

Jacksonville Early Literacy Partnership 2006 Policy Council

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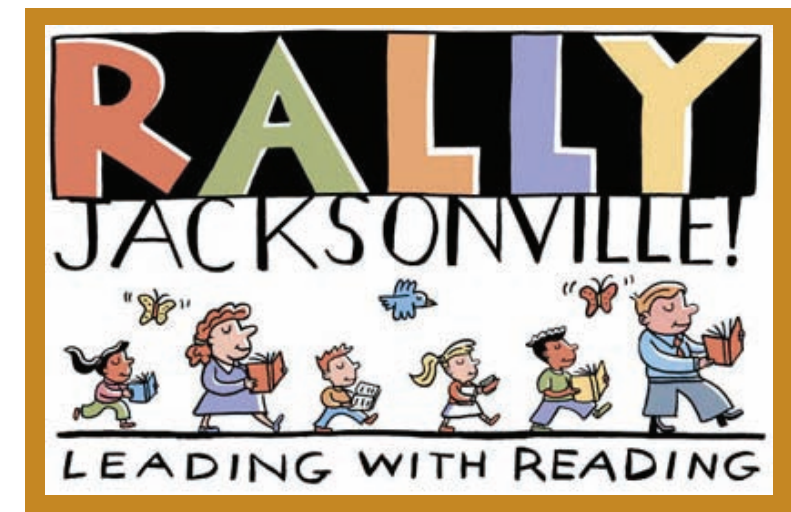
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Jacksonville Early Literacy Partnership

Annual Report 2005-2006



Jacksonville: Where Reading Begins

Executive Summary

Convened by Mayor John Peyton



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

John Peyton, Mayor

Challenges Ahead

Since 2003, the members of the Jacksonville Early Literacy Partnership (JELP) have diligently worked to create a community-wide collaboration among business, education, and community organizations to increase both the quality and quantity of early learning programs in Jacksonville. This report details the great successes that the partnership, under the umbrella of *RALLY Jacksonville!*, has achieved to date.

Working together, we have reached more than two-thirds of the county's 4 year olds through the Mayor's Book Club, served 8,400 of Jacksonville's most vulnerable children each year through intensive intervention in child care centers, and developed and tested a rating system to evaluate the quality of services offered by local child care centers. This report also addresses the exciting opportunities that lie ahead as we continue the effort to equip every child in Jacksonville with the skills necessary to succeed in school.

As you know, one of the top priorities of my administration is improving early literacy in Jacksonville. I believe that one of the best ways to prepare our children for their future, and to create a well-trained and educated workforce, is to teach children to read at an early age. I am proud of the great strides we have made in increasing early literacy over the last three years, and I know the result of our work will be a brighter, stronger future for our children and our city.

Thank you for your interest in early literacy. I look forward to continuing the good work we have begun to ensure that all of Jacksonville's children enter school ready to learn.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Peyton".

John Peyton
Mayor

No quick fix or single strategic investment will significantly improve early care and learning for all children. Success in closing the early learning gap in Jacksonville requires long-term thinking, strategic investment, and community-wide commitment. Listed below are the challenges to success that must be addressed.

Increasing Awareness and Understanding

- Help practitioners, advocates, families, businesses, and community members understand the magnitude of the problem and the need for both short-term and long-term strategies to address the issues.
- Help practitioners, advocates, families, businesses, and community members understand that, together, the quality of children's early experiences in the home, in the community, in child care settings, and in elementary schools builds a strong or fragile foundation for children's future success.
- Help practitioners, advocates, families, businesses, and community members recognize that fundamental and long-lasting change will not happen quickly and may not be fully realized for more than a decade.
- Increase community awareness that "school unreadiness" is more costly in the long run than increasing the quality of early care and learning.

Increasing Community Engagement

- Increase family involvement in providing high-quality early learning experiences for children.
- Ensure that all Jacksonville early care facilities provide high-quality early learning experiences.
- Ensure that community resources such as libraries, parks, and museums are accessible to families and actively support children's early learning and development.

Sustaining Progress with a Long-Term Strategy

- Create a community-wide structure to leverage current resources and partner strengths. The structure must be robust enough to overcome resistance to change. It must also be flexible enough to respond to new opportunities and challenges as they arise.
- Develop strategies for long-term financial support.
- Develop linkages with other services such as the health care system, housing services, and employment opportunities.
- Sustain a focus on evaluation and accountability.



Successes to Date

Citywide Collaboration

- Mayor Peyton creates a citywide collaboration of community organizations and individuals that leverages individual efforts and shares resources toward the common goal of ensuring that every child enters kindergarten ready to read, ready to learn, and ready to succeed.

Taking Action to Build Individual and Organizational Capacity

- Pilot projects to increase the engagement of families in their children's learning are being implemented on the Eastside, Westside, and Northside of Jacksonville. These pilot projects directly impact about 200 children and their families each year. As the pilot projects are refined, successful practices will be shared across the city.
- The Mayor's Book Club enrolls over two-thirds of all Jacksonville four year olds (over 8,100 children in each of its first two years of existence).
- Efforts to improve quality at over 125 early care and learning centers serving Jacksonville's most vulnerable children have impacted over 8,400 children each year. These efforts have resulted in improved quality at the child care centers and increased early literacy achievement for children served. Approximately 1,000 4-year-old children in JELP Intensive Quality Support Centers were given two early literacy screening measures. Two hundred and twenty children most at-risk of future reading difficulties received intensive intervention by highly trained teachers visiting the centers two times a week.
- JELP partners developed and are field-testing a quality rating system that will help families and the community evaluate the quality of services offered by child care centers.
- JELP partners developed and are field-testing a career ladder for school readiness practitioners that provides a long-term strategy for building capacity and sustaining gains. In 2005-2006, approximately 220 school readiness teachers and teacher aides have participated in the career ladder. These professionals positively impact about 3,000 children ages birth to five each year.
- JELP partners were awarded three grants totaling over \$1,642,963 that support JELP initiatives.

Commitment to Evaluation and Accountability

- Recognizing that what gets measured gets done, the JELP adopted a research-based and data-driven approach for developing goals, identifying outcomes, taking strategic actions, measuring progress, sharing results, and using what it learns to guide future actions.



Why Is Jacksonville Investing in Early Literacy and Learning?

Research is clear: there is an undeniable link between quality early literacy and learning and children's future academic success. Studies also document the link between children's academic success and communities' future economic prosperity.

In 2003, Mayor John Peyton brought key community partners together, provided funding, and demonstrated his willingness and commitment to lead the effort to improve the school readiness of Jacksonville's children through the creation of the Jacksonville Early Literacy Partnership (JELP).

The JELP is chaired by the Special Assistant to the Mayor for Early Literacy, and is guided by a Policy Council. The Policy Council is made up of CEOs of key early childhood agencies and organizations representing all sectors of the city.

The JELP partners are charged with developing and implementing a collaborative, comprehensive plan to shift early child care from a custodial focus to an educational focus. The JELP built on successful strategies that partner agencies had in place. They then forged a shared vision to magnify the results being achieved by rethinking current efforts and creating and testing innovative solutions to a complex and multifaceted problem.

This executive summary provides a snapshot of JELP activities and results for the 2005-2006 program year.



The City of Jacksonville understands the connection between early learning and future economic prosperity, and has chosen to invest in early literacy and learning through *RALLY Jacksonville!*, the community-wide literacy initiative developed by Mayor Peyton and the JELP.



The JELP: Answering a Call to Action

Many Jacksonville child- and family-focused agencies have worked diligently to improve conditions in the settings where children receive early care and education, regardless of the geographical location in which they live.

Because the needs are great and the challenges many, it became increasingly clear that no single agency working in isolation would succeed. Instead, it would take a citywide collaborative effort spanning traditional organizational boundaries to be successful.

In 2003, Mayor Peyton acted to bring these agencies together, provided additional funding, and demonstrated the willingness and commitment to lead the effort to improve the school readiness of all of the city's children through a more focused and collaborative initiative. To this end, the Mayor convened the Jacksonville Early Literacy Partnership (JELP), a citywide collaboration chaired by the Special Assistant to the Mayor for Early Literacy. The JELP is guided by a Policy Council made up of the CEOs of key early childhood agencies and organizations representing all sectors of the city.

The JELP partners were charged with developing and implementing a collaborative, comprehensive plan to shift early child care from a custodial focus to an educational focus. The JELP built on successful strategies that partner agencies had in place. They forged a shared vision to magnify the results being achieved by rethinking current efforts and creating and testing innovative solutions to a complex and multifaceted problem.

The work of the JELP is carried out by 13 multi-organizational work teams.

JELP Partner Agencies

- The Mayor's Office and the City of Jacksonville
- Early Learning Coalition of Duval, Inc.
- The Community Foundation in Jacksonville
- The Don Brewer Early Learning, Research & Professional Development Center
- Duval County Public Schools
- Episcopal Children's Services
- Florida Community College at Jacksonville
- Florida Institute of Education at the University of North Florida
- Nemours BrightStart! Dyslexia Initiative
- Jacksonville Children's Commission
- Jacksonville Public Library
- Jacksonville Urban League Head Start Program
- United Way of Northeast Florida



Neighborhood Engagement with Citywide Implications

The Don Brewer Early Learning, Research, & Professional Development Center

The Brewer Center is a school readiness support center where researchers and practitioners tackle the pressing challenges of providing high-quality educational care for young children. The Center reached full capacity in September 2006, enrolling 98 children from its eastside neighborhood. In 2005-2006, the Brewer Center also:

- Implemented a high-quality school readiness program,
- Participated in Florida's Voluntary PreKindergarten initiative,
- Developed a collaborative professional development initiative for child care center directors and supervisory staff,
- Enhanced neighborhood pride by developing a community think tank to address neighborhood challenges,
- Built community partnerships with local elementary schools, and
- Participated in the Northeast Florida Literacy Council and the Obesity Coalition of Duval County.

The Center's reach extends far beyond its eastside neighborhood, as successful practices enacted at the Center are disseminated throughout Jacksonville's early care and learning community.

S. P. Livingston: Family Involvement and Learning Community

The S.P. Livingston: Family Involvement and Learning Community goal is to serve as a demonstration site for a family-school-practitioner-university partnership that field-tests promising family engagement strategies and disseminates effective strategies to Jacksonville child care centers and elementary schools.

Families of preschool children enrolled in child care centers in the S. P. Livingston Elementary School attendance zone were invited to participate in family workshops designed to increase involvement in their children's education.

Each two-hour workshop at the school offered activities for children and parents. Families learned ways to embed literacy exercises into everyday home life.

Early childhood specialists and practitioners attended the workshops to observe, review materials, and gain knowledge to use with families in other settings.

When surveyed, participants ranked all components of the workshops positively and expressed a high level of satisfaction with the books and learning activities provided. This program increases the ability of families to be meaningfully engaged in their children's development and learning.

Community Engagement:

The JELP organized its community engagement initiative into two interrelated strategies.

A **Citywide Engagement** component is designed to increase community awareness and understanding of the importance of high-quality early care and learning, and increase the city's commitment to improving the quality of early care and learning in Jacksonville. The Citywide Engagement component is led by the Jacksonville Children's Commission, working in collaboration with the Jacksonville Public Library, The Community Foundation in Jacksonville, and the United Way of Northeast Florida.

Second, a **Neighborhood Engagement** component with citywide implications is designed to rigorously field-test promising practices that address persistent challenges to Jacksonville and its ability to achieve its vision for excellence. This component provides a way to test promising practices and disseminate those with demonstrated success to other parts of the city.

The Neighborhood Engagement component is led by the Don Brewer Center, Duval County Public Schools, the Jacksonville Public Library, the Northeast Florida Pediatric Society, and the Florida Institute of Education at the University of North Florida.

Citywide Engagement

RALLY Jacksonville! Mayor's Book Club

In its second year, the *RALLY Jacksonville!* Mayor's Book Club enrolled nearly 8,400 four-year-old children—approximately 67% of Jacksonville's entire four-year-old population.

Mayor's Book Club registration events were held at public libraries, leading to the issuance of 247 new library cards to families.

Over the course of the year, each Book Club member received 11 books designed to promote children's literacy knowledge. Each child also received a backpack filled with "learning supplies"—crayons, stickers, and a blanket to sit on while reading.

When the final book was mailed, it included a postcard survey form for parents. Two hundred and sixty-six responses were returned, and nearly 80% of respondents rated the Book Club as helpful.

For Jacksonville, the Mayor's Book Club means more children will have a better chance of learning the skills they'll need before they enter kindergarten.

United Way: Born Learning - Parent Education

United Way of Northeast Florida joined the national Born Learning program to spread the message to Jacksonville-area families that any everyday moment can become a learning moment with young children.

In 2005-2006, United Way worked with JELP partner organizations to distribute educational materials to parents through Jacksonville businesses. In addition, United Way field-tested a series of interactive lunch workshops for parents. Born Learning Lunch and Learn sessions provide parents with information on a variety of issues affecting their children, including how to select a high-quality child care center and how to use the quality rating system developed by the Early Learning Coalition of Duval, Inc. Local businesses and governmental agencies are invited to participate. A trained Born Learning facilitator works with volunteers to present the sessions in workplace settings.

Full implementation of the Born Learning Lunch and Learn sessions will move forward in 2006-2007.

The JELP Organization

Jacksonville Early Literacy Partnership

Shared Goal and Expected Outcome
Every Child Enters Kindergarten Ready to Read,
Ready to Learn and Ready to Succeed

Strategic Initiatives

Quality Preschool

Support for Centers

- Quality Enhancement Initiative
- Intensive Quality Support Teams
- Nemours BrightStart!

Support for Teachers

- Career Ladder for School Readiness Practitioners

Support for Directors

- Enhancing Leadership and Business Practices

Community Engagement

Citywide Engagement

- Mayor's Book Club
- RALLY Book Drive!
- RALLY Business Volunteers!
- United Way: Born Learning - Parent Education

Neighborhood Engagement with Citywide Implications

- The Don Brewer Early Learning, Research, & Professional Development Center
- S.P. Livingston: Family Involvement and Learning Community
- Reach Out and Read: RALLY Jacksonville!

Support Initiatives

Accountability and Evaluation

- Track Annual Work Team Outcomes
- Track School Readiness Indicators
- Conduct Special Studies
- Assess Progress and Report Results

Communication

- Increase Community Understanding and Commitment
- Share Results with Policy Makers and the Community

The JELP partners organized their efforts around two strategic initiatives: *Quality Preschool* and *Community Engagement*. The results from the 2005-2006 program year are presented in the following pages

Quality Preschool: 2005-2006 Results

Intensive Support to Child Care Centers Serving Low-Income Children

The JELP Intensive Support to Improve Quality component targets centers serving Jacksonville's most vulnerable children. To raise the level of quality in these centers and give parents a tool with which to evaluate center quality, the Early Learning Coalition of Duval developed and field-tested a Quality Rating System (QRS) in 2005-2006. The QRS reviews a child care center in eight areas of quality, including learning environment and teacher qualifications, and assigns from zero to five stars to indicate the level of quality attained by the center.

QRS Intensive Support Services are available to help centers improve quality and earn additional stars. Approximately 100 child care centers serving school readiness children and 25 Head Start centers engaged in Head Start's national quality improvement process received support in 2005-2006.

- In 2006, 52% of participating centers received three or more stars, which represents a 200% increase over the 2005 ratings.
- From 2005 to 2006, 66% of the centers increased their rating by at least one star, and 23% increased their rating by at least two stars.
- Approximately 7,900 children ages birth to five years old were impacted by the JELP Intensive Support to Improve Quality initiative.

Career Ladder for School Readiness Practitioners

The Preschool Quality Component of JELP created a comprehensive professional development program, organized into a career ladder for early childhood workers as they help Jacksonville's children get ready for school. A comprehensive preschool and infant/toddler CDA-Plus curriculum was also developed and implemented.

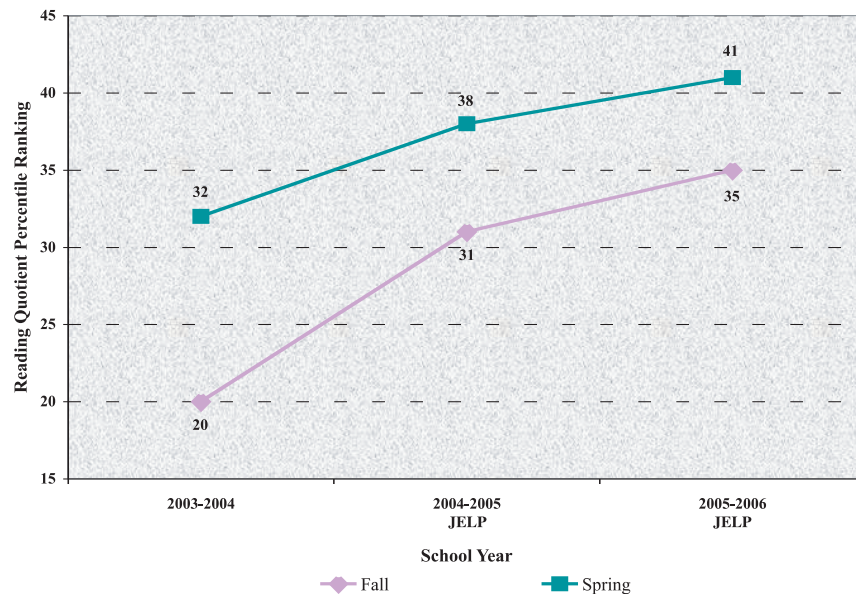
The Career Ladder program works to improve preschool quality by: (a) increasing the level of preschool practitioners' credentials; (b) increasing the number of practitioners with increased credentials; and (c) providing research-based professional development to classroom teachers and support staff. As teachers improve their skills and knowledge, the quality of preschool programs will improve, and more of Jacksonville's children will be ready to go to school.

- 220 child care practitioners earned CDA-Plus certification through programs collaboratively offered by Episcopal Children's Services, Florida Community College at Jacksonville, and the Jacksonville Children's Commission.
- A Memorandum of Understanding among Episcopal Children's Services, Florida Community College at Jacksonville, and the Jacksonville Children's Commission was developed and implemented to award successful CDA-Plus completers up to nine semester hours of college credit for an Associate of Science degree in Early Childhood Education, offered at FCCJ.

Child Outcomes

The mean percentile ranking of the children's year-end standardized TERA Reading Quotient score (the teal line) has steadily increased over the past three years, with the largest increase occurring from the 32nd percentile ranking in 2003-2004 to the 38th percentile ranking in 2004-2005.

Percentile Ranking of the TERA-3 Reading Quotient Mean Scores for the Past Three Years



The JELP Longitudinal Study used the 2004-2005 JELP evaluation data, the 2005-2006 Duval County Public School kindergarten data, and the Florida 2005-2006 school readiness data. These data were combined, resulting in 1,581 JELP and 6,166 comparison children included in the study.

- Results from state-mandated kindergarten school readiness testing indicates children in JELP preschool classrooms had higher levels of school readiness than comparison children who did not participate in JELP preschools.
- The true differences between the JELP children and the comparison children's school readiness scores are due to their participation in JELP preschool classes where their teachers received intensive support and coaching.

Summary of the Prosperity Score Results Across Readiness Measures by Stratum

Test	Statistical Test	Strata											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	All	
ESI-K	t-test		✓+	✓+			✓+	✓+					✓+
	Chi-Sq		✓	✓			✓+						✓+
LNF	t-test	✓+	✓+	✓+	✓+	✓+	✓+	✓+	✓+	✓+			✓+
	Chi-Sq	✓+	✓+	✓+	✓+	✓+	✓+	✓+	✓+	✓+	✓		✓+
ISF	t-test			✓+	✓+			✓+		✓+			✓+
	Chi-Sq	✓+	✓		✓+	✓		✓+			✓		✓+

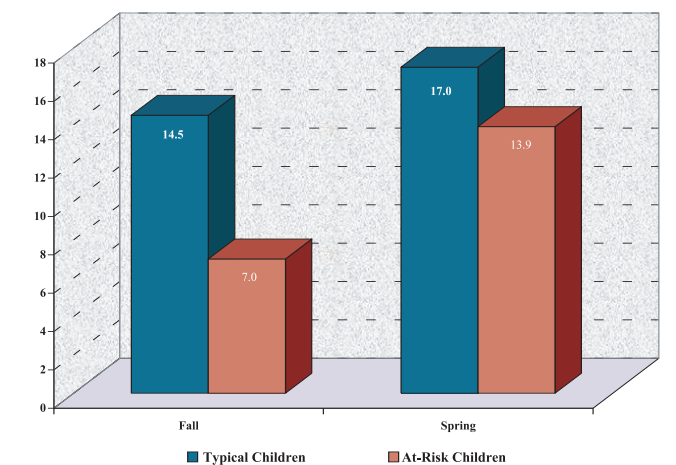
Note: ✓+ Indicates a significant difference at $\alpha \leq .05$. ✓ Indicates a significant difference at $\alpha \leq .10$.

Each ✓ and ✓+ indicates there was a true difference, with JELP children achieving at higher levels than comparison children.

The Nemours BrightStart! Program is designed to assist children at-risk for dyslexia/reading failure. Preschool children scoring in the lowest 28% received intense small-group literacy instruction twice per week for nine weeks.

- Children receiving intervention, on average, doubled their total scores on *Get Ready to Read*.

Average *Get Ready to Read!* (GRTR) Scores Over Time



The chart shows the improvement in GRTR scores from fall 2005 to spring 2006 for children scoring in the typical and at-risk ranges in fall 2005. Many of these children caught up to their peers following Nemours BrightStart! intensive intervention.