.[6] If the percent of elementary level participation is the benchmark, more than half of all DCPS students are in low-income families.

Low-income students are over-represented among low performers. In 2002-03, nearly three-quarters of elementary low performers were also low income.

Duval County Public School Students, by characteristic 2002-03

	Total number of students	Percent of students
All students	125,335	100%
Low income	*66,000	*53%
White	61,078	49%
Black	54,962	44%
Male	63,920	51%
Female	61,414	49%
With a disability	20,053	16%
Limited English	2,506	2%

Source: Florida Department of Education, Florida School Indicators Report, http://info.doe.state.fl.us/; Profiles of Florida School Districts; DCPS, Data Warehouse.
Figures for students living in poverty are estimates based on elementary grades only.

Students in grades 3-10 scoring at Level 1 or 2 on FCAT Reading, by characteristic, 2002-03

	Total number scoring at Level 1 or 2	Percent of total students scoring at Level 1 or 2
All students	37,111	100%
Low income	*26,000	*73%
Black	20,625	56%
White	13,031	35%
With a disability	8,721	24%
Limited English	1,161	3%

Source: Florida Department of Education; Adequate Yearly Progress Reports, http://web.fldoe.org/nclb/; Florida School Indicators Report, http://info.doe.state.fl.us/; 2003 LEA Profile.
Figures for students living in poverty are estimates based on elementary grades only.

Data also show a disproportionate percentage of low performers speak English as a second language or have a disability.

Sixteen percent of the total student population were identified with at least one of more than 40 types of disabilities targeted by the Exceptional Student Education program. Some of these students do not take the FCAT and are assessed with an alternate test. Of the students in grades three through ten who scored at Levels 1 or 2 on FCAT Reading, 24 percent had a disability.

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[6]DCPS, Data Warehouse

Similarly, two percent of the total student population has been identified as in need of services provided by the English as a Second Language program. Of the students in grades three through ten who scored at Levels 1 or 2 on FCAT Reading, three percent were identified as having Limited English Proficiency.

Data also show that a disproportionate percentage of low performers are black. Forty-four percent of the total school population in 2002-03 was black and 56 percent of low performers in grades three through ten was black.

Of the black students who scored at Level 3 and above, equal percentages were from low-income families and from middle and high-income families. However, within the group of white students who scored at Level 3 or above, less than 20 percent were from low-income families.

Percent of students scoring at Level 3 or above, by participation in free or reduced-price lunch programs and by race, DCPS, 2002-03
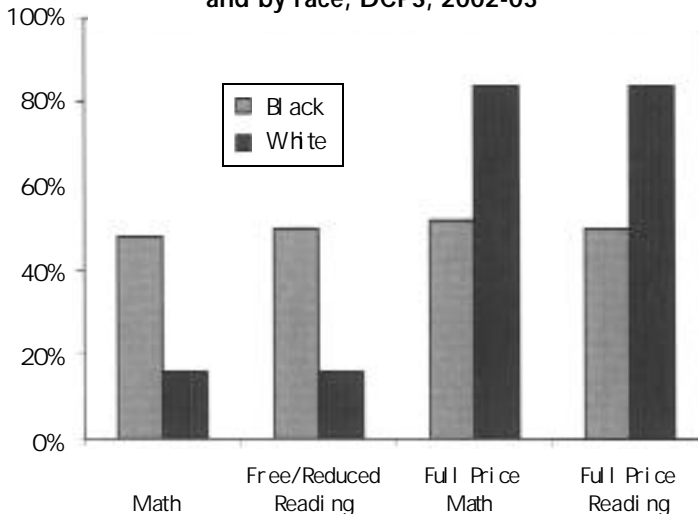
Source: DCPS, Data Warehouse

A resource speaker reminded the study committee that while data describe groups of low-performing students, this description should not be understood as the cause of low performance. Descriptors such as "low income" or "race" do not cause low performance.

The next section discusses multiple barriers to school success.

The following is a story written by Jamie Vollmer, a businessman and public education advocate.

Excerpt from
The Teacher Gives the Businessman a Lesson

I [Mr. Vollmer] stood before an auditorium filled with outraged teachers who were becoming angrier by the minute. I represented a group of business people dedicated to improving public schools. I was an executive at an ice cream company that became famous in the middle 1980s when *People Magazine* chose our blueberry as the "Best Ice Cream in America."

We are told, sir, that you manage a company that makes good ice cream.

I smugly replied, Best ice cream in America, Ma'am.

How nice, she said. Is it rich and smooth?

Sixteen percent butterfat, I crowed.

Premium ingredients? She inquired.

Super premium! Nothing but Triple A. I was on a roll. I never saw the next line coming.

Mr. Vollmer, she said, leaning forward with a wicked eyebrow raised to the sky, when you are standing on your receiving dock and you see an inferior shipment of blueberries arrive, what do you do?

In the silence of that room, I could hear a trap snap. I knew I was dead meat, but I wasn't going to lie. I send them back.

That's right! she barked, and we can never send back our blueberries. We take them big, small, rich, poor, gifted, exceptional, abused, frightened, confident, homeless, rude, and brilliant. We take them ADHD, junior rheumatoid arthritis, and English as their second language. We take them all! Every one! And that, Mr. Vollmer, is why it's

Early child development and learning

The achievement gap begins before children start school. Before birth, a mother's physical and mental health influences the development of her child. After birth, the most important stage of development is between birth and age five, when the brain develops rapidly. Although quality child-care services for children ages 0-5 exist, Jacksonville does not have mechanisms in place to ensure sufficient quality childcare services or that all children have access to them.

Low birth weight babies

A mother's physical and emotional health before, during, and after pregnancy influences her child's ability to develop. As a group, babies that are born prematurely and with low birth weights (less than 5.5 pounds) may not develop the same capacities as their peers. In Jacksonville, 9.6 percent of all newborns are low birth weight.

A 1990 national study published in the *Journal of Pediatrics* found that low birth weight babies were more likely to repeat a grade, fail in school, or be identified as needing special services in school. Similarly, a 2003 study conducted at the University of Florida found that low birth weight was a significant factor affecting children's readiness for kindergarten.

Mothers living in poverty have worse health as compared to other groups of mothers. Their poor health is often related to environmental stresses, including substandard housing, workplace demands, poor nutrition, and lack of healthcare. As a result, more low birth weight babies are born to mothers living in poverty than to those who are not.

In Duval County, a disproportionate number of mothers living in poverty are black. According to the U.S. Census, in 1999, Duval County white women headed 2,768 households with children who were living in poverty. In the same year, black women headed 7,321 households with children who were living in poverty. Comparable numbers for Hispanic and Asian mothers living in poverty are 427 and 151, respectively.[7] In 2002, the rate of low birth weight babies among black mothers was almost double the rate as for white mothers.

Low birth weight babies by race, Duval County, 2002

	Percent of low birth weight babies per 1,000 live births
Black	13.2
Mixed race	8.6
White and Hispanic	7.6

Source: Florida Vital Statistics Annual Report, 2002

While some low birth weight babies have been exposed to illegal substances. Less than 10 babies per 1,000 births in Northeast Florida, or one percent of all babies, were exposed to illegal substances before birth in 2001. Recent advances in medical technology also mean more low birth weight and premature babies are kept alive.

Infants who are premature and had a low birth weight can succeed in school. However, they may need intensive support in their early years of development. Infants living in poverty are less likely to receive this kind of support. Their parents have less access to quality childcare and good nutrition, for example.

What's available

Several community efforts to increase pre-natal care and healthy pregnancies are underway, including Healthy Start and Healthy Families. Their impacts on the achievement gap are not known. However, the rate of low birth weight babies has remained constant since 1999.

Literacy in the home

In Duval County in 2002, 18 percent of all births were to mothers without twelve years of education.[8]

Parents' literacy structures their child's access to language, which is a tool for learning. Printed materials such as magazines and books are more common in homes where parents read. Parents who enjoy reading may frequently read to their children, building early awareness of spoken and written language. Parents with limited literacy skills, on the other hand, may not expose their children to written words as often. Also, their spoken vocabulary will be smaller than that of more literate parents. JCCI's 1999 *Adult Literacy* study found that the functional illiteracy rate in Jacksonville is estimated to be 47 percent. That means 47 percent of Jacksonville adult residents cannot perform reading and mathematics at a 9th grade level.

The study committee found that the size of a child's vocabulary, the foundation for language skills, is correlated with family income. Hart and Risler's study of 42 families found that children of middle-class families learned 1,500 words by the age of three and in comparison, children living in poverty learned approximately 450 words. Another significant difference between the two groups of children was the rate at which they learned new words. Middle-class children learned new words three times faster than children living in poverty.

A 1997 study, *Differences in Print Environment: Children in Beverly Hills, Compton, and Watts*, found that lowest-income homes had, on average, three books while middle-income homes had an average of 199 books.

This major gap in opportunities for learning spoken and written language contributes to the achievement gap. According to resource speakers, brain development patterns emerge in children as young as three years old. From that point on, education

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[7] U.S. Census, Summary File 3, Tables P160B, P160D, P160H, and P160I. American FactFinder, http://factfinder.census.gov
[8] 2003 *Quality of Life Progress Report*, http://www.jcci.org

in school will expand and strengthen all children's ability to learn. However, some children begin their school career already behind others.

What's available

JCCI's 1999 study *Adult Literacy* lists the many local programs dedicated to improving adult literacy. The Jacksonville Children's Commission (JCC), a City agency dedicated to improving the quality of life of Jacksonville's children, began a new program to improve literacy in the home in January 2004. The pilot program works with 400 families who receive financial assistance for childcare. They attend a series of parenting classes that teach the basics of brain development and good parenting. Parents also demonstrate, in their homes, how reading is a part of their child's daily activity. Through this program, JCC encourages parents to expose their children to a variety of educational and cultural experiences. For example, parents show counselors ticket stubs from the Museum of Science and History as well as movie theaters.

In 2002-03, 3,698 adults enrolled in Florida Community College of Jacksonville (FCCJ) courses preparing them for a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) or in courses for non-native speakers of English improving their literacy skills. The DCPS also recognizes the importance of family literacy and operates the Even Start program at three elementary schools. In 2003-04, 119 families improved their literacy through Even Start.

Jacksonville's local public television station, WJCT, reached 1,189 adults and 3,768 children during fiscal year 2003 through its *Ready to Learn* program. The program conducted 79 workshops in low-income neighborhoods. The workshops encourage parents and caregivers to read to their children, watch a limited amount of television with them, and reinforce what is learned through television programs with books and activities.

The Jacksonville Public Library also offers an individualized literacy program for adults through its Center for Adult Learning.

In 2003, 436 adults participated in literacy and English for Speakers of Other Languages classes through the Public Library.

In 2003, the *Learn to Read* program assessed approximately 350 adults who inquired about literacy tutoring. Of those, approximately 250 began tutoring sessions.

Childcare and early learning opportunities

Childcare settings are an entry point at which children's fluency with language can be increased. However, resource speakers said that many childcare services have not been structured in a way to address this learning gap.

A childcare license requires attention to safety and fire hazards, but does not regulate the quality of services provided. In licensed facilities, children learn from teachers who have, at the minimum, 40 hours of training. The number of children not in licensed facilities who lack quality childcare is not known. Faith-based childcare centers are exempt from licensing regulations and the number of children attending unlicensed facilities is unknown as well.

Childcare workers generally earn an hourly wage which amounts to approximately $14,000 a year. Low wages in the childcare industry create high employee turnover and attract workers who may themselves have limited literacy skills.

Childcare centers are changing and some now provide learning opportunities as well. In these, four-year-olds in pre-kindergarten are taught to recognize letters of the alphabet, learn that reading requires a left-to-right movement, and that written words represent speech. The number of licensed and unlicensed childcare centers that use a school readiness curriculum is not known.

Quality childcare for all 4-year olds, Duval County, 2003-04

	Number of children	Percent of total
4-year-olds	11,966	100%
Low-income 4-year-olds	5,519	46%
Low-income 4-year-olds in subsidized childcare	4,137	3.5%
Low-income 4-year-olds not in subsidized childcare	1,382	16%
Annual community cost for part-time childcare subsidy	$2,360 per child	For a total of $13.6 million
Estimated annual cost to expand preschool to all low-income 4-year-olds	$3.9 million	For a total of $15.7 million

Source: Duval County Health Department; Duval County Public Schools; Jacksonville Children's Commission

According to tests conducted with four-year-olds in pre-kindergarten, a school readiness curriculum increases children's ability to recognize letters of the alphabet. In Duval County, five hundred low income four-year-olds who participated in a school readiness curriculum were tested at the beginning of the 2002 school year and then at the end. Sixty-one percent recognized correctly the letters of the alphabet in the fall. The following spring, 75 percent recognized upper and lower case letters.[9]

> **Pre-kindergarten** is for four-year-olds and other children about to enter kindergarten. These school readiness programs are offered within public schools and childcare centers.

In the fall of 2002, Florida voters approved a constitutional amendment establishing free universal pre-kindergarten for all four-year-olds in Florida. The amendment also changes requirements for childcare center licensing. It calls for all licensed childcare centers to provide four-year-olds with a state mandated pre-kindergarten program by 2005.

This amendment did not have funding attached to it, and resource speakers observed that the new requirements for childcare workers will increase their professional requirements and therefore their pay. As a result, the cost of childcare may increase. It is not clear how this will affect low-income families' access to quality childcare.

What's available

The Ready Child Coalition, in existence since 1999, is working to improve the learning experiences of all children in childcare ages 0-5 in Duval County, especially low-income children. The Coalition is one of many similar organizations created statewide from a 1999 mandate in the Florida Legislature.

In 2003, the Jacksonville Children's Commission (JCC), which receives funds from the Ready Child Coalition, subsidized childcare expenses for 9,300 children ages 0-12. The JCC secured 7,200 slots in 754 centers, or 80 percent of all licensed centers in Duval County. These subsidized slots allow low-income children to attend childcare along with children of middle and high-income families at an annual cost of $3,382 per child. The Jacksonville Children's Commission estimates that approximately 3,000 low-income children, or 10 percent of all low-income children, under five years of age in licensed childcare were exposed to early literacy curricula in 2003. That same year, 3,000 children were on JCC's waiting list for childcare subsidies. Due to funding constraints, JCC reports that it will cut back the number of available slots in 2004, serving fewer 9-12 year olds.

In 2003-04, the Jacksonville Urban League served 2,020 primarily low-income three and four-year-olds and their families through its Head Start program at an average annual cost of $6,577. The program operates in 28 locations, most of which are in Jacksonville's urban areas.

DCPS operated an Early Intervention program for 725 children who were in foster care or living in poverty in 2003-04. A federally-funded program provided pre-kindergarten services for an additional 198 four-year olds from low-income families that same year.

In 2001, the Professional Development Consortium, a contracted consultant to the Ready Child Coalition, began training childcare workers in school readiness curricula. This was the first community-wide effort to train them in preparing children for kindergarten. In 2003, 124 childcare centers, or 13 percent of the total number of licensed centers in Duval County, were using a school-readiness curriculum because of the Consortium's efforts.

In 2004, Mayor Peyton announced plans to increase literacy skills among 4-year-olds. The City of Jacksonville will spend $7 million and the Ready Child Coalition another $3 million. The initiative includes:

- sending instructors to 200 childcare centers to train providers in early literacy activities;

- six pilot childcare sites for research into early literacy barriers; and

- the Mayor's Book Club which will provide a book each month to participating 4-year-olds.

As a result of the Mayor's initiative, the instructors providing literacy training in childcare centers will more than double in 2004-05.

Resource speakers said that while efforts are being made, currently Jacksonville is not effectively preparing all children under the age of five for school. More than 60 percent of children in Duval County enter school "not yet" ready or "in process" of getting ready for kindergarten-level language tasks, according to the 2003 School Readiness Uniform Screening System.

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[9]The Duval County Professional Development Consortium, 2002-03 Report

Some reasons why students fall behind and available assistance

The obstacles to learning that exist before entering school do not go away once children enter school. Some low performers experience even more learning problems as they progress from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Various factors contribute to students' low performance, including parents' health, mental health, and educational level; family stability; and quality of classroom instruction. While many students receive assistance, the success of these efforts is difficult to determine. This section lists some of the assistance available to low-performing students, and the costs, but does not list or evaluate all assistance.

Critical grade transitions

In third, sixth, and ninth grades, school performance expectations of students increase significantly, which poses a problem for many low-performing students. In comparison to other students, those in third, sixth and ninth grades are retained more frequently.

Third grade

Educators in Florida expect children will read by third grade. Until that time, children are recognizing letters and sounds and learning how to read. In 2003, the State of Florida began requiring all 3rd graders to score at Level 2 on FCAT Reading for promotion to fourth grade. That year, in Duval County, 18 percent of 3rd graders scored at Level 1.[10]

Of those who failed to meet the State's expectations for reading, 224 attended summer reading programs and successfully passed the test. However, a remaining 1,243 were not promoted to 4th grade.[11] In 2002-03, 12 percent of Duval County 3rd graders were retained compared with 14 percent of 3rd graders statewide.[12]

Research shows that early academic failure damages young children more than failure occurring later in school. The negative effects may stay with them for the rest of their academic careers.

What's available

In 2003, DCPS was awarded funds from the federal government to provide intensive reading instruction to students performing below grade level in kindergarten through third grade. The initiative, called Reading First, required that five percent of the grant award was spent on books for students to read, while the remaining funds were spent on coaches for elementary teachers and outreach to parents. Although 30 schools were identified as needing intensive reading assistance programs, 21 schools were funded. In each of these 21 schools, teachers were trained in literacy methods that have been approved by the State of Florida. No measures of the program's effectiveness were provided.

In June 2003, DCPS and the Florida Department of Education offered a workshop to all parents of third graders, "Families Building Better Readers Parent Workshop." One hundred families attended the evening event, which emphasized how parents can help their third graders become better readers.

In response to stricter promotion requirements for third graders, many community volunteers work with K-3 students. For example, the Beaches Resource Center, supported by the Full Service Schools program, awarded $2,500 to a teacher who matched fourth graders with younger students who struggle with reading. Also, nine high-performing high school students in Duval County have been matched with low-performing third graders in 2003-04. The program, Teen Trendsetters, operates statewide. So far, these programs reach relatively few students and their effectiveness is not known.

In elementary schools, Students Taking Academic Responsibility (STAR) reached 565 children, or approximately 32 percent of all elementary students who had been held back a grade in the fall of 2002. STAR students remain in a regular classroom and receive additional academic assistance outside the classroom as well as after school and in the summer. This means that a little more than a third of the students held back a year in elementary school received assistance. According to DCPS, 72 percent of STAR elementary school participants improved their attendance record and 90 percent of participants were promoted to the next grade.

DCPS also operates the Extended Day Enrichment Program. This program serves elementary students in 83 out of 106 schools. The students spend an hour and a half before school starts and three hours after school working on homework and engaging in drama, music, arts, and sports. The program charges parents $34 per week or approximately $880 for an academic year. The program is entirely supported by parents' fees.

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[10]Florida Department of Education, http://fcat.fldoe.org/search/
[11]"Summer Did Little to Fix Grade 3 Reading," *The Florida Times-Union*, 8/18/03
[12]Florida Department of Education, "Number of Students Not Promoted to the Next Higher Grade," Report 62.306

Sixth grade

Resource speakers said that the 6th grade is a stumbling block for many low-performing students. For the first time, they have more than one teacher and they change classes. Sixth grade is the first year in which students must maintain a 2.0 grade point average, or C average, to be promoted.

For many low performers, these changes are overwhelming. In 2002-03, 12 percent of sixth graders, or 1,335, were not promoted. In comparison, three percent of fifth graders, or 270, were not promoted that same year.[13] In Duval County, more than half of sixth graders scored at Levels 1 or 2 on the FCAT Reading and Math tests in 2004.

What's available

In middle school, the LEAP Forward program targets students who have been held back and are at-risk for dropping out. In 2002-03, the program reached 49 students at Jefferson Davis Middle School, which is two percent of the middle school students district wide who were held back in 2001-02. This computer-based program allows students to progress at their own pace. Ninety-two percent of participants were promoted to the next grade in 2003.

Ninth grade

Ninth grade is also a challenge because it is the first year of high school. While in middle school, students remained in a group as they changed classes. In their new high school, they often attend classes with students of different ages.

In 2004, 71 percent of all ninth graders scored below Level 3 on the FCAT reading test in Duval County. The comparable statewide figure is 68 percent.

In addition to the large portion of students who fail to score at least Level 3 on the FCAT, ninth graders are held back more frequently. In 2003, at least twenty-six percent of ninth graders failed a course.[14] Because they failed a course, they must attend a ninth grade homeroom the following year. They repeat the failed course while taking other 10th grade courses.

Black male students are more frequently retained in ninth grade than white male students. In 2003, nearly 25 percent of white males were retained. In comparison, 42 percent of black males were retained.[15]

Students retained in any grade level frequently lose self-esteem and interest in academics. Many low performing students do not learn how to gain satisfaction from academic challenges. According to resource speakers, high-performing students learn to succeed within the school's culture by finding activities through which their self-esteem grows. This is called the 'school game.' Students who cannot play the 'school game' feel academic work is meaningless. They look for satisfaction and success outside of academics. For many low performers, being held back a grade is proof that they cannot play the 'school game', which influences their academic expectations of themselves.

What's available

The LEAP Forward program also targets high school students. Five hundred ninety-two, or eight percent of all high school students held back a grade in 2001-02, participated the following year. Fifty-eight percent of participants, or 343 students, were promoted to the next grade level.

Low-income life

The study committee did not find a single 'smoking gun' characteristic that prevents school success. Although a disproportionate number of low performers are black, skin color is not an obstacle to earning an education. Similarly, a disproportionate number of low performers are living in poverty or are from a low-income family. And yet family income does not, in itself, predict school success.

Research suggests that the conditions in which students live influence their school performance. Much research in psychology, including a 2003 study published in *Psychological Science*, supports the idea that environmental factors shape intelligence, and by extension, student performance. The study found that intelligence, as measured by Intelligence Quotient (IQ), is influenced by environment; it is determined less by genes than was once thought. The study also found that environment has a more significant influence on IQ in low-income children that among high-income children. These findings suggest that it is possible to raise low-income students' academic performance by improving their learning environments, in school and at home.

Bill Mason

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[13]Florida Department of Education, "Number of Students Not Promoted to the Next Higher Grade," Report 62.306
[14]Florida Department of Education, "Number of Students Not Promoted to the Next Higher Grade," Report 62.306
[15]DCPS, Data Warehouse

Several resource speakers described low-income students' learning environments. Many do not have access to the same learning activities as their middle-class classmates because their parents cannot afford year-round sports, tutoring, Scouts, music lessons, and other programs.

Also, many low-income students live in neighborhoods that are unsafe in comparison to middle-class suburbia. While not all low-income students come from neighborhoods that are unsafe, many do. They may witness violence more often than their middle class classmates, for example. In unsafe neighborhoods, illicit activity is more frequent, which also affects low-income students. Their parents are more likely to be incarcerated and they are more likely to land in foster care as a result. While many low-income students overcome these obstacles, a large number do not. They are more likely to become marginalized from middle-class society.

According to the federal government's General Accounting Office, students living in poverty change schools at triple the rate of high-income families.[16] Low-income families, and especially those who rent, often move when they do not have money to pay their rent or to take care of their day-to-day needs. They may move within Duval County to another home, or live with a relative for a period of time and then move to another location.

The state calculated a mobility rate for each school district until 2000. That year, the mobility rates were 36 percent for high schools, 40 percent for middle schools, and 39 percent for elementary schools. Since 2001, the state calculates a stability rate, which was 92 percent for 2002-03.[17] The mobility rate gave a picture of the frequency at which students move in and out of schools. The stability rate, on the other hand, gives a picture of how many students were enrolled in the same school in October and February.

> **Mobility** was calculated by dividing the total number of new entries, reentries, and withdrawals during the 180-day school year by the total number of students who were enrolled at the start of school. Starting in 2001, the State of Florida replaced its mobility indicator with a new measure, the stability rate. The stability rate is the percentage of students who were present in both October and February.

Mobility especially affects younger students, for whom close identification with one teacher is an important motivation to learn. Also, teachers develop a picture of a student's strengths and weaknesses over time. Teachers work best when this picture is filled in with information about the student's family, a set of records including previous teachers' observations, as well as test scores. Students who move frequently may be in a classroom for weeks before their test scores and evaluations catch up with them.

One resource speaker explained how low-income students might appear to middle-class teachers. She said that schools are based on middle-class norms, especially in the area of language and academic expectations. Middle-class teachers develop relationships with low-income students and through these relationships they impart the expectations, language and knowledge needed to hold a middle-class job and live a middle-class life. However, the teacher's role, especially a teacher who does not live in the same neighborhood as her students, may conflict with parents' and students' expectations.

For example, many low-income neighborhoods are not as safe as middle-class neighborhoods, so norms for maintaining personal safety differ. The resource speaker explained how she found herself having contentious discussions with parents concerning their children fighting in school. Some low-income parents instructed their sons to fight back, while the teacher, from the middle-class, objected to this. Her conversations with parents followed a pattern.

> *Teacher*: Your child is fighting and he needs to stop it.
> *Parent***:** I've told him to fight back when somebody starts something.
> *Teacher*: Well, I can't have that kind of behavior in my classroom.
> *Parent*: Well, I told him to fight back.

Once she realized that she needed to respect the rules for living in the school's neighborhood, the teacher was able to re-direct the conversations. Her conversations were more successful:

> *Teacher*: Do you fight or use profanity when you're at work?
> *Parent*: No.
> *Teacher*: My job is to make your child ready to enter the work world and when he is on my time, he needs to learn not to fight. Please help me enforce this rule of not fighting on school time.
> *Parent*: Okay, I can do that.

For many teachers, life in a low-income neighborhood appears foreign, and many low-income parents experience confusion, shame, and mistaken communication in trying to understand their child's education. This situation compromises parent involvement and adults' shared expectations for academic performance.

Low performers need adults to create clear goals for classroom behavior, homework, and grades. Communication of these goals depends on parents and teachers working together and sharing the same expectations of students. Several resource speakers observed that in low-income neighborhoods parental involvement is often lacking and parents and teachers have fewer opportunities to work together to improve students' performance. A lack of parental involvement in school, in turn, compromises students' identification with academic excellence.

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[16]"Parsing the Achievement Gap: Baselines for Tracking Progress," Educational Testing Service, http://www.ets.org/research/pic
[17]Florida Department of Education, http://info.doe.state.fl.us/fsir/

What's available

Even though schools cannot define a neighborhood, educators and administrators try to remove the environmental barriers to learning, including mobility, neighborhood violence, and lack of after-school activities. DCPS, in partnership with community social service agencies, offers academic and social enhancement programs in schools that have a high percentage of low-income students. The 2003-04 Human Services Council's Inventory of School Programs reports that 24 social service programs operate in approximately 59 elementary schools, 25 middle schools, and 12 high schools, or 64 percent of the total number of schools. While not all of these programs address academic performance, many of them address the needs of low-performers. The community-based programs are concentrated in elementary schools and are less frequent in high schools.

An example of an after-school program targeted to low-income students is TEAM UP. The Jacksonville Children's Commission operates the TEAM UP program at 14 elementary, 26 middle, and two high schools, or 28 percent of all schools. Students spend two to three hours after school receiving assistance with homework, participating in social and cultural activities, and engaging in physical exercise such as karate. A snack and dinner are also provided. The Jacksonville Children's Commission subsidizes the TEAM UP program, which does not charge parents.

The Full Service Schools program reaches into neighborhoods and provides parents, teachers, social workers, and concerned citizens with a structure for deciding how to meet the social service needs of their children. Teachers and school counselors at six high schools (out of 18) and all the middle and elementary schools that feed into each, identify students facing non-academic barriers to learning. A caseworker determines the students' needs and refers them for services. More than 20 nonprofit social service agencies "wrap" services around students. These services include rental and utility assistance, mentoring, tutoring, after-school programming, parent education, and child abuse prevention. The goals of the program include increased attendance and decreased discipline referrals.

In 2003-04, the Full Service Schools program reached 8,976 students, of which approximately 12 percent, or 1,077, received services more than once. Subtracting these duplicates, the program reached approximately 7,899, or approximately six percent of the total Duval County student population and 22 percent of the targeted schools' population. The program's total cost was $1.5 million at $170 per child.

Of the $1.5 million budget, $687,417 is allocated to six neighborhood-based Oversight Committees. Each Oversight Committee is made up of parents, teachers, social workers, and concerned citizens who decide how to meet the social service needs of their children. They award small grants to service providers who can best meet the needs of the low performers in that neighborhood.

Select programs available in DCPS and their costs per child, 2003-04

	Percent of DCPS students participating	Annual community cost per child
TEAM UP	5%	$796-$1,100
Extended Day Enrichment	7%	N/A
Full Service Schools	6%	$170
Can-Do Schools	2%	$328

Source: Jacksonville Children's Commission; DCPS; United Way of Northeast Florida

Many low-income students face barriers to learning besides those in their neighborhood. Teachers' perceptions may affect their performance as well as their identification with academic excellence. In 2003, DCPS addressed the need for greater awareness of the middle-class teachers' role in schools located in low-income neighborhoods. Aha! Process, Inc. conducted professional development workshops on poverty and middle-class values for DCPS teachers and teachers-in-training at the University of North Florida. It is not clear how these workshops fit into an overall strategy for building bridges between middle-class teachers and low-income families, but the school system is taking steps to address this issue.

Adult role models

Working parents of all income levels frequently leave older children to take care of younger children in the afternoon and evening. Lack of adult supervision contributes to the achievement gap because adults teach skills such as setting and achieving goals, overcoming setbacks, and dealing with strong emotions. Many low performers lack a consistent relationship with a caring adult who guides them through difficulties.

Several resource speakers said that one of the most important factors for improving students' low academic performance is access to a positive role model, someone who teaches the student how to succeed.

What's available

A great deal of mentoring occurs through Boy and Girl Scouts, religious activities, sports teams, character-building organizations, and parents who take another parent's child 'under their wing.' More formal types of mentoring occur in one-day intensive events, such as Take Your Daughter to Work Day. Also, sororities and fraternities plan activities with groups of children from a specific neighborhood.

> **Mentoring** involves an adult who guides and assists a younger person through an informal relationship based on a mutual goal, interest, or activity. These relationships are formalized through community programs that match an adult with a child.

One of the largest providers of mentoring services is Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Florida. Some mentors meet with children in school and others meet with children outside of school, in church and community activities. In 2002-03, 359 students in DCPS and 298 children in community organizations were matched with a mentor. The adult makes a commitment of at least one year of contact with his or her child.

In 2003, Take Stock in Children matched an additional 361 Duval County students with a mentor. These low-income students pledge to stay away from drugs and crime and focus on their schoolwork. Students who stay with the program are provided college tuition at a Florida public university or vocational training.

Kesler Mentoring Connection matches adults with children for 25 local agencies, including Big Brothers Big Sisters and Take Stock in Children. In 2002, 1,000 adults signed up for an orientation session on mentoring and 60 percent followed through. In 2004, at least 650 children were on waiting lists for a mentor.

Besides those listed here, several smaller programs provide mentoring services. Resource speakers estimated that in 2003-04, 2,200 children in Duval County had a mentor. However, if one assumes that most low-performing children could benefit from a relationship with an adult mentor, then six percent of the number of students who might need a mentor had one in 2003-04.

Parental involvement

Parents' involvement can be placed on a continuum. On one end are parents who violate the law requiring school attendance. In Duval County each year, 10-20 parents are arrested for failing to ensure their elementary-aged student attends school consistently. On the other end of the continuum are parents who attend all meetings with teachers, join the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), and volunteer for class field trips and school events.

The study committee found that parent involvement has a significant influence on a school's culture, especially the overall discipline and orderliness in a school. Resource speakers said that teachers and administrators need parents' support to maintain student discipline.

Two principals, one in Texas and the other in Oklahoma, observed that a pivotal point in improving their school's academic culture was when parents became involved in school decisions. Both principals referred to Second Cup meetings. The principals invited parents to stay for a second cup of coffee after they brought their children in the morning. At one school, parents interacted in a free-form way, voicing concerns, and slowly realizing that the administration was, in fact, listening to them. As the parents began to trust the administration and faculty more readily, they became more involved. These meetings did not cost the school more than a cup of coffee for several parents.

One Jacksonville principal observed that as students grow older, they need even more motivation to learn and excel and that parents who are involved in their child's school often demand the best of the school and their children. However, parents' involvement, in general, drops off as their children enter middle and high school.

When parents communicate frequently and productively with teachers, they become more involved in their child's education. However, teachers are not sufficiently trained to work with parents, so many must learn from experience how to best communicate with parents.

What's available

In 1999, DCPS awarded a Family Friendly Schools designation to schools that met standards for parent and community involvement. The initiative was funded through a one-year state grant, and continuation funding was not available.

In 2003-04, 23 DCPS schools, or 15 percent of the total number of schools, earned the Five Star Award. This award is designed by the Florida Department of Education and includes many criteria similar to the Family Friendly Award. The number of schools awarded the Five Star has held steady since 1999. No incentives exist for a school to earn this award aside from School Board and Florida Department of Education recognition.

The **Jacksonville Housing Authority** has increased the number of parents involved in their child's education. In 2003, 1,072 parents receiving housing assistance pledged to pay close attention to report cards, the number of books their children read, and attendance. Another program, the David and Ann Hicks Prep Club, has assisted more than 25 low-income students attending the University of North Florida. Also, 88 parents attended a four-month workshop on doing homework with children, attending parent-teacher conferences, and getting involved in Parent-Teacher Associations.

Teacher quality

Teachers can significantly improve student performance. Their most challenging jobs are with low performers who have to be brought up to grade level. Compensation for teachers does not reward them for this challenging work. Resource speakers said that it is difficult to keep teachers in schools that have a large percentage of low performers, further reinforcing the achievement gap.

New teachers frequently begin their career in classrooms whose students face the most obstacles to learning. Duval County School Board's contract with Duval Teachers United allow new teachers to transfer out of their first position after two years and nine months. This means the same students who most urgently need a consistent, positive relationship with a teacher are most likely to experience the highest teacher turnover. Of new teachers hired each year, DCPS loses 16 percent within four years.[18]

Professional development through further education can provide veteran teachers with new skills. In 2003-04, thirty-four percent of DCPS teachers held a master's degree.[19] In schools where higher percentages of teachers hold a master's degree, fewer students score at Levels 1 and 2 on the FCAT.

Administrators responsible for teacher quality can take action to ensure their faculty meets expectations. New teachers, for example, work under a 97-day probationary period. The teacher can be terminated without cause within the 97-day period. With veteran teachers, administrators must document low performance over two consecutive years. Between 2000-01 and 2003-04, 290 new and veteran teachers have been removed due to low performance.[20]

During the past five years, fewer students have chosen to earn a B.A. in Education at UNF. In 1999, 1,709 students were enrolled in UNF's College of Education and Human Services. In 2003, 1,567 were enrolled, an eight percent decrease. A resource speaker suggested that this is because teachers' salaries do not support a middle-class lifestyle. Also, other career choices that do support a middle-class lifestyle are readily available, especially for women and minorities, who, in the past, did a lot of teaching in public schools.

As reported in Phase One of this study, teacher salaries remain below other professions requiring a college degree. Starting salary for teachers is an obstacle to recruitment. In 2002-03, a college graduate with no experience teaching started at $30,000. In comparison, the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce reports that an entry-level financial analyst earns $35,539 and a customer service supervisor, $40,638.

Salary is also an obstacle to retaining teachers for the long-term. In 2002-03, a teacher who earns a master's degree can expect an initial annual salary increase between $1,150 and $3,825. In Duval County, teachers with a master's degree earned an average of $45,836. In contrast, a Human Resources Manager earned an average of $60,419.
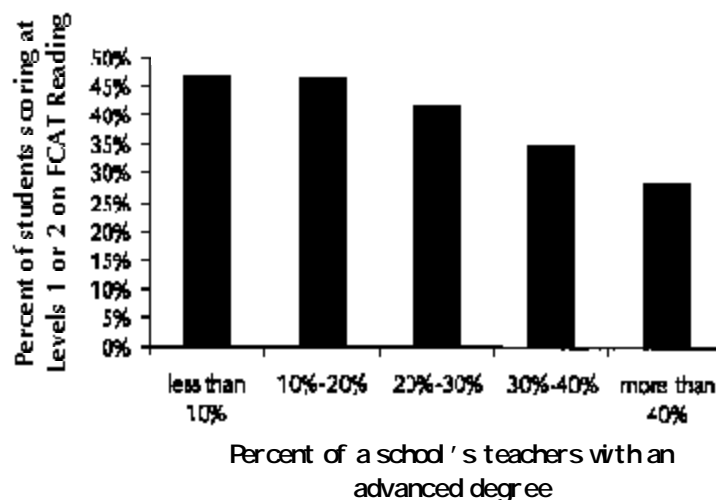
Another consequence of a relatively low teacher salary is that DCPS cannot always find enough qualified math, science, and exceptional education teachers. The Duval County School Board's contract with Duval Teachers United does not allow math and science teachers to be paid more than other teachers.

Teacher mobility and student outcomes, Duval County Elementary Schools, 2002-03
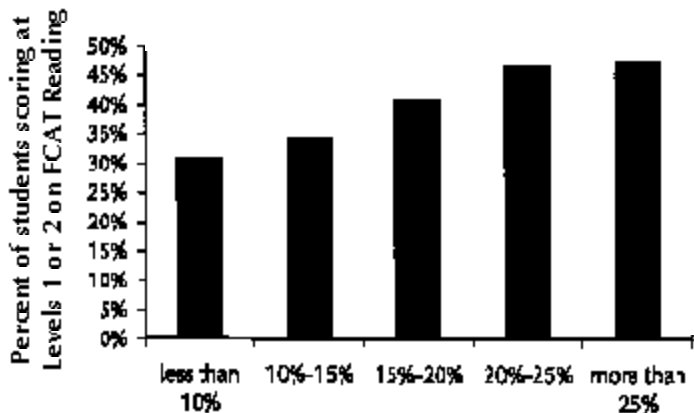
Source: School Public Accountability Reports, http://www.educationcentral.org; Florida School Indicators Report, http://info.doe.state.fl.us/fsir

Teacher preparation and student outcomes, Duval County Elementary Schools, 2002-03

Percent of a school's teachers with an advanced degree

Source: Florida School Indicators Report, http://info.doe.state.fl.us/fsir

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[18]DCPS, Human Resources Support Services
[19]DCPS, Public Relations Office
[20]DCPS, Public Relations Office

What's available

In 2002, Duval Teachers United, DCPS, and business leaders established Creating Opportunities that Result in Excellence (CORE) (*see p. 23 of Phase One*). The teachers and administrators agree to teach in a CORE school for four years. If students' performance improves, then teachers and administrators earn $2,500 that year. This financial incentive is meant to stabilize faculty at low-performing schools. Duval Teachers United, which brought the program to Duval County, reports that teaching faculty has stabilized at the five elementary schools in the program. Resource speakers said that school-wide reform takes time and that it is too early to measure the impact of the CORE program. However, of the five schools in the CORE program, two have seen third-grade FCAT Reading score gains and one school has made gains in third-grade FCAT Math in the two years since the program started.

The University of North Florida partners with DCPS in three challenged elementary schools, Sallye B. Mathis Elementary, West Jacksonville Elementary, and Woodland Acres Elementary. At each of these schools, approximately 20-24 teachers-in-training annually work with a university professor inside and outside classrooms. The program provides the schools with additional teaching resources (the teachers-in-training and their supervisors). One of the goals of the program is to ensure the success of new teachers assigned to schools with a majority of low performers.

The Schultz Center for Teaching and Leadership, a nonprofit agency providing teacher training and leadership development, opened in 2002. The staff of The Schultz Center offers services to teachers and principals across Northeast Florida. From February 2002 to March 2004, the Center has provided trainings and workshops to 25,000 participants, suggesting that DCPS employees participate in several different trainings during the year. Workshops cover topics such as elementary literacy, leadership, school guidance, and standards-based teaching.

School leadership

Phase One of this study found that "[in] Duval County, principals are the executive officers of their individual schools." As the leader of the school, the principal plays a significant role in defining the culture of the school. The principal and other administrators build the school's relationship with parents and surrounding neighborhood. The principal also defines how much effort and how many resources are targeted to the school's low performers. As with teachers, school principal effectiveness varies. Between 2000-01 and 2003-04, two principals have been removed for ineffective administration.

What's available

The Partnership to Advance School Success (PASS) program operates statewide in 32 schools. Nearly a quarter, or seven schools, are located in Duval County. An additional elementary school in Duval County has already graduated out of the program. The PASS program matches school principals with local business executives to assist with growth of administrative and executive skills.

The business also makes a $75,000 financial commitment to improving the school over three years. The State of Florida matches this amount, so the total amount available for improvements is $150,000. Schools that earned a D through the state's school grading system are eligible for the program. They are identified as potential partners when principals are newly hired because potential for reform is greatest at that point in time.

Mental health

Children's mental health can be influenced by their physical health as well as their parents' or guardians' mental health. For example, when parents are depressed, an infant may not be stimulated or nurtured to develop the same emotional capacities of their peers.

Teachers, guidance counselors, principals, and physicians who refer students for mental health screening often do so because they observe the following behaviors which interfere with learning:

- inability to stay on task;
- poor social skills;
- anger;
- withdrawal;
- poor short-term memory; and
- regression to earlier developmental stages.

Learning is a social process involving relationships with authority figures, following instructions, and working with others. When behavior problems get in the way of learning, students struggle to keep up with their peers.

It is not known how many children are in treatment for emotional or behavioral disorders through private services. However, since most health insurance does not provide mental health services, many children do not have access to counselors and psychiatrists through their parents' health insurance. Their parents have to pay out-of-pocket for the service, which many cannot afford.

What's available

The Exceptional Student Education program identifies students who are emotionally handicapped and severely emotionally disturbed and provides services that address their emotional disorders. In 2003-04, 1,713 students, or 1.3 percent of the entire school population, were identified as either Emotionally Handicapped or Severely Emotionally Disturbed.

For some children whose families lack financial resources for mental health services, the Full Service Schools program provides access to counselors and psychiatrists. Full Service Schools contracts with mental health providers through the Jacksonville Children's Commission. These school-based mental health services served approximately 1,600 students in 2002-03. Waiting lists at some of the Full Service Schools sites are at times 25-30 students. In 2002-03, the Full Service Schools program's expenditure for mental health services per student was approximately $56. Data showing improvements in student behavior were not available.

The Jacksonville Children's Commission reaches 2,700 students in six low-income elementary schools through its Can Do Schools program. The primary intervention students receive is mental health counseling. In 2002, the Can Do Schools program's expenditures per student were $329. Between 1998-99 and 2002-03, three of the six elementary schools saw a reduction in the number of out-of-school suspensions, while the other three saw an increase. During the same years, the number of violations of the Student Code of Conduct dropped in five schools and increased in one.

The Duval County Health Department recently hired a child psychiatrist who diagnoses and treats kindergartners and first graders who receive healthcare at Duval County Health Department clinics. The largest of these children's public health clinics has a waiting list that is three months long for an appointment with the psychiatrist. While most appointments made at that clinic have a no-show rate of 30 percent, appointments for the psychiatrist have a no-show rate of 10 percent.

Community expectations

Performance standards and requirements set by the State of Florida set official academic expectations. Unofficial expectations, as communicated by teachers, parents, and peers, also shape student performance. In some cases, unofficial expectations are based on biases and misperceptions of students' abilities.

Academic standards and expectations

Schools in Florida are part of a massive, nation-wide educational reform movement to standardize the delivery of educational services. Since the early 1990's, DCPS has been implementing academic standards shared by all Florida public schools. In 1996, Florida enacted its Sunshine State Standards and created the FCAT. Pages 16-17 of Phase One detail how this reform movement has changed DCPS schools.

Briefly, the shift toward standards-based instruction holds all teachers accountable for the progress of each student. Teachers are being required to monitor carefully which skills their students have learned and which they have not, and then are expected to work one-on-one with those who have not yet met grade-level standards. Data are not yet available on the effectiveness of teachers' individual plans to improve students' test scores.

The percentage of students scoring at Level 3 on or higher FCAT Reading has increased. In 1998, approximately 50 percent of all 4th graders who were not Limited English Proficient and not in the Exceptional Student Education program scored at Level 3 or above. In 2003, 60 percent of all students, including those in special programs scored at the same level. Among 10th graders, a lower percentage score at Level 3 and above.

FCAT Reading scores
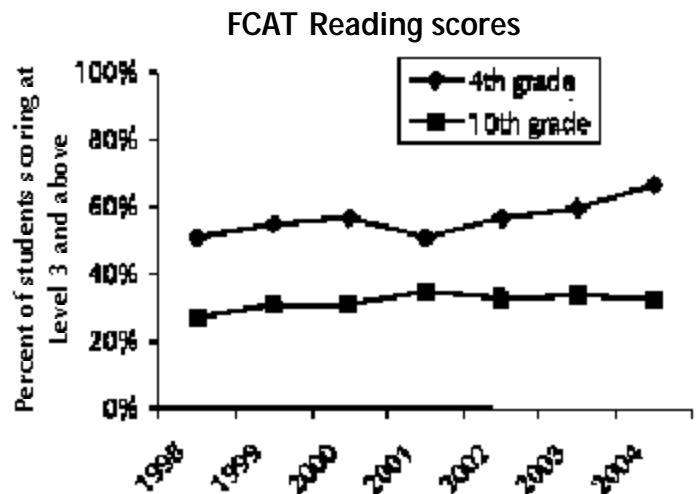
Source: DCPS, Data Warehouse

Math test scores show an even greater increase over the five-year period between 1988 and 2003.

FCAT Math scores
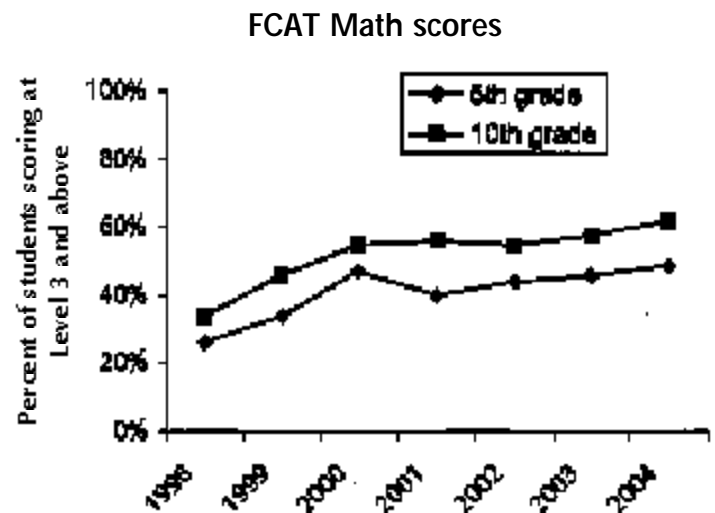
Source: DCPS, Data Warehouse

What's available

'Safety net' programs are available to catch those students who have fallen below grade level in math and reading. Examples include teaching coaches for teachers, ninety-minute blocks of reading every day, the Reading Recovery program in elementary schools, and programs for low performers in middle and high schools.

The safety net programs are funded through Supplemental Academic Instruction funds. The amount allocated is determined according to a formula based on the number of students retained the previous year and the number of students who scored at Level 1 on the FCAT. Many schools use the funding for tutoring before, during, and after school, including Saturdays and holidays.

In 2003-04, $3.8 million in Supplemental Academic Instruction funds were distributed among DCPS schools. The previous academic year, 19,643 DCPS students scored at Level 1 in Reading. Calculating for these low-performers, the total amount of funds allocated per student in 2003-04 was $191.

A Florida statute requires that elementary and middle school students who score at Level 1 must receive remediation and that an Academic Improvement Plan must be drawn up for each student. Policies and funding target students who score at Level 1; however, the programs also reach students who scored at Level 2. For example, in middle school, over half of all students were enrolled in a language arts remediation class in 2003-04. Remediation is less frequent in high school, where 63 percent of all ninth and tenth graders scored at Levels 1 and 2 on FCAT Reading. Only 17 percent of 9th and 10th graders were taking a reading remediation course.

FCAT scores show that extra help for low-performers in elementary schools has worked. In contrast, middle and high school students have not been offered the same programs, and their FCAT scores have not increased at the same rate. (*See FCAT scores on p.5*)

The State of Florida's Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability conducted an audit of instructional services in DCPS in 2002-03. The audit found that DCPS uses all of Florida's recommended best practices in the Educational Delivery Services section, and that administrators use data to guide decisions about instruction. The report also identified problems in student achievement and concluded that steps are being taken to address these problems.

FCAT requirements

All students in Florida must earn a scale score of 300 (about a Level 2.5) on the 10th grade FCAT Reading and Math tests in order to graduate. This means students must read and perform math to a level beyond 9th grade but not quite 10th grade in order to graduate from public school. If a student fails the FCAT in 10th grade, he or she may be promoted and has 5 more chances to pass the test before graduation.

After struggling through school for ten years, many low performers stop attending school altogether. In 2002-03, a total of 945 students, approximately four percent of students who were in 9th and 10th grade, were dropped from the school rolls because they were no longer required to attend and had excessive absences.[21] They may have moved to another district, earned a GED, or decided not to finish.

In 2003, 553 seniors had not passed either the FCAT Math or Reading tests before summer. Many took the test again that summer and passed. However, in August 2003, 427, or 6 percent of all seniors had not graduated, many of them because they did not pass the FCAT. [22]

What's available

DCPS operates a program targeting students who are at risk of dropping out, the Graduation Initiative. Another program, Accelerated Learning Centers, assists students who have already dropped out and are still school age. They work on a self-paced program through computer-aided instruction in order to earn high school credits.

Communities-in-Schools, a nonprofit agency, operates several programs aimed at keeping students in school and improving academic performance. In 2003, Communities-in-Schools provided case management services for 460 high school students at risk for dropping out of two high schools.

Jacksonville's PACE Center for Girls is an alternative school for girls who referred by the juvenile justice system, school staff, parents, and community agencies. Eighty girls ages 13-18 attend small classes, and work with a social worker. The majority are enrolled for one academic year and return to public school with better skills for playing 'the school game.' Ninety-nine percent of the girls enrolled in 2002-03 increased their academic performance while at PACE.

Teachers' expectations

Schools communicate expectations of students through teachers' direct feedback on work completed, curriculum, and requirements for promotion and graduation. As with teacher quality, courses are not all the same. For some students, courses are more rigorous and they are prepared for college by the end of high school. For others, who may earn similar grades, courses are less challenging and do not prepare them for college work.

In all Duval County high schools, gaps exist between white, black, Hispanic, and Asian students when it comes to taking Honors and AP (AP) courses. In 2002-03, fifty-two percent of Asian Duval County high school students took Honors and AP courses. The comparable percentages for whites, blacks, and Hispanics are 43 percent, 21 percent, and 34 percent, respectively. A resource speaker confirmed that black students are underrepresented in AP courses at the national level as well.

When black students have fewer expectations made of them, it has been called "the soft bigotry of low expectations."

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[21]DCPS, Data Warehouse
[22]DCPS, Data Warehouse

Percent of high school students enrolled in Honors or Advanced Placement courses, by race, 2003-04
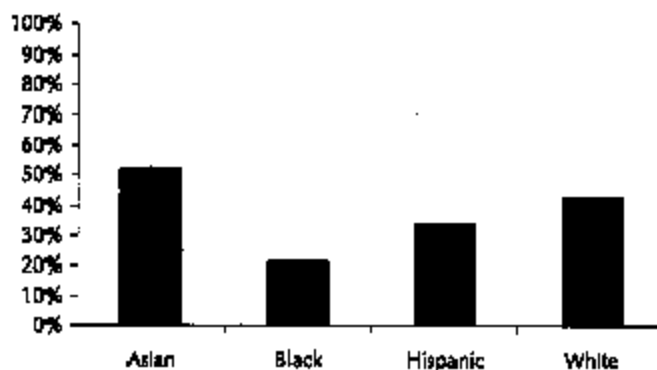
Source: Duval County Public Schools

For example, Matthew Gilbert Middle and Jean Ribault Middle, predominantly black schools, did not offer Honors courses in 2003-04. In 2002-03, 31 students at Matthew Gilbert and 24 students Jean Ribault scored at Levels 4 or 5 on either Math or Reading FCAT, which would have qualified them for Honors courses at other schools.

According to *The Florida Times-Union*, in the fall of 2003, four high schools, Andrew Jackson, Englewood, Raines, and Peterson Academies of Technology, did not offer AP courses. In comparison, in a college preparatory school, such as Stanton and Paxon, many seniors take four AP courses.

Until 2003-04, students were placed in the courses at parents' request and when teachers and counselors noticed a student's high performance. According to new policy, all students who score at Levels 4 and 5 in Reading or Math will be placed in an Honors or AP course. Students scoring at Level 3 and maintaining an A/B average will have the option of taking Honors. In the 2004-05 school year, all middle and high schools will offer Honors and Advanced Placement courses.

Negative peer influence

While in elementary school, low performing students might work hard to please a teacher, but in middle and high school they might drop this behavior. Resource speakers agreed that in middle school, peers sometimes become a negative influence. When motivation to excel in school is perceived as "uncool," students place more time and effort in other activities rather than studying. This shift in middle school attitudes is challenging; however, good teachers and other adult role models can still influence students' behaviors.

Parents' expectations

Children work to meet their parents' expectations. However, parents' expectations vary widely. *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning* cites a study of parent expectations and their effects on student performance. The study found that students work within their parents' 'trouble threshold'. The authors of *No Excuses* observe:

American parents in general want their children to do well in school…few deny the importance of a good education. But an intriguing group difference emerged from a question asking students about the 'trouble threshold' in their families. What was the lowest grade they thought that they could receive without their parents getting angry? Black and Hispanic students got into trouble at home only when their grades fell below C-. For whites it was a full grade higher, B-. But Asian students felt that receiving anything below an A- would incur parental wrath.

Racial categories cannot tell the whole story behind parenting and student performance. Also, "Asian" is a broad racial category that includes various nationalities, origins, and family income levels. However, it is interesting to note that in Duval County, Asian students take honors courses at a higher rate than white, black, or Hispanic students.

Solutions from other communities

Other communities also face an achievement gap and some have developed practices that appear promising in relation to the achievement gap in Jacksonville. Coordinated child-care services, constructive public dialogue, and community investment in challenged schools are solutions which have decreased the achievement gap in some communities.

Early childhood development

The Kentucky Department of Education rates the quality of childcare centers-criteria beyond licensing and certification requirements. The program, called STARS for KIDS NOW, is voluntary. A total of 733 of childcare centers and homes participate in the program, 25 percent of all locally-certified childcare providers.

All facilities that choose to participate in STARS for KIDS NOW are eligible for technical assistance and incentives awarded quarterly. Childcare centers and family homes earn between one and four stars, based on staff-to-child ratios, curriculum, parents' involvement, staff training, and personnel practices. A larger proportion of facilities earn a one or a two while the number of four STAR facilities is limited. All participating facilities are encouraged to take childcare subsidies so that low-income children get ready for school in quality childcare settings.

The program aims to raise parents' awareness of quality services. Parents frequently ask childcare referral agencies, "Is this a STAR center?" and many childcare centers advertise their STAR rating in marketing materials.

In Kentucky, childcare trainers and center directors earn credentials. A scholarship program for childcare workers supports improvements in early learning. The Department of Education also has established a credentialing system for childcare workers.

In addition to support for childcare workers and improvements to quality of services, Kentucky also has Early Childhood Standards, which provide benchmark behaviors and abilities that children ages 0-4 acquire through quality learning environments. These

standards are designed as a framework to assist parents, early care and education professionals, administrators, and others in under-standing what children are able to know and do from birth through four years of age. For example, the standards explicitly describe the ways that children use language, interact with books, and begin to write and draw.

The effects of Kentucky's initiative to increase childcare quality can be seen in evaluations of childcare programs across the state. Evaluation includes programs which participate and those that do not participate in the initiative. The 2003 assessment found that preschool programs that participate have higher quality classrooms than those that do not. Between 2002 and 2003, the average quality ratings of 111 childcare programs throughout the state increased.

Community-wide dialogue on education

The El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence has brought together the entire El Paso community for 13 years to close the achievement gap.

After thirteen years, it is one of the longest-running community-wide partnerships aimed at closing the achievement gap. The Board of Directors includes the President of the University of Texas at El Paso, the President of El Paso Community College, the superintendents of the community's three largest school districts, the El Paso County Judge, the Mayor of El Paso, the Executive Directors from the Greater El Paso, Black, and Hispanic Chambers of Commerce, and a representative from an interfaith organization. Recently, the achievement gap in El Paso has been closing.

In 2000, the Collaborative hosted a summit of over 200 citizens and leaders. At the Summit, the Collaborative used Census data and local economic indicators to demonstrate the importance of closing the achievement gap and how that drives higher-wage jobs. It also demonstrated educational outcomes for all students in El Paso: those enrolled in Head Start programs, public schools, and the community college and university. Resource speakers reported that using data to build consensus among diverse people is an important step toward closing the achievement gap.

Percent of El Paso region students passing
Texas Assessment of Academic Skills
Reading by race, 1999-2000
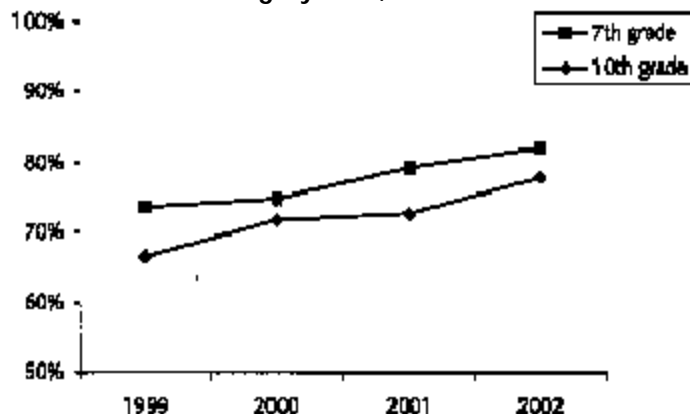
Source: El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence

Schools located in low-income neighborhoods

The transformation of Western Village Academy during the past five years offers some answers to the question, "What does it take to reform a school in which the majority of students are low performing?"

Western Village Academy is located in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. In 1999, the superintendent of Oklahoma City Schools approached the Chief Executive Officer of Integris Health, a large healthcare system, asking whether Integris would assume responsibility for the school.

Integris contributes $300,000 annually to the school. This includes the salary for a school director who raises an additional $700,000 annually. These funds have secured:

- a full-time physician assistant;
- a mentor for each student;
- a full-time counselor; and
- a teacher aide in each classroom.

A resource speaker explained that Western Village Academy spends approximately $1 million more per year than its counter-part elementary schools.

The table below compares students and cost per student at Western Village Academy with a comparable Jacksonville elementary school. The table does not include in-kind contributions through volunteer work. It is not possible to compare student performance because standardized tests in Oklahoma and Florida differ.

A Comparison of Western Village Academy and Annie R. Morgan, 2002-04

	Western Village Academy*	Annie R. Morgan**
Number of students	311	406
Students on free and reduced price lunch	90%	52%
Black	90%	88%
White	4%	10%
Hispanic	5%	<1%
Operating budget costs per student	$4,180	$4,927
Local community contribution per student	$2,220	$ 135
Average class size	20	20

*2003-04 **2002-03
Source: Western Village Academy, School Improvement Plan;
          Annie R. Morgan, NCLB School Public Accountability Report;
          Annie R. Morgan, Florida School Indicators Report

Conclusions

1. The achievement gap among children in DCPS severely limits Jacksonville's quality of life. The effects of a large portion of public school students who are unprepared for the workforce or higher education constrains Jacksonville's opportunities for future economic growth.

2. The sheer magnitude of the number of children who are not ready to enter public school, who fall farther behind, and who fail each year is unacceptable. The large number of students who fail to graduate each year or who graduate with inadequate skills is a detriment to our community.

3. Some Jacksonville citizens leave learning and teaching to the school system, inappropriately absolving themselves from the responsibility for their children's education.

4. Each and every one of us in Jacksonville and DCPS share responsibility for the fact that too many Jacksonville children fail in school. However, few opportunities exist for ongoing, structured dialogue in which citizen input and educational expertise can meet in mutual partnership to improve learning environments. This lack of community-wide dialogue, free of blame and defensiveness, contributes to misconceptions about the school system and leaves too many citizens outside of the process of improving public education.

5. The single most important factor in ensuring student success is the presence of a parent or another adult (in or outside the home) who shows consistent interest in the student and provides long-term guidance. Far too many low-performing students lack regular interaction with a positive role model. Despite growing support from local businesses for successful mentoring programs, only a small portion of low-performing students is matched with a mentor.

6. Inadequate family resources significantly impact the achievement gap. Some students, frequently from low-income households, start school severely challenged in emotional and intellectual development as well as social and language skills. The school system alone is unable to compensate for these disparities which reach beyond the scope and influence of schools.

   - Too many families in Jacksonville lack adequate healthcare or do not access available services, which contributes to the unacceptable number of low birth weight babies born, a condition that frequently has negative impacts on early childhood development.
   - Lack of adequate healthcare for all preschool and school age children also contributes to the achievement gap.
   - A lack of literacy skills in many families drastically limits their children's early development and ability to learn to read.

7. Parental involvement in low-income neighborhoods is hindered by the following barriers:

   - Many parents feel intimidated or unwelcome in their child's school.
   - Many parents lack skills for talking with teachers, principals, and administrators and advocating for their children.
   - Many parents are under the stress of dealing with competing priorities of daily life and work, and do not have the time or energy to support their child's education as much as they would like.
   - Some teachers and other staff members are inadequately prepared to work with parents from low-income neighborhoods.

8. Jacksonville lacks a sufficient number of quality childcare programs geared toward early childhood education.

   - Jacksonville's system for licensing childcare facilities ensures safe custodial care, not quality learning environments.
   - A quality preschool curriculum is reserved for a fortunate few children while others may or may not receive this vital early literacy training.
   - Many childcare providers lack adequate training and compensation to attract professionals with sufficient preparation and understanding of early childhood development and learning.

9. DCPS is, in part, responsible for the unacceptable increase in the achievement gap as students grow older.

   - The school system lacks a policy commitment for matching the most challenging teaching situations with the most skilled teachers and principals. Schools with a high percent of low performers and few community resources are unable to keep good teachers.
   - Students who fail to meet expectations are too often retained or promoted to the next grade without necessary skills to succeed. Promotion and retention are both inadequate because neither solution identifies students' problems nor offers effective remediation.
   - Too few qualified black students are encouraged to take Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses, which reinforces low expectations. Similarly, some schools fail to offer enough Honors and AP courses to qualified students, which compromises the school's culture of learning.
   - An unacceptable number of middle and high school students fail to read at grade level according to state standards. Many high schools fail to acknowledge this large academic stumbling block for low performers and do not provide adequate reading instruction for them.

10. DCPS and the community, which includes parents, business leaders, public and private agencies, and city government, have failed to provide sufficient resources to students to sustain achievement throughout their school career.

- The school system and community have inadequately addressed the effects of family mobility on student performance, leaving too many students with a disrupted academic career.
- The community has failed to provide sufficient physical and mental health care services for families who then are unable to adequately nurture their children's educational progress.
- Jacksonville has excellent in-school and out-of-school programs that "wrap" services around a small portion of low-performing students. Lack of resources for these programs limits the number of participants and overall impact on the achievement gap.

11. Community support for individual schools is uneven, with some schools benefiting from many partnerships and too many other schools lacking outside support. Jacksonville schools lack adequate staff to coordinate partnerships with businesses, agencies, nonprofits, and community organizations. In addition, the school district lacks adequate evaluation of the effectiveness of school-community partnerships.

12. The community and school district have failed to create a culture of learning in Jacksonville that supports student achievement among all students.

- Some students fail to arrive at school ready to learn and fail to take responsibility for their education.
- Some parents and guardians, children's first teachers, fail to understand the importance of education. They expect little academic achievement and their children, in turn, expect little of themselves.

Recommendations

BRINGING US TOGETHER

Each and every one of us in Jacksonville and Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) share responsibility for too many children failing. However, we have few opportunities in which we can work together to help these children. We need community-wide dialogue, free of blame and defensiveness, to eliminate misconceptions about the school system and bring citizens into the process to improve public education.

The committee feels the Alliance for World Class Education is best suited to bring together the community and the school system because its individual members, from all walks of life, are already leaders. The committee recommends that:

1. The Alliance for World Class Education convene an action group including but not limited to leadership, staff, and volunteers from the Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Duval County Health Department, DCPS, Duval Teachers United, the First Coast Media Council, The Community Foundation, the Jacksonville Children's Commission, the Jaguars Foundation, the Jesse Ball duPont Fund, United Way of Northeast Florida, local colleges and universities, and faith-based agencies. The group's purpose will be to initiate and maintain a city-wide dialogue on education issues. The group should:

   - secure a locally-recognized facilitator to assist the group in implementing a meaningful, two-way dialogue among community leaders and school system leaders;
   - engage parents and concerned citizens within a cluster of schools with an eye on strengthening existing processes for community involvement in schools;
   - use the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence as a model for creating a long-term, data-driven, solution-oriented dialogue without blame and defensiveness; and
   - develop partnerships with print and electronic media to promote and sustain community efforts to improve students' academic performance.

WORKING WITH STUDENTS

Many students who overcome obstacles to learning have a positive relationship with an adult. At different times in a child's life that adult may be a parent, caregiver, teacher, or mentor. The community can strengthen this backbone of educational excellence–the parents, teachers, and mentors working with students.

Parents and caregivers are a child's first teachers, and while some parents have the skills and resources needed to prepare their children for school, others do not. The entire community, including City agencies and businesses, should assist parents and caregivers.

PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

The study committee applauds the Mayor's plans to ensure all Jacksonville students enter school ready to learn. Because early learning for low-income children is funded through public funds at the state and local levels, the Mayor should continue to take the lead in expanding quality childcare.

2. The Mayor, in coordination with the Jacksonville City Council and the Duval Delegation, should leverage state and local resources to increase funding for early learning and to fully fund quality pre-K education. Locally, the Mayor's efforts should identify additional funding sources to support the long-term use of research-based early literacy curricula in childcare centers.

The Ready Child Coalition's efforts to improve Jacksonville's childcare services is another step toward closing the gap. The committee recommends the Ready Child Coalition continue to raise the quality of childcare for low-income children.

3. The Ready Child Coalition should:

   - develop workshops and activities that enhance parents' understanding of early learning practices, based on strategies used by the Jacksonville Urban League's Head Start Program, and offer the workshops at childcare facilities, schools, and other locations;
   - provide professional development in early learning curricula so that all children attending licensed childcare facilities are exposed to early literacy curricula, such as ELLM or Links to Literacy; and
   - develop a system for rating and monitoring childcare services similar to the STARS for KIDS NOW program in Kentucky.

Recommendations

TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

Every day, teachers assist low-performing students to reach grade level. But working with lots of low performers takes special skills and tremendous commitment. Unlike other professions, teachers are not compensated for more challenging work. The study committee supports systemic financial incentives for teachers who succeed with low performers. A true pay-for-performance system will target teacher resources to schools with large percentages of low performers and begin to close the gap. Making this happen will require work within the school system and additional resources from the community.

6. Duval County School Board and Duval Teachers United should adopt contract provisions in the 2005-06 collective bargaining agreement so that all schools compensate teachers and principals who take on the most challenging jobs and succeed in them.

7. The Alliance for World Class Education should leverage incentives from the community to significantly reward teachers who narrow the achievement gap.

Learning occurs in a safe and orderly environment, free of disruptions and distractions. Teachers should be assisted in the schools, especially when it comes to expectations for respectful and orderly behavior. Phase One of this study identified the critical role that classroom discipline plays in student learning.

8. DCPS should ensure safe and secure schools. The school system should:

    *   identify students who require a discipline contract, signed by students and parents or guardians; and
    *   adopt a tough policy on classroom behavior that supports teachers.

The study committee applauds DCPS for increasing professional development opportunities, especially for elementary school staff working in low-income neighborhoods. Now this effort should be expanded so that teachers in low-performing middle and high schools have similar opportunities for professional development.

9. DCPS should continue and expand its contract with The Schultz Center for Teaching and Leadership for in-service workshops on successfully engaging parents in their children's education, effectively managing classroom discipline, and providing reading assistance to struggling students. Such trainings should particularly target teachers working with low-income students so they understand the effects of poverty on student behavior and learning.

STUDENTS

The study found that educational reforms at the elementary level are working, but the same efforts have not reached middle and high school students. At the same time, more is expected of middle and high school students, they face increased obstacles, and a higher percentage fail to perform at grade level.

10. DCPS should provide academic assistance to all students scoring at Levels 1 or 2 on FCAT Reading or Math until they score at Level 3, reallocating resources as necessary. This assistance, coupled with enrichment activities, should be provided either during or after school, during the summer, or on Saturdays. Resources should be leveraged through increased partnerships between low-performing schools and faith-based agencies or other community-based organizations offering academic assistance programs to failing students.

The study committee found that teachers and families expect students to perform at different levels. These varying expectations shape the achievement gap. To close the gap, all Jacksonville students should be expected to excel in school.

11. To raise expectations and motivation of students, DCPS should ensure that all middle and high school students who score at Levels 4 or 5 on FCAT Reading or Math have the opportunity to enroll in an Honors or AP course. Some students who show particular interest, skill, or motivation but who have not scored at Levels 4 or 5 should be coached and encouraged to take an Honors course.

The study committee concluded that too many Jacksonville residents do not value education. Jacksonville's media leaders, who discuss press coverage and its effects, should make this a priority.

Recommendations

STUDENTS (Continued)

12. The First Coast Media Council should promote high academic expectations through press coverage of education. Coverage should communicate:

   - the significance of early-learning opportunities;
   - the importance of a high school education for getting and maintaining a good job; and
   - the benefits of attending college.

Many students excel in school despite non-academic obstacles. One reason these students excel is that they receive assistance at the right time in their life. The study found that many low-performers are on waiting lists for help. The community can change this situation so that every child who wants a helping hand gets it.

13. The Human Services Council and DCPS should ensure that adequate safety net programs and school-based services are available to low-performing students.

   - The Human Services Council, in cooperation with DCPS, should seek increased funding to expand services, including those provided through Full Service Schools. Additional funding should increase the number of schools offering school-based services as well as reduce waiting lists in existing programs.
   - DCPS should assess the costs and benefits of school-based services for low-performing students.

ADULT ROLE MODELS

One way the community can help low performers is quite simple–meet with them. The study found that hundreds of students would like to meet regularly with a mentor but not enough adults volunteer. Kesler Mentoring Connection is already a leader in coordinating volunteer resources for mentoring. The study committee feels they can successfully partner with DCPS to increase mentoring of low-performing students.

14. DCPS Office of Community Involvement, in conjunction with Kesler Mentoring Connection, should convene all funders and providers of community-based and school-based mentoring programs to plan for expansion of mentoring activities so that all students at risk for failure have an opportunity for group or one-on-one mentoring. This effort should also monitor expansion of services to maintain their effectiveness.

According to 2004 FCAT scores, over half of our students who took the test are failing to perform at grade level. This transcends race, income, neighborhood, and individual schools–even Stanton College Preparatory, a nationally-recognized high school, has failing students. This community-wide problem requires community-wide solutions.

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Membership and Work

Committee members met together 29 times from October through May. In addition, the management team met many times to provide guidance and direction for the study. The committee received information from 28 knowledgeable resource people and additional written materials researched by JCCI staff.

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1977 Housing	Thomas Carpenter
1977 Public Education (K-12)	Robert W. Schellenberg
1978 Public Authorities	Howard Greenstein
1978 Strengthening the Family	Jacquelyn Bates
1979 Citizen Participation in the Schools	Susan Black
1979 Youth Unemployment	Roy G. Green
1979 Theatre Jacksonville	Richard Bizot
1979 Civil Service	Max K. Morris
1979 Planning in Local Government	I. M. Sulzbacher
1980 Capital Improvements for Recreation	Ted Pappas
1980 But Not In My Neighborhood	Pamela Y. Paul
1980 The Energy Efficient City	Roderick M. Nicol
1981 Coordination of Human Services	Pat Hannan
1981 Higher Education	R. P. T. Young
1982 Disaster Preparedness	Walter Williams Jr.
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1982 Downtown Derelicts	Earle Traynham
1983 Mass Transit	David Hastings
1983 Indigent Health Care	Linda McClintock
1984 Jacksonville's Jail	Eleanor Gay
1984 Growth Management	Curtis L. McCray
1985 Visual Pollution	Doug Milne
1985 Minority Business	Jack Gaillard
1986 Private Delivery of Public Services	George Fisher
1986 Mental Health and Drug Abuse Services for Children and Youth	Flo Nell Ozell
1987 Child Day-Care Services	George W. Corrick
1987 Infrastructure	Joan Carver
1988 Local Election Process	Jim Rinaman
1988 School Dropout Prevention	Gene Parks
1989 Reducing the Garbage Burden	Jack F. Milne & James L. White III
1989 Independent Living for the Elderly	Roseanne Hartwell
1990 Future Workforce Needs	Yank D. Coble Jr.
1990 Philanthropy in Jacksonville	Juliette Mason
1991 Adequate Water Supply	Russell B. Newton Jr.
1991 Positive Development of Jacksonville's Children	Henry H. "Tip" Graham

STUDY	CHAIR
1992 Long-Term Financial Health of the City of Jacksonville	Mary Alice Phelan
1992 Young Black Males	Chester A. Aikens & William E. Scheu
1993 Planning for Northeast Florida's Uncertain Military Future	David L. Williams
1993 Public Education: The Cost of Quality	Royce Lyles
1994 Reducing Violence in Jacksonville Schools	Dale Clifford
1994 Jacksonville Public Services: Meeting Neighborhood Needs	Michael Korn
1995 Teenage Single Parents and their Families	Afesa Adams
1995 JAXPORT: Improvement and Expansion	Jim Ade
1996 Creating a Community Agenda: Indicators for Health & Human Services	Bruce Demps
1996 Leadership: Meeting Community Needs	Bill Brinton
1997 Improving Public Dialogue	Jim Crooks
1997 Transportation for the Disadvantaged	Cathy Winterfield
1997 Children with Special Needs	Virginia Borrok
1998 The Role of Nonprofit Organizations	Sherry Magill
1998 Incentives for Economic Development	Henry Thomas
1999 Improving Adult Literacy	Edythe Abdullah
1999 Arts, Recreation and Culture in Jacksonville	Ed Hearle
2000 Affordable Housing	Bill Bishop
2000 Improving Regional Cooperation	Jim Rinaman
2001 Services for Ex-Offenders	Dana Ferrell Birchfield
2001 Growth Management Revisited	Allan T. Geiger
2002 Making Jacksonville a Clean City	Brenna Durden
2002 Beyond the Talk: Improving Race Relations	Bruce Barcelo, Brian Davis
2003 Neighborhoods at the Tipping Point	Randy Evans
2003 Public Education Reform: (Phase One) Assessing Progress	J. F. Bryan IV
2004 Town & Gown: Building Successful University-Community Collaborations	Audrey McKibbin Moran
2004 Public Education Reform: (Phase Two) Eliminating the Achievement Gap	Bill Mason

Mission Statement

JCCI is a nonpartisan civic organization that engages diverse citizens in open dialogue, research, consensus building, and leadership development to improve the quality of life and build a better community in Northeast Florida and beyond.

JCCI

Citizens building a better community

JCCI named a Solution for America by the Pew Partnership for Civic Change.