Introduction
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.

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 its Jacksonville Early Literacy Partnership (JELP) initiative.

This report for 2005-2006 offers an overview of the national and local implications of early literacy and learning programs, provides details of the JELP initiative’s performance for the year, and identifies significant accomplishments to date and the challenges that lie ahead.

Money invested today in high-quality, early education will help children develop the social, emotional, and academic foundations that will serve them throughout life. But widely accessible early childhood education programs will do more than prepare individual children for personal success: The economy will benefit from a better prepared workforce, increased employment opportunities, stronger growth, and rising standards of living, while society will benefit from less crime, enhanced schools, and children who are better prepared to participate in democratic processes. – Committee for Economic Development¹

National Context

America's emerging global economy relies on information and innovation. Jobs are becoming far more knowledge-based, requiring higher levels of creative, complex thinking. Competition from countries that have gained technological and economic infrastructure is further pressuring the U.S. workforce to adapt. A highly educated workforce is imperative to maintain productivity, and only increased productivity can lead to improvements in our standard of living.²

Jacksonville Context

The Blueprint for Prosperity: Raising the Income of Duval County Residents is a strategic plan developed by the City of Jacksonville, the Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce, and WorkSource. Released in February 2006, the goal of the plan is "to increase the income of Duval County residents through concentrated efforts on six community foundations: economic development, education, racial opportunity and harmony, infrastructure, leadership and quality of life."

From the Blueprint:

"Per capita income is defined as total income of county residents divided by total population of the county. Per capita income includes earnings from work, wealth earning from dividends, interest and rent and transfer payments from the government such as welfare and social security. ... Duval [County] per capita income as a percentage of the U.S. per capita income has declined since 1985... from 98 percent in 1985 to 96 percent in 2003. The trend line projection is to drop to 94 percent in 2015.³

Percentage of Duval County residents over age 25 with bachelor's degrees or higher: 21.9%, as compared to 24.4% of U.S. population (2000 Census).

Blueprint for Prosperity goal: 35% of Duval's population with a bachelor's degree or higher by 2017.

² CED, p. 2.


¹ Blueprint for Prosperity Task Force, Blueprint for Prosperity: Raising the Income of Duval County Residents. (Jacksonville, FL: Author). Available at http://www.myjaxchamber.com/blueprint/Blueprint_03_15_06.pdf
Quality early learning experiences are vital for children to acquire the skills they will need to compete in a 21st-century workplace.

Learning to Read Is the Foundation for Future Academic Success

National Context

The 21st-century workplace demands higher levels of reading; mathematics and problem-solving skills; the ability to work in groups and communicate effectively (orally and in writing); the ability to use technology; and the ability to engage in lifelong learning.

We now know that quality early learning experiences are important steps toward the acquisition of these skills. We also know that children acquire important pre-reading skills during the first five years of life.

To generate and sustain a well-educated workforce, concerted efforts must be made to ensure that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic status, learn to read well.

The reality is that a child who is not a skilled reader by the end of third grade is unlikely to graduate from high school. To ensure higher levels of achievement and higher graduation rates, we must strengthen children’s early learning opportunities before they start school.

America loses $192 billion—1.6% of GDP—in combined income and tax revenue with each cohort of 18-year-olds who never complete high school.¹

Jacksonville Context

Table 1. Percentage of Duval County Students Reading At or Above Grade Level: 2005-2006

Source: Florida Department of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 8</th>
<th>Grade 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four-year graduation rate for Duval County in 2004: 67.2%, the lowest among Northeast Florida counties, and lower than the state average of 71.6%.²


National Context

Disparities in student achievement appear even before children enter kindergarten. Preschool-aged children who live in poverty are less likely to know the letters of the alphabet; fewer than half can count to 20 or write their names.¹¹

Young children from low-income families have smaller vocabularies than their more affluent peers; they recognize fewer letters, numbers or shapes; they have fewer books at home; and they are read to less frequently.

Disparities that are apparent in kindergarten tend to persist as students progress through school. Studies tracking first graders with reading problems have shown that 88% still have problems reading when they reach fourth grade.¹² Seventy-five per cent of third graders who are poor readers are still poor readers in ninth grade.¹³ Children who are not skilled readers by the end of third grade are unlikely to graduate from high school.

Jacksonville Context

The School Readiness Uniform Screening System (SRUSS) is an assessment given to children in the fall of kindergarten to measure their general developmental readiness for school.

In Fall 2005, between 30 and 40% of kindergarten students in Duval County were found to be at moderate or high risk of falling below grade level in reading based on two parts of this assessment that relate strongly to children's reading readiness (Letter Naming and Initial Sound Fluency). (Source: Florida School Readiness Uniform Screening System, State Report of District Scores, Fall 2005, p. 4.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Reporting Performance</th>
<th>SRUSS Percent Getting Ready and Not Ready Yet</th>
<th>FCAT Gr. 3 Reading % Below Proficient (Levels 1 and 2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-Risk Literacy Neighborhoods</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Duval County Neighborhoods</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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¹ Juel.

The time between birth and age 5 is critical if children are to build a strong foundation for future learning.

Efforts to Improve Children’s School Readiness Must Begin Early

National Context

Learning begins at birth, and is cumulative. Brain research documents that the first years of a child’s life set the foundation for later learning. In the learning process, children first gain the fundamental skills that must be in place before they can learn at the next level. By age 3, roughly 85% of the brain’s core structure will be formed. Many of these key learning “building blocks” are developed before a child turns five.14

Gaps in children’s skills are apparent by the time they start kindergarten. Because of the documented persistence of the achievement gap, our efforts to close the gap must start early—before children enter kindergarten. Those efforts must target the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will help children become successful readers.

The evidence is mounting: Many things can wait; children cannot.

Jacksonville Context

Projections for 2005 indicate that the Jacksonville population includes 63,248 children under age 5, with over 12,000 children in each age cohort.

This means that every year there are more than 12,000 three year olds and more than 12,000 four year olds for whom high-quality early learning experiences cannot wait.

We must act immediately to ensure that those future graduates, workers, and citizens are acquiring the foundational skills they will need to be successful.

Jacksonville’s Youngest Citizens and Future Workforce

Class of 2018: 12,600 Children Strong
Class of 2019: 12,900 Children Strong
Class of 2020: 13,000 Children Strong
Class of 2021: 13,200 Children Strong

High-Quality Preschool Programs Yield Educational and Economic Benefits

National Context

High-quality preschool programs, rich in literacy experiences and learning opportunities, increase children’s pre-reading skills, leading to better child outcomes.

High-quality preschool is not a luxury; it is linked to future economic prosperity. Benefits of participating in high-quality preschool include:

- Increased achievement test scores
- Improved behavior and attitudes
- Decreased special education referrals
- Decreased crime and delinquency
- Increased high school graduation

Cost-effectiveness studies suggest that high-quality preschool has a high rate of return: Every dollar invested will return $4 to $16, and the public will recoup one-half to three-quarters of its original investment.15

While high-quality preschool is known to be both effective and cost-effective, many early child care programs focus on custodial care rather than meaningful learning. Research has revealed that a startling number of child care settings are poor to mediocre in quality. A national study, the Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study, found that 86% of centers in the study provided mediocre care; 12% were so inadequate that they threatened children’s health. Family child care homes fared no better.16

Jacksonville Context

Preschool quality is made up of two dimensions—process and structural. Process quality includes personal interactions, materials, and learning opportunities and classroom and center environments. Structural quality refers to class size, adult-child ratio, and the education and training of teachers and staff.

The Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) are the most widely used instruments for measuring elements of quality in infant/toddler and preschool classrooms. Using a seven-point scale, Figure 1 depicts a snapshot of the ITERS and ECERS ratings for selected JELP centers in the fall of 2005.

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16 CED, p. 3.

Developing early literacy skills takes place in families, in communities, in child care settings, and in schools.

**National Context**

Children do not develop or learn in a vacuum.

The first five years of life are critical to a child's lifelong development. The environment and experiences to which young children are exposed set the stage for future development and success in school and in life.

The extent to which children are “ready” to be successful in school depends on their development in six important areas, but it is the quality of the support children receive from their families, their communities, child care settings, and schools that ultimately determines their readiness for future success.

While families are their children’s first and most important teachers, they are no longer doing the job alone. Social and economic changes have resulted in increased demand for and enrollment in outside-the-home early care and learning services.

The National Center for Education Statistics found that in 2004, 66% of four-year-old children attended preschool. In 1965, only 7% of four-year-olds were enrolled. There is a much greater need for high-quality early care and learning services.

*Figure 2. Expanding Preschool Enrollment*

Three decades of research have shown that parental participation improves student learning—and successful interventions can alter parenting behavior to improve school readiness.  

of the Family and Community

Jacksonville Context

Efforts are underway in Jacksonville to: (a) make neighborhoods safer; (b) ensure adequate, accessible, and affordable housing; (c) provide affordable and accessible health services both before and after children are born; (d) see that children and families have enriched learning opportunities before and after school; and (e) improve K-12 student achievement.

The Jacksonville Early Literacy Partnership (JELP) builds on these efforts through a citywide partnership that is committed to improving the quality of Jacksonville children’s school readiness outcomes, beginning with our most vulnerable children.

Engaged Families

Partners in their children’s development and learning

Preschool Quality

Early Care and Learning Programs and Elementary Schools

Ready Readers, Ready Learners

Community Engagement

15 Literacy Neighborhoods, each anchored by one or more public libraries

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Mayor John Peyton (above) addresses the Literacy Summit participants in January 2006.
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 (see Appendix B).

**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
The work of the JELP is organized into two strategic initiatives: Improving Preschool Quality and Strengthening Community Engagement. This work is supported by a strong commitment to evaluation and accountability and wide-ranging and extensive communication.

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

JELP Partners
The Mayor's Office and 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
Jacksonville Children's Commission
Nemours BrightStart! Dyslexia Initiative
Jacksonville Public Library
Jacksonville Urban League Head Start
United Way of Northeast Florida
Florida Institute of Education at the University of North Florida
JELP Guiding Beliefs

To make a difference in the lives of Jacksonville's children, the JELP believes that it must:

- **Improve Quality.** Strengthen and improve the quality of early care and learning programs in all sectors of our community.

- **Leverage Efforts.** Weave together effective efforts underway in many sectors of our community, accelerate these efforts and their impact, and implement initiatives that address barriers to achieving a shared vision.

- **Nurture Partnerships.** Strengthen the links between school readiness and public school programs, working to improve literacy outcomes for children in grades K-3.

- **Field-Test Promising Practices.** Implement neighborhood demonstration projects testing innovative and research-based strategies to enhance early literacy that, if effective, could be used more broadly across the community.

- **Engage in Research.** Research promising efforts and effective practices being used in other communities.

- **Increase Community Awareness.** Use the bully pulpit of the Mayor's office to focus attention and awareness on improving early literacy and learning.

- **Track Data and Use Results.** Develop and make available a virtual data partnership and gateway to access information, track outcomes, and report on progress.

- **Partner with Parents and Families.** Engage parents and families as primary, essential partners in the development of their children.

- **Build Collaboration.** Build a community-wide collaborative partnership that (a) features trust, recognition, and appropriate accountability; and (b) makes fact-based, data-driven decisions and recommendations with a continuing focus on the vision to make Jacksonville the most literate community in America.
In January 2006, more than 200 business and community leaders gathered at the Main Library downtown to explore the links among early literacy, future success in school, and Jacksonville’s prosperity. At the city’s first Literacy Summit, Mayor John Peyton laid out a compelling argument for the importance of strengthening and deepening the city’s focus on children’s early years—particularly early literacy.

Arthur J. Rolnick, Senior Vice President and Director of Research for the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, was the keynote speaker at the Summit. Rolnick, a national authority on the economic impact of early childhood education, made the following points:

- State and local governments often take an active role in promoting the economy by subsidizing private activities. Proponents contend that these subsidies lure businesses to desired locations. Rolnick argues that this strategy is shortsighted, as it merely shifts resources from one place to another.

- Education produces effects with benefits to individuals and the public. As a result, K-12 and post secondary educational institutions receive support from multiple levels of government.

- Research documents the connection between the quality of children’s early learning experiences and future success. Yet the years from birth to school entry receive less attention from policy makers and lower levels of public investment than other sectors providing similar kinds of support and educational services to children.

- Evidence is mounting that investment in high-quality early childhood education yields high returns. The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study tracked the contributions an adult makes to the quality of his/her early care and learning experiences. Participants in the study who attended high-quality preschool classes were less likely to be placed in a special education program, had significantly higher high school graduation rates, and fewer participants were arrested as compared to the control group.

- Cost-benefit analysis of the Perry Preschool Study found that for every dollar invested in the program, over $8 in benefits was returned to the participants and to society as a whole. Rolnick’s cost-benefit analysis estimated the real internal rate of return (adjusted for inflation) at 16 percent. These returns are higher than rates of return on many educational and societal interventions now in use.
Rolnick described the Minnesota Foundation for Early Childhood Development, a permanent endowment created to provide money to fill the gap between funds currently available and the amount needed to fully fund high-quality preschool programs. The voluntary program focuses on children living in poverty, with incentives provided for families to encourage involvement. Rolnick explained the benefits of this type of permanent endowment, which include:

- Scholarships cover tuition to high-quality and highly effective child care programs and parent mentoring.
- Funds may be used to enhance existing programs, boost teacher qualifications and compensation, reduce adult-child ratios, and increase curriculum and learning resources.
- Funds may be allocated for research to track the improvement of participating children and identify where additional support may be needed.
- The endowment represents a long-term commitment and a market-based approach that promotes innovation, outcome accountability, and ongoing quality improvement.

Rolnick challenged Jacksonville to continue efforts to improve the quality of early care and learning services and increase access to high-quality programs to all families, but especially to those living in low-income neighborhoods.

A second community-wide strategy was unveiled at the Summit: United Way's Born Learning Initiative. Rachel Perry, Communications Director of United Way Success by Six, introduced the campaign:

**Born Learning...**

- ...is a national early learning public engagement campaign designed for local adoption;
- ...is a collaborative response to the widening gap between cutting-edge science on early learning and our understanding and actions around what children need to come to school prepared to succeed;
- ...includes public service announcements, a Web site, and educational materials that give parents, grandparents, and caregivers easy action steps to help young children learn; and
- ...is a unique partnership that links a national early learning public engagement campaign with local adaptation and effort.

The Summit concluded with a call to action issued by Mayor Peyton. He challenged participating businesses to adopt a child care center, offer employees time to volunteer in their children's schools, or implement at least one other proactive program that would positively impact early childhood education in Jacksonville. He challenged frontline practitioners, child advocates, and researchers to continue to work collaboratively to (a) help transform Jacksonville's custodial care to high-quality learning care, and (b) significantly increase family and community engagement in young children's learning and development.
JELP Strategic Initiative:
Preschool Quality
The JELP’s Preschool Quality Strategic Initiative is made up of four programs carefully designed to address critical needs and to reinforce and support related improvement efforts. The work of these programs was carried out through multi-organization work teams (see Appendix B).

The four programs include:

- **Intensive Quality Support Teams** that provide a wide array of coaching support for 662 frontline child care practitioners in 165 child care centers in Duval County.

- **A Quality Rating System** that examines preschool quality based on eight components: ratio and group size, environmental structure, staff qualifications, staff compensation and benefits, professional development, screening and assessment, curriculum, and parent/family involvement.

- **The Nemours BrightStart! program**, which screens preschool children for dyslexia and offers related intervention services.

- **A Career Ladder for School Readiness Practitioners** that assists preschool teachers as they work to increase their professional qualifications.

The Preschool Quality Initiative is led by the Early Learning Coalition of Duval, Inc., working in collaboration with Episcopal Children’s Services, Florida Community College at Jacksonville, the Jacksonville Children’s Commission, Jacksonville Urban League Head Start, the Nemours BrightStart! Dyslexia Initiative, and the Duval County Public Schools.
Goal(s) or Purpose:
Evidence substantiating the strong link between the high-quality early care and learning experiences of young children, particularly those children living in low-income neighborhoods, and their future success in school and beyond continues to mount. By focusing efforts on helping children before they enter formal schooling, the JELP is working with school readiness service providers to lay a strong foundation for children’s future educational achievement and thus the city’s future economic prosperity.

Two closely aligned research- and standards-based strategies comprise the Intensive Support to Improve Quality component:

- developing and field-testing a Quality Rating System (QRS), developed by the Early Learning Coalition of Duval (ELC), that will help families and the community evaluate the quality of early care and learning programs and begin to require higher quality programs for children; and

- providing (a) technical assistance, coaching support, and literacy-focused resources to approximately 100 centers preparing for the ELC QRS Rating; and providing (b) coaching support and literacy-focused resources to teachers working with some of Jacksonville’s most vulnerable children in 25 Jacksonville Urban League (JUL) Head Start centers.

Target Audience: Child Care Centers Served
Recognizing that all children benefit from participating in high-quality school readiness programs, especially children living in low-income neighborhoods, the JELP Intensive Support to Improve Quality component targets centers serving Jacksonville’s most vulnerable children. The highest concentration of Intensive Support to Improve Quality component centers is in five of the most at-risk JELP Literacy Neighborhoods. The map of Duval County on page 20 is organized into the 15 JELP Literacy Neighborhoods. This map illustrates the locations of centers participating in the Intensive Support Quality Component, with red indicating those JELP Literacy Neighborhoods with more than 12 participating centers, and green indicating neighborhoods with fewer than four participating centers.

The child care centers served by the JELP include approximately 100 child care centers with signed rate agreements to serve school readiness children and prepare for QRS rating; and 25 Head Start centers engaged in Head Start’s national quality improvement process. Centers may participate in the QRS Intensive Support Services program for up to 24 months. Head Start centers have committed to a similar process as they improve the quality of early care and learning services they provide.
What We Did: Child Care Center Quality

Development of Quality Rating System (QRS)

The Early Learning Coalition of Duval (ELC) developed and completed the first phase of field-testing the Quality Rating System. The QRS rates early care and learning programs in eight components of quality:

1. center and classroom learning environment quality
2. use of research-based curriculum and appropriate assessment tools
3. engagement of parents and families in center activities and in the learning of their child
4. qualifications of the director and lead and associate teachers
5. professional development opportunities of staff and their links to needs of the children being served in the program
6. screening and referral services for children and their families
7. ratio and group size
8. staff compensation and benefits

One hundred centers prepared for QRS rating and participated in the Intensive Support to Improve Quality component as part of the Phase I Pilot. Each was awarded a pilot star rating based on its level of compliance with prescribed standards in the eight components.

In 2005 and 2006, participating centers were evaluated on quality component 1 (center and classroom learning environment) using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS). Both scales use a 7-point rating system. For the purpose of rating quality, ratings from 0 - 2.99 are considered Poor, ratings from 3.00 to 4.99 are considered Mediocre, and ratings from 5.00 and upward are considered Good-to-Excellent. There were 87 centers with ITERS ratings for both years, and 92 centers with ECERS ratings for both years. Figures 1 and 2 show the 2005 (Figure 1) and 2006 (Figure 2) ECERS and ITERS ratings by the three quality categories.

Figure 1. ITERS and ECERS QRS Ratings of Learning Environment Quality for 2005
From fall 2005 to spring 2006, the environmental quality in infant and toddler classrooms and preschool classrooms significantly improved. The percentage of centers with ITERS Good-to-Excellent ratings increased by 500%. The percentage of centers with ECERS Good-to-Excellent ratings increased by 200%.

ITERS and ECERS scores are used to assign stars for the first component of quality, center and classroom learning environment quality. The figures show improvement in the ITERS and ECERS ratings across the years. In fact, from 2005 to 2006, the percentage of centers with ITERS Good-to-Excellent scores increased by 500%, and the percentage of centers with ECERS Good-to-Excellent scores increased by 200%.

In 2005, in addition to the ITERS and ECERS scores, centers rated themselves on all of the quality components, and in 2006 trained assessors rated the centers on the eight components of quality. The ratings were transformed to a Star Rating System that awards from zero to five stars depending on the overall quality of the center. Figure 3 shows the 2005 and 2006 Star System ratings for the 87 centers rated for both years.
Support Teams (continued)

**JELP 2005-2006**

- In 2006, 52% of the 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.

The quality of the QRS centers improved between the two assessments. In 2006, 52% of the centers received three or more stars, which represents a 200% increase over the 2005 ratings.

Figure 4 provides additional information about the change from 2005 to 2006 in the number of quality stars awarded to each of the 87 centers.

*Figure 4. The Change from 2005 to 2006 in the Number of Quality Stars Awarded to the 87 QRS Centers*

Sixty-six percent of the centers increased their rating by at least one star over the year, and 23% of the centers increased their rating by at least two stars.

Due mostly to these ratings that reflect ECERS and ITERS learning environment quality, 22 centers exited from the QRS in 2006.

**Supporting the Teachers and Staff: Coaching, Training and Materials**

This strategy is led by the Early Learning Coalition of Duval (ELC), working in collaboration with Episcopal Children’s Services (ECS), the Jacksonville Children’s Commission (JCC), and the Jacksonville Urban League (JUL) Head Start Program.

As centers prepared for the ELC QRS rating, Intensive Quality Support Teams provided (a) regular classroom coaching for teachers working with infants, toddlers, and preschool children; (b) technical assistance for center directors to develop Center Quality Action Plans; (c) assistance to center staff in implementing their Center Quality Action Plans; and (d) assistance in accessing additional program and training resources such as mini-grants for materials, scholarships for additional training, and volunteer mentors.

*Intensive Support by Targeted Literacy Classroom Coaching* is the delivery system used in participating JUL Head Start centers and in some early care and learning centers working with JCC and ECS. This strategy provided (a) a preschool coach to deliver regular classroom coaching to teachers working with preschool children, and (b) additional literacy-focused resources to enhance the quality of the environment in early care and learning classrooms.
During the 2005-2006 school year, approximately 7,900 children ages birth to five years old in 165 child care sites with 662 teachers participated in the JELP Intensive Support to Improve Quality component (see Appendix D). Figure 5 shows the age range of the children served.

**Figure 5. The Number of Children in Each Age Group Served by the JELP Intensive Support to Improve Quality Component**

![Pie chart showing age distribution of children served](chart.png)

### What We Did: Child Outcomes

Regardless of the delivery system used to provide services, all sites included in the JELP shared a common commitment to using literacy-intensive instruction. Children's literacy-related outcomes were assessed in the fall and spring of the year, and the assessments provide evidence of the impact of intensive support on children's readiness and literacy skills. Figure 5 reports the number of children served by the JELP; however, only a portion of these children was included in the assessment of child outcomes. Participating JELP four year olds eligible for kindergarten in the 2006-2007 school year were sampled for the assessment of child outcomes.

Two instruments were used to measure the children's reading readiness - the *Test of Early Reading Ability-Third Edition* (TERA-3) and the *Alphabet Letter Recognition Inventory* (ALRI).

TERA-3 is a norm-referenced test of early literacy skills that can be used to measure growth over time. It also provides a standard by which to compare participating children to other children across the nation.

The ALRI is a locally developed inventory measuring children's ability to recognize and name the upper- and lowercase letters of the alphabet when presented in non-alphabetic order. The ability to identify the letters of the alphabet is a key skill which sets the stage for reading readiness —therefore for future learning.
**Support Teams (continued)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JELP 2005-2006</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TERA-3 Results</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The national percentile ranking of the TERA-3 Reading Quotient fall and spring mean scores are reported for each of the past three years in Figure 6. In 2003-2004, the year prior to implementation of the JELP, results are reported for the children served by the Duval County Professional Development Consortium, and participating children were sampled. The evaluations of two groups of children were combined, resulting in 637 scores. In 2004-2005, the Year 1 JELP results are reported for all children with informed consent, resulting in 1588 scores. In 2005-2006, the Year 2 JELP results are reported for a sample of children with informed consent, resulting in 758 scores.</td>
</tr>
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**Figure 6. Percentile Ranking of the TERA-3 Reading Quotient Mean Scores for the Past Three Years**

![Graph showing the percentile ranking of the TERA-3 Reading Quotient mean scores for the past three years.](image)

The mean percentile ranking of the children’s TERA-3 Reading Quotient score at the beginning of the school year (the purple line) has steadily increased over the three years, with the largest increase occurring from the 20th percentile ranking in 2003-2004 to the 31st percentile ranking in 2004-2005. Likewise, the percentile ranking of the children’s score at year’s end (teal line) has also steadily increased. The gain in percentile ranking for the last two years is similar, with a seven-percentile ranking increase in 2004-2005 and a six-percentile ranking increase in 2005-2006. In both years, the year-end mean percentile ranking was at least 13 percentiles above the bottom quartile.

- The gain in the TERA-3 Reading Quotient score for the last two years represents an increase of seven percentile rankings in 2004-2005 and six percentile rankings in 2005-2006.

- In both years the year-end mean percentile ranking was at least 13 percentile rankings above the bottom quartile (the 25th percentile ranking).
Intensive Quality Support Teams (continued)

JELP 2005-2006

- In each of the past three years, the percentage of proficient JELP children exceeded the 66% of all children entering kindergarten for the first time who were proficient at letter recognition based on the ECLS-K benchmark.

ALRI Results

The ALRI score represents the number of correctly identified letters, and scores are reported in four recognition categories: 0 to 13 letters, 14 to 26 letters, 27 to 39 letters, and 40 to 52 letters.

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten (ECLS-K) provides a national benchmark for alphabet letter recognition. In the ECLS-K study, a random sample of upper- and lowercase letters was presented to children. ECLS-K researchers classified letter recognition as proficient if children named at least 75% of the sampled letters. Reports using ECLS-K data indicate that 66% of children entering kindergarten for the first time were proficient in letter recognition. This standard is used as a benchmark for the JELP children’s letter recognition.

Figure 7 shows the ALRI performance of the children for the past three years. There were fall and spring scores for 1,431 children in 2003-2004, 2,055 scores in 2004-2005, and 2,300 scores in 2005-2006.  

Figure 7. The Percentage of Children Proficient at Letter Recognition for the Past Three Years

![Bar chart showing percentages of children proficient in letter recognition for each year](image)

Figure 7 shows that the instruction in letter recognition has been very successful each year. The light blue bars illustrate the percent of children proficient in letter recognition in the fall of the year, and the teal bars illustrate the percentage of children proficient in the spring. In each of the past three years, the percentage of proficient JELP children has exceeded the ECLS-K benchmark.


The children who experienced JELP preschool classrooms, in contrast to the comparison children, had higher mean scores and more positive distributions of readiness categories across all state readiness measures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JELP 2005-2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children who experienced JELP preschool classrooms had higher levels of state-mandated kindergarten school readiness than comparison children who did not participate in JELP preschool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What We Did: The Longitudinal Study**

During the 2004-2005 school year, the JELP offered 5,100 children from low-income neighborhoods high-quality preschool that included literacy-focused curricula with job-embedded training for the teachers. This cohort of children matriculated to kindergarten in fall 2005, when they underwent state-mandated assessment of school readiness using three instruments. The JELP Longitudinal Study uses 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.

The specific research question addressed in this study was: Were JELP children more ready for kindergarten than similar children who did not participate in the JELP? Outcome variables in the study include the Early Screening Inventory - Kindergarten (ESI-K) and two measures from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) and Initial Sounds Fluency (ISF).

Propensity scores (representing the probability of participation in a JELP preschool class the year prior to kindergarten) were assigned to children. Gender, ethnicity (defined as Black or non-Black), free/reduced lunch status, language minority status (ESOL), living within a Reading First school attendance boundary, and the public elementary school attended were background characteristics used to estimate the propensity scores. The observations were ranked by their propensity score and the ranked data were divided into 10 equal strata or groups.

A t-test was used to determine whether the differences between JELP and comparison children’s mean scores occurred by chance or represent true differences. A chi-squared test was used to determine whether the distributions of the percentage of scores in readiness categories depended on children’s participation in JELP classrooms. Table 1 summarizes the results across strata and school readiness measures. Each ✓ and ✓+ indicates there was a true difference, with the JELP children achieving at higher levels than the comparison children.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Statistical Test</th>
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Note: ✓+ Indicates a significant difference at α ≤ .05. ✓ Indicates a significant difference at α ≤ .10.
Intensive Quality Support Teams (continued)

JELP 2005-2006

- Children who experienced JELP preschool classrooms had higher levels of state-mandated kindergarten school readiness than comparison children who did not participate in JELP preschool.

The children who experienced JELP preschool classrooms, in contrast to the comparison children, had higher mean scores and more positive distributions of readiness categories across all state readiness measures when the strata are collapsed (Table 1, page 27, far right column). The preponderance of evidence allows us to say 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.

Lessons Learned and Implications for Planning:

Evidence continues to mount that investing in improving quality and increasing literacy and learning outcomes for children improves the school readiness of children, especially those who are economically disadvantaged. However, improving the quality in early care and learning programs is personnel- and resource-intensive.

We must make every effort to ensure that we maximize the impact of our investment to improve quality and children's school readiness outcomes. The JELP is engaged in ongoing discussions about how to create a quality support system for centers which identifies expectations for entry and continuation in the system, establishes criteria for exiting the system, and provides the support centers need to maintain high quality after exiting.

We know that staff members at child care centers turn over—sometimes rapidly and extensively—resulting in substantially new preschool workers who deal with the children from year to year. For this reason, the provision of coaching in the form of on-site quality support team members is an essential intervention. Quality support in the form of on-site assistance needs to be designed in levels, rather than as a one-size-fits-all dose expected to bring all centers to a fixed and sustained level of quality. Success will likely resemble an infusion of resources over time, rather than a single inoculation expected to result in sustained change.

The need for reliable data in a timely manner requires resources and time to train and administer the evaluation tools. To instill confidence in the assessment process, the instruments must be standardized, and the individuals administering them must be trained to a common standard of agreement.

The first year of the Longitudinal Study indicates that JELP intensive support of preschool classrooms resulted in a higher level of school readiness for participating children than the comparison children, as measured by Florida’s statewide kindergarten screening. This longitudinal study will continue until the children are in the third grade.

The JELP acts as a first responder in the city's efforts to improve the educational success of its children. By focusing its efforts on helping children before they enter formal schooling, Jacksonville is a leader in the state in transforming custodial early care to high-quality early care and learning in the school readiness sector.
Goal(s) or Purpose:
The Nemours BrightStart! Program is designed to assist prekindergarten children at risk for dyslexia/reading failure. The goal of the program is to screen and provide intensive educational intervention to increasing numbers of children each year. While other JELP programs provide intensive support to centers serving at-risk children, Nemours BrightStart! works with children in those centers who need additional, small-group instruction to learn critical early literacy skills.

Target Audience:
The primary target audience for this intervention included children considered at risk for dyslexia/reading failure. This determination was made by selecting children who scored in the lowest 25% of scores on the early literacy screening measures used in the program.

What We Did:
At 52 participating centers, children for whom parental consent was obtained were given two early literacy screening measures, Get Ready to Read and Get It, Got It, Go! Trained Nemours BrightStart! teachers administered these tests. Children who scored in approximately the lowest 28% were offered on-site intensive, small-group literacy instruction at 38 of the 52 screening sites. With parental consent, children received these lessons with Nemours BrightStart! teachers twice a week for 30 minutes per lesson, in groups of up to four children. The intervention lasted about nine weeks. Some child care centers received intervention from October 2005 to January 2006, while others received it from February to April 2006.

All intervention children were re-screened with Get Ready to Read and Get It, Got It, Go! in January 2006, to compare the progress of those who had just completed intervention with those waiting to start intervention. In April and May 2006, 78% of all children screened in the fall of 2005 were re-screened with the same two tests. By doing so it was possible to measure growth in early literacy skills for typical children, and compare this to the growth seen in children who received the Nemours BrightStart! intensive instruction.
68% of entire spring screening sample scored 16 or higher on *Get Ready to Read*, the score determined in national studies to indicate probable readiness for formal reading instruction. Only 25% of these children scored at this level in fall 2005.

Children experiencing intervention, on average, doubled total score on *Get Ready to Read*, and more than tripled their Rhyming scores on *Get It! Got It! Go!*

67% of intervention children scored within normal range on *Get Ready to Read*.

Statistical analyses indicated a significant, positive effect of the Nemours BrightStart! intervention for participating children.

![Figure 1. Average Get Ready to Read! (GRTR) Scores Over Time](image1)

Figure 1 shows the improvement in GRTR scores from Fall 2005 to Spring 2006 for both typical children and those scoring in the at-risk range in Fall 2005. Many of these children caught up to their peers following Nemours BrightStart! intensive intervention.

![Figure 2. Average Rhyming Scores Over Time](image2)

Figure 2 shows the results of intervention on a rhyming task for two successive groups of at-risk children. Both groups made significant progress as a result of intervention; progress was significantly slower during the months children were not receiving extra help. Changes over time were statistically significant and indicate that the Nemours BrightStart! intervention was successful in helping at-risk children acquire critical early literacy skills.

**Lessons Learned and Implications for Planning:**

The Nemours BrightStart! approach to screening and intervention is effective in accomplishing its stated goals. *Get It, Got It, Go!* has some psychometric problems that made interpretation challenging. A new screening instrument will replace *Get It, Got It, Go!* in 2006-2007.
Career Ladder for School Readiness Practitioners

JELP 2005-2006

Annual Outcomes

- The Infant/Toddler CDA-Plus Curriculum was collaboratively developed and implemented.

- The Family Child Care Home CDA-Plus Curriculum was collaboratively developed and implemented.

- 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.

Goal(s) or Purpose:
The goal of the Career Ladder for School Readiness Practitioners program is to create a comprehensive professional development program, organized into a career ladder, for early childhood workers as they help Jacksonville’s children get ready for school. Efforts are focused on creating stronger training programs, increased opportunities, and more targeted support for early childhood educators pursuing a Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate, or a two- or four-year degree in Early Childhood Education.

Target Audience:
There were three target groups identified to receive the benefits of these program services: 1) classroom teachers or teacher aides employed in centers receiving intensive support as they prepare for the Early Learning Coalition of Duval’s Quality Rating Program; 2) classroom teachers or aides enrolled in child care centers with signed rate agreements to serve school readiness children; and 3) classroom teachers or teacher aides employed in centers in low-income and/or high-needs neighborhoods.

What We Did:
The Career Ladder team first focused on the training available for students pursuing the CDA in Jacksonville. This is the pre-college certificate that allows child care workers to teach voluntary pre-kindergarten (VPK) and certifies them for a variety of lead teacher roles in the child care industry. The three agencies that provide this training, Episcopal Children’s Services, the Jacksonville Children’s Commission, and Florida Community College at Jacksonville, came together with other partners on this work team to redesign CDA curriculum to strengthen the knowledge and skills of Jacksonville’s preschool teachers. The CDA-Plus training is now offered at all agencies. It incorporates the essential competencies of health, safety, nutrition, and environment typically associated with CDA training, but adds other competencies that strengthen teachers’ classroom practices, including: an understanding of contemporary brain research and early learning, methods for teaching early literacy, how to implement comprehensive preschool curricula, and how to use computers to prepare lessons and for child learning. Since the CDA is a pre-college degree that allows child care workers to teach preschool, and since the legislation governing VPK will require that teachers hold college degrees in the future, the work team also added a third important component: general preparation in adult literacy and math skills.

This content-focused component gives each child care worker the opportunity to get ready for college and strengthens the content base used in their classrooms with the children they currently serve.
What We Did (continued):

Because many community college representatives are members of this work team, an articulation agreement among all agencies offering the CDA-Plus program and the community college was executed. All students completing all components of the CDA-Plus program can earn nine college credits toward a two-year degree at Florida Community College at Jacksonville. Through tuition support, mentoring, and quality training, 220 child care practitioners earned CDA certification through programs offered in this partnership. About one third of those teachers have already entered the AS degree program in Early Childhood Education at Florida Community College at Jacksonville and are on a career path to transfer to a university in their junior year to secure a four-year degree.

An enhanced Infant/Toddler CDA-Plus curriculum and an enhanced Family Child Care Home CDA-Plus curriculum using the CDA-Plus VPK model were also completed.

Lessons Learned and Implications for Planning:

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.

The past two years of implementation have demonstrated the importance of individual mentoring and close monitoring of career ladder candidates. Because child care workers have traditionally been viewed as caretakers in the past, today’s child care worker is not well-prepared to conduct the standards-based teaching needed to prepare children for school. Mentoring and coaching in the field have proved effective in engaging early childhood educators on this path to lifelong learning.

As efforts move forward, it is clear that improving quality of school readiness programs will demand:

1. a clear road map that links the multiple paths through training agencies and colleges for early childhood educators;

2. that agencies collaborate to strengthen programming across organizational boundaries and streamline approaches so that all agencies are teaching similar competency-based curricula; and

3. efforts to strengthen the leadership and management skills of directors (as well as teachers).

All three of these elements are essential if Jacksonville is to significantly improve the quality of school readiness programs and the readiness outcomes of its children.
Annual Outcomes

- The design for a research-based workshop series for center directors was completed.
- The curriculum includes seven leadership and four business competencies.
- Plans for pilot-testing during the 2006-2007 program year were finalized.

Goal(s) or Purpose:

The purpose of this work team was to design a professional development curriculum for center directors that would build the knowledge and skills needed to (a) implement a research-based and standards-based, high-quality school readiness program that consistently produces positive readiness outcomes for children; and (b) operate a small business effectively and efficiently.

Target Audience:

The target audience for this program will be: child care center directors who are participating in the Intensive Support Program to prepare them for the QRS rating system; Head Start directors participating in the Intensive Support Program; center directors with signed rate agreements to serve school readiness children; and particularly, center directors of programs located in low-income and/or high-needs neighborhoods.

What We Did:

The work team was convened in February 2006. From a review of the literature and best practices, seven leadership and four business competency areas were identified. Leadership competencies include: (a) creating and sustaining high-quality early care and learning environments; (b) choosing and using high-quality learning tools; (c) choosing and using assessment tools; (d) learning to lead; (e) increasing and sustaining meaningful family involvement; (f) creating and sustaining high-quality interactions; and (g) choosing and supporting high-quality professional development.

Core business competencies include: (a) business plan basics; (b) financial statements and setting up a budget; (c) basic recordkeeping, and (d) taxes. Seven possible business elective areas were also identified. For each competency area, goals and outcomes were developed. Participating directors will develop a portfolio as they try out what they are learning in their own centers. Participating directors will also receive one-on-one technical assistance. A focus group of center directors was conducted to gather input regarding possible delivery strategies and competency areas. The work team used focus group information along with feedback from other key stakeholders to design the pilot workshop series.

Lessons Learned and Implications for Planning:

This program was in the design phase during the current program year (2005-2006), so there has not been an opportunity to determine lessons learned at this point; however, in 2006-2007 two cohorts of early care and learning directors will be identified to participate in the field-testing of the director leadership and business practices workshop series, and implementation of the program will commence with this group.
The environment and experiences to which young children are exposed set the stage for their future development. The quality of support children receive from their families, communities, child care settings, and schools determines their readiness for school and for future success.
JELP Strategic Initiative:
Community Engagement
Families are children’s first and most important teachers. Children begin learning the moment they are born, and the time spent with their families is crucial to their development.

But the neighborhoods in which children live are also important, because it is here they will find the teachers and clergy who help them learn, the doctors and nurses who help keep them healthy, the police officers who help keep them safe, and the libraries where they can access books to read. The quality of support children receive from their families and communities directly influence the person the child becomes.

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 Library, the Northeast Florida Pediatric Society, and the Florida Institute of Education at the University of North Florida.

Finally, the Florida Institute of Education at UNF, working in collaboration with all JELP partners, leads the evaluation and accountability efforts.
Citywide Engagement: Mayor’s Book Club, RALLY Book Drive! and RALLY Business Volunteers!

JELP 2005-2006

Annual Outcomes

• Jacksonville’s four-year-old cohort totals approximately 12,600 children, and all are invited to participate in RALLY! activities, regardless of socioeconomic status.

• Each Book Club member received 11 books designed to promote literacy concepts.

• 247 new library cards were issued.

• 8,399 four year olds became members of Mayor’s Book Club.

Goal(s) or Purpose:

The purposes for both programs carried out as part of the RALLY! component are to (a) encourage community engagement through active involvement in early care and education efforts by community and business volunteers; and (b) increase families meaningful engagement in their children’s learning by providing literacy materials and experiences designed to better prepare preschool children to enter school.

Target Audience:

The RALLY! component targets preschool four-year-old children and their families in Jacksonville, with a particular focus on children living in low-income neighborhoods and the child care centers in which they are enrolled. Each year, Jacksonville’s four-year-old cohort totals approximately 12,600 children, and all are invited to participate in RALLY! activities, regardless of socioeconomic status. The broader community is also included as the target audience in terms of soliciting volunteers to serve in different capacities and support the work of this program.

What We Did:

Mayor’s Book Club

The highly successful Mayor’s Book Club for four year olds completed a second year of operation. Families of four-year-old preschool children in the community were invited to register their children to receive periodically distributed books and related follow-up materials parents could use to discuss story elements and develop early literacy concepts with their children. Participating children also received backpacks filled with “school supplies”—crayons, stickers, a blanket to sit on while reading, and other items. Nearly 8,400 four year olds enrolled in the Book Club in 2005-2006—approximately 67% of Jacksonville’s entire four-year-old cohort. Registration events were held in selected Jacksonville public libraries, and during those events 247 new library cards were issued to families.

When the final book was mailed to 2005-2006 Mayor’s Book Club participants, it included a postcard survey form for parents. Two hundred sixty-six responses were returned, and nearly 80% of the respondents rated the Book Club as helpful.
Citywide Engagement: Mayor’s Book Club, RALLY Book Drive!

JELP 2005-2006

- 80% of participating parents rated the Book Club as helpful.

- Families reported that participation in the Mayor’s Book Club increased the time they spent on literacy-related activities with their children by one hour or more per week.

- 362,036 books were collected during this year’s RALLY! Book Drive.

The amount of time that children spend engaged in literacy activities impacts their future ability to read well, so increasing the time spent reading books at home is an important element in helping children’s school readiness. Participation in the Mayor’s Book Club increased the time that most responding parents spent on literacy-related activities with their children by one hour or more.

**Figure 1. Responses to the Question, Was the Mayor’s Book Club Helpful?**

The RALLY Book Drive! is a volunteer and service opportunity for organizations and individuals to collect and distribute books for low-income children. Serving as an umbrella for citywide efforts, the program’s three-year goal is to collect and distribute 1,000,000 books. A total of 362,036 new and gently used books were collected during 2005-2006.

**Figure 2. Responses to the Question, Has Book Club Changed the Amount of Time Spent per Week on Activities?**


and RALLY Business Volunteers! (continued)

JELP 2005-2006

Annual Outcomes

- 22 active RALLY Readers! Business Teams were established.
- 195 RALLY Readers! served approximately 3,500 children.
- 254 volunteers participated in RALLY! events.

What We Did:

RALLY Readers!

Teams of employees from 22 volunteer businesses visited child care centers each week. The carefully trained volunteers read high-quality children’s literature to preschool children in center classrooms. The volunteers engaged children in follow-up conversations and activities to review and reinforce concepts and skills introduced in the book. Participating RALLY Readers! businesses are profiled in snapshots that reveal their experiences with the program (see Appendix C).

Figure 1. Responses to the Question, Was RALLY Readers! Service Helpful to the Children?

RALLY Champions!

A new component of the RALLY Business Volunteers! was developed during 2005-2006. RALLY Champions! matches a Jacksonville business with a specific child care center. The RALLY Champions! business provides funds to help partner centers enhance classrooms, sponsors monthly themed events, holds appreciation days for teachers, and supports numerous other activities collaboratively developed by the donor and center director.
Lessons Learned and Implications for Planning:

The impact of the Mayor's Book Club has exceeded the expectations originally set during its planning and continues to increase in popularity and interest by the public. Engaging the children directly, and providing something immediate for families to do to help their children has proven to be an effective strategy. Informal feedback from Book Club members and their families indicates that directly appealing to children has encouraged them to become activists themselves, and to encourage the participation of their families.

In Year 1, and again in Year 2, the question of continuing involvement with Book Club members as they transition into kindergarten was a subject of discussion. A special newspaper for former Book Club members called RALLY Record was created as a pilot, and three issues were distributed. However, RALLY Record required more time and resources than first anticipated to develop, and did not appear to make a significant impact, so it was discontinued. As an alternative, the final book in the Book Club series will now include a letter from the Mayor encouraging members to join the book club initiated by Duval County Public Schools Superintendent Joseph Wise.

To provide additional feedback and make improvements, future activities will include (a) carrying out focus groups in various Literacy Neighborhoods; (b) increasing recruitment efforts for the RALLY Readers! program; and (c) developing additional strategies so that individuals and/or organizations might choose to become involved in RALLY! activities.
Citywide Engagement:  
United Way: Born Learning - Parent Education

JELP 2005-2006

Annual Outcomes

- Successful field-testing of Born Learning Lunch and Learn sessions was completed.

- Born Learning Lunch and Learn sessions were adapted to address Jacksonville needs.

- A comprehensive 2006-2007 implementation plan was developed.

- Jacksonville businesses and governmental agencies were recruited to participate.

Goal(s) or Purpose:

The goal of the United Way Born Learning program is to address parents' need for information about how they can maximize their children's learning potential. In 2005, the United Way of America partnered with the Ad Council and Civitas to create a parent engagement campaign called Born Learning.

Target Audience:

Local businesses and governmental agencies will be invited to participate. A trained Born Learning facilitator will work with volunteers to deliver the Born Learning Lunch and Learn sessions in workplace settings. The target audience is primarily low-wage families: parents, grandparents, or other caregivers.

What We Did:

The United Way of Northeast Florida joined forces with national efforts in the Born Learning program. This campaign features a series of public service announcements developed by the Ad Council. Civitas developed a set of complementary printed educational materials. The ads and materials are designed to convey the message that caregivers can easily turn any everyday moment into a learning moment.

During 2005-2006, the United Way of Northeast Florida worked with JELP partner organizations to develop a strategy for distributing these materials to parents through Jacksonville businesses and organizations. A series of three 45-minute interactive lunch and learn sessions have been developed that will be implemented in 2006-2007 with funding from RALLY Jacksonville! and the Early Learning Coalition of Duval. The workshops were field-tested with 45 parents. Evaluations were positive and provided useful feedback.

Materials and seminars delivered in Jacksonville will also include information regarding the selection of high-quality child care centers and the quality rating system being developed by the Early Learning Coalition of Duval.

Lessons Learned and Implications for Planning:

2005-2006 was a planning year. Feedback from the field-testing of the workshop series was positive. Modifications to make it Jacksonville-specific have been completed. Recruiting efforts have been productive. Jacksonville businesses and governmental agencies have been receptive and full implementation is scheduled for 2006-2007.
Neighborhood Engagement
The Don Brewer Early Learning, Research, and Development Center

JELP 2005-2006

**Annual Outcomes**

- The Brewer Center laid the groundwork to serve as a model demonstration child care center.
- The Center reached full enrollment capacity in September 2006.
- The Center delivered a VPK program during the academic school year and an intensive summer VPK program.

**Goal(s) or Purpose:**

The goal of the Brewer Center is to serve as part of a citywide, research-based and results-driven school readiness support center that brings together practitioners and researchers to tackle pressing challenges of practice. The work of the Center is organized around four strands: (a) implement a community-based demonstration center; (b) develop and implement a practice-focused research and development agenda; (c) develop professional development and outreach strategies and disseminate them to other Jacksonville centers; and (d) identify and test promising strategies to forge strong community partnerships.

**Target Audience:**

Target audiences were identified for each strand:

- **Strand 1:** Children ages six weeks to five years living in low-income neighborhoods
- **Strand 2:** Jacksonville’s early care and learning practitioners, families, neighborhoods, and local, state, and national researchers
- **Strand 3:** Two cohorts of child care center directors and/or educational supervisory personnel participating in the JELP Intensive Quality Support program
- **Strand 4:** Eastside community

**What We Did:**

- **Strand 1** establishes a community-based demonstration center at the Center. The Center opened in June 2005 with 35 children. As of September 2006, the Center is at capacity with 98 children. The Center serves at-risk children and recruits from the Jacksonville Eastside neighborhood in which it is located. The Center is fully staffed with seven teachers, all of whom have bachelor's degrees in education, and six of whom hold valid Florida Teaching Certificates. The Center is fully staffed with nine classroom assistants. All assistants have at least a CDA credential; three of the classroom assistants have an associate's degree and two have bachelor's degrees.

- **Strand 2** of the Center’s agenda is to implement a practice-focused research and development agenda that addresses pressing problems.

- **Strand 3** focuses on professional development and outreach strategies and disseminates promising practices about director leadership and business professional development to other early care and learning programs.

- **Strand 4** identifies and tests strategies to forge strong community partnerships among private, public, and governmental agencies.
The Center developed a comprehensive, research-based professional development plan for child care directors designed to increase directors' capacity to run effective businesses and function as learning leaders for their staff and the families they serve.

The Center developed a practice-focused research and development agenda that addresses the pressing problems that impact quality.

Major accomplishments for 2005-2006 include:

**Strand 1:** The Center opened, enrolled 98 children (most of whom live in the Center's Eastside community), implemented a high-quality school readiness program, and participated in Florida's VPK initiative with an academic year and an intensive summer program.

Strand 2: A practice-focused research and development agenda was developed using results from the work of the Intensive Support for Quality Preschool team, needs assessment findings, and implications from current research.

**Strand 3:** Developed a collaborative professional development initiative for child care center directors and other supervisory staff that focuses on effective leadership and business practices.

Strand 4: Served as a spark plug to enhance neighborhood pride by: (a) canvassing the neighborhood to inform residents of the Center’s purpose; (b) developing a community think tank (with local community members) that meets three times per year to tackle neighborhood problems; and (c) building community partnerships by hosting a Learn to Read program, partnering with local elementary schools (R. L. Brown, John Love, Long Branch), and actively participating in the Northeast Florida Literacy Council and the Obesity Coalition of Duval County.

**Lessons Learned and Implications for Planning:**

**Strand 1:**

- Successful teachers are more likely to have had prior experiences working with at-risk children. A valid Florida Teaching Certificate and prior experience with at-risk children helps teachers more fully understand the needs of these children and the skills needed to develop and implement learning opportunities to address the children's diverse needs.

- Finding qualified substitutes is an issue for all child care facilities.

- Providing services to families that are in crisis is an important retention strategy to ensure children remain at the Center and continue to make progress.

- Screenings are important tools to pinpoint the kinds of interventions needed to ensure each child has successful learning experiences.

**Strand 3:**

- Center directors and educational supervisory personnel are often overwhelmed with the day-to-day operation of the center and have little time to investigate the professional development opportunities needed to improve the quality of the programs provided at their centers.
Neighborhood Engagement
S.P. Livingston: Family Involvement

Goal(s) or Purpose:
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.

Target Audience:
Families of preschool children who live in the S. P. Livingston attendance zone and whose children were cared for in child care centers immediately surrounding the school were included in the target audience of 200 families.

What We Did:
Many families want knowledge and skills that will enable them to be effective teachers and supporters of their children's educational development. The S. P. Livingston: Family Involvement and Learning Community, located in a high-needs neighborhood, is designed to increase the meaningful involvement of families in the educational lives of their children and foster the development of constructive relationships with their children's teachers and school administrators. The strategies for establishing learning communities were researched and incorporated into planned activities in order to increase levels of readiness for children entering kindergarten, and to support high levels of achievement for children as they progress through elementary grades.

Key elements for enhancing the involvement of families in their children's education, including strategies to overcome barriers to families’ participation, were incorporated into the design of activities provided at the workshops. The elements included the provision of resources ranging from books and learning materials to child care services and on-site meals for participants. Most importantly, families engaged in hands-on activities and interactions to support the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills needed to increase the readiness of their children for school.

Family Literacy Bags were provided for each family to take home and continue the learning experiences together after every workshop. Each bag contained three books, 12 activities and a variety of learning materials (manipulative letters, puppets, chalk, chalkboard, crayons, and markers).

In addition, strategies were designed and field-tested to build bridges among the school readiness, K-12 sectors, and families and children. This program increases the ability of families to be meaningfully engaged in their children's development and learning.
Lessons Learned and Implications for Planning:

Recruitment and retention of families proved to be a significant challenge. Two series of bi-weekly family workshops were conducted for a total of 25 workshops. Forty families were expected to participate; the actual number of participating families was 33 (40 individuals). Of those participating, half (20) of the participants attended at least 60% of the workshops and 13 attended 80% or more of the workshops (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Workshop Attendance**

Legend: 20% = > 0% & <20%, 40% = > 20% & <40%, 60% = > 40% & <60%, 80% = > 60% & <80%, More => 80%

Two focus groups were conducted during the year to assess effectiveness of the materials and the format and content of the workshops.

- Participants rated all components of the workshops positively; continuation of all components was recommended.
- Participants expressed a high level of satisfaction with the books and learning activities.
- Participants commented on the positive responses of their children to the material.
- Participants noted an increase in the number and quality of their interactions with their children as a result of attending the workshops.
- Participants shared a variety of motives for their initial decision to attend the workshops; however, the books and workshop content accounted for their continued participation.

The importance of actively engaging family members in all aspects of the activities was recognized, and subsequent workshops will address this issue.

It was also apparent that one-on-one contact is essential for recruitment. Families that attended over 60% of the sessions received encouragement from their children’s teachers and directors of child care centers.
Neighborhood Engagement with Citywide Implications: Reach Out and Read: RALLY Jacksonville!

**Goal(s) or Purpose:**
The Reach Out and Read - RALLY Jacksonville! (ROR - RALLY Jacksonville!) pilot project, initiated by the Northeast Florida Pediatric Society, was designed to address research findings that document the importance of establishing links between health and early care and learning delivery systems. This project will develop and field-test a strategy that brings together school readiness children and their families, their pediatricians, neighborhood libraries, early care and learning centers, and neighborhood elementary schools to strengthen and increase the early literacy knowledge and skills children need to become successful readers.

**Target Audience:**
The target audience for this project included families in the Literacy Neighborhoods anchored by Bradham-Brooks Branch Library and Graham Branch Library, the medical practices of Dr. Shelly Thompson and Dr. Charles Simmons, Women and Families Clinic, neighborhood child care centers, neighborhood elementary schools, and neighborhood families and their children ages birth to eight.

**What We Did:**
2005-2006 was used for planning and strategy development. Two Literacy Neighborhoods were identified as the focus for the ROR - RALLY Jacksonville! pilot project: Bradham-Brooks and Graham Literacy Neighborhoods. Delivery strategies were designed for Phase I implementation 2006-2007. Families and their children will participate through their physicians’ offices. Beginning with a child’s six-month check-up, the physician will briefly discuss the importance of reading to children on a daily basis, and discuss age-appropriate books. Neighborhood child care centers will be asked to promote reading to children with their parents. The ROR-RALLY Jacksonville! Coordinator, in collaboration with neighborhood libraries, will conduct activities, collect data for evaluation, and work with the Jacksonville Library Youth Services department to implement additional support activities.

**Lessons Learned and Implications for Planning:**
This program was in the development phase during the current program year (2005-2006). Planning challenges focused on identifying strategies that would build bridges among four relatively isolated service delivery systems—health, public libraries, child care centers, and low-income families—whose services greatly impact the knowledge, skills, and dispositions children need to enter kindergarten ready to read, ready to learn, and ready to succeed. Work team members finally recognized that effective bridging mechanisms did not currently exist, and that if they were going to succeed in aligning and leveraging the efforts of these community agencies, it would require developing a specific bridging tool that simultaneously addressed individual organizational and shared goals.

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**JELP 2005-2006**

**Annual Outcomes**
- Completed the comprehensive planning and input process.
- Developed and received Policy Council approval to implement a 3-year pilot project beginning in fall 2006.
Neighborhood Engagement with Citywide Implications: Carter G. Woodson and St. Clair Evans
Neighborhood Hub

JELP 2005-2006

Annual Outcomes

- Pilot project was completed to work with elementary schools and child care centers in Carter G. Woodson and St. Clair Evans school areas.

- JELP preschool coaches worked with preschool teachers in these schools to identify needs, share practices, and establish networks to build a basis for collaboration and joint problem-solving.

Goal(s) or Purpose:

This component had two purposes: (a) develop and field-test a strategy for building stronger links between elementary schools and child care centers located in high-needs neighborhoods; and (b) develop a greater understanding of the needs and challenges faced by child care centers located in high-needs neighborhoods.

Target Audience:

Child care centers neighboring two elementary schools that serve the largest percentage of children eligible for free and reduced price meals in Duval County were the target audience for this initiative.

What We Did:

Two JELP/Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) preschool coaches created a network of preschool teachers working at two elementary schools, Carter G. Woodson and St. Clair Evans, and preschool teachers working in neighborhood child care centers. The JELP/DCPS preschool coaches assisted teachers in implementing a research- and standards-based curriculum and creating literacy-rich environments for children. They provided technical assistance to directors as they worked to improve the quality of the early learning services they were providing. Teachers from the schools and child care centers met on a regular basis at teacher get-togethers to share successful practices, problem-solve implementation challenges, and build their knowledge and skills in using effective instructional practices.

Lessons Learned and Implications for Planning:

Results from the pilot project indicated the need for conducting a comprehensive and in-depth needs assessment to determine the quality of early learning and care services being provided to school readiness children. Needs assessment information will be used to develop strategies that can help centers improve the quality of early care and learning services they provide.

Beginning in 2006-2007, JELP/DCPS school readiness coaches will assess approximately 100 centers with signed rate agreements to serve school readiness children. The assessment will examine the current status of quality, provide technical assistance in developing a center action plan, and identify resources that may assist directors in implementing the plan. The needs assessment project, called the Quality Enhancement Initiative, will span two years. The expected outcome will be to produce a quality profile that describes the quality of early care and learning services being provided to school readiness children. This information will be used to develop strategies that can help centers improve the quality of early care and learning services they provide. This pilot project ended in 2005-2006 with the lessons learned used to guide the Quality Enhancement Initiative in 2006-2007.
High-quality early care and learning programs nurture the academic, social, emotional, and physical development of children.
Support Initiatives
### JELP 2005-2006

#### Annual Outcomes

- Developed a four-pronged strategy to create a unified and coherent approach to evaluation and accountability for JELP activities and initiatives.

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#### Goal(s) or Purpose:

The JELP framework for action calls for a unified approach to data-driven decision-making and the creation of an accountability and data infrastructure that will:

- Help answer implementation questions;
- Track and monitor progress; and
- Make results available in a variety of ways to JELP partners, decision- and policy makers, and the community as a whole.

A four-pronged evaluation strategy:

1. **Annual Work Team Outcomes** are the data elements that JELP Work Teams use to assess the extent to which they achieve expected outcomes for a given year. Annual outcomes may change from year to year. Work Teams also identify key accomplishments for a given year as part of the annual outcomes reporting process.

2. **Performance Measures** are selected data elements that depict important attributes of the two strategic initiatives: Preschool Quality and Community Engagement. The performance measures, to be developed in 2006-2007, will provide the community a sense of the progress being made toward achieving JELP goals. They will answer the questions: (a) Who was served? and (b) How well did we do in comparison to a target or comparison group? The measures will not change year-to-year and will be tracked over time.

3. **School Readiness Indicators**, to be finalized in 2006-2007, are selected data elements that will help to identify needs, plan and assess strategies, support decisions, and encourage dialogue regarding the status of early literacy in Duval County.

*Readiness Indicators* (specifying the quality and/or quantity of important support and services associated with positive children’s readiness) will be identified for each of the important dimensions that contribute to children’s readiness for school:

- Family indicators,
- Community indicators,
- Early care and learning program indicators, and
- School indicators.

In addition, child-level indicators of readiness for school will be identified.

*Readiness Indicators* will be reported for each of the 15 JELP Literacy Neighborhoods. Readiness indicators will not change year-to-year and will be tracked over time. Answers to these questions will ultimately help us know where and how community resources should be focused to help the children who need it most, while monitoring the extent to which all children enter kindergarten ready to read, ready to learn, and ready to succeed.
JELP 2005-2006

4. **Studies to Inform Decision Making** are special-purpose reports generated to provide answers to questions about programs and services delivered under the auspices of the JELP.

**Target Audience:**

The members of the Evaluation and Accountability Work Team collaborate with chairpersons and members of all work teams (see Appendix B) and agencies participating in JELP programs and services. Florida Institute of Education researchers and staff provide technical assistance and expertise in the areas of research, assessment, and evaluation assisting work teams to determine the extent to which annual outcomes are achieved and assess the impact of program activities and services.

**What We Did:**

Recognizing that what gets measured gets done, the JELP adopted a research-based and data-driven approach for: (a) developing goals; (b) identifying outcomes; (c) taking strategic actions; (d) measuring progress; (e) sharing results; and (f) using what is learned to guide future actions. Through ongoing discussions over the past three years, the members of the JELP Policy Council have used input and data from work teams to improve program services and determine the best use of community resources for the overarching goals of the partnership.

*Regular Reporting Across Partner Agencies*—Agencies developed operational definitions to provide decision makers with consistently reliable figures on a recurring basis about the numbers of children served by JELP programs. A regular reporting cycle for submission of these data was also established by JELP partner agencies.

*Community School Readiness Profile*—a descriptive profile of the current state of children birth to five in Jacksonville, available child care settings, and the current level of services being provided under the auspices of the JELP was developed (see Appendix A).

*Annual Work Team Outcomes*—This year, as in each year of the JELP project, the Accountability Work Team members also met with individual work team chairs to assist them in developing *Annual Work Team Outcomes* and to identify data elements necessary to monitor the implementation and progress of each of these outcomes throughout the year. A calendar of activities (action plan) was created for each work team that delineated the schedule of data collection activities, analysis, and reporting activities to ensure that data needed to evaluate success and monitor progress would be available in a timely manner. Results are reported in the previous sections of this report.

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Evaluation and Accountability (continued)

JELP 2005-2006

School Readiness Indicators Project—Using research findings and best practices from other cities, the School Readiness Indicators work team identified a set of early literacy indicators that will track progress toward achieving the shared JELP goal. Focus groups with specialized expertise in child development were held. Nine neighborhood feedback sessions were hosted at branch and regional libraries to gather input about the proposed set of early literacy indicators. Although the meetings were well publicized, attendance was much lower than anticipated or desired. Additional input will be gathered during 2006-2007.

JELP Community Survey—A telephone survey of community members was conducted to establish baseline data about Jacksonville's awareness of, beliefs about, and commitment to high-quality early child care and literacy, including the Jacksonville Early Literacy Partnership initiative. The Public Opinion Research Laboratory at the University of North Florida conducted the survey using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing technology, ensuring geographic coverage of the city. The JELP Community Survey included 24 closed-response questions. There were 1004 survey respondents, and the margin of error was +/- 3% for the general population. At least 80% percent of the JELP Community Survey respondents indicated:

- It is important for children to enter school ready to read.
- It is important for Jacksonville's children to enter kindergarten ready to read.
- It is important for Jacksonville to provide high-quality early childhood education for all children.
- Having the most literate community in Florida is an important goal for Jacksonville.
- Increasing Jacksonville's literacy rate will improve Jacksonville's economic future.
- Tax dollars should be spent to improve our early childhood education programs in Jacksonville.
- Jacksonville will benefit from its investment in the Mayor's Early Literacy Initiative.
- They are likely to continue to support the investment by the City Council in the Mayor's Early Literacy Initiative.
- The responsibility for making sure children are ready for school is shared by agencies that represent a broad base of the community.

JELP Longitudinal Study—A JELP Longitudinal Study to assess the impact of JELP intensive quality support services on participating children's readiness outcomes was conducted (see page 27).
Lessons Learned and Implications for Planning:

Each year, the results of action plans established by individual work teams are reviewed with work team members to evaluate the extent to which outcomes have or have not been reached, and from these determinations, decisions about next steps or changes in course are made. Annual outcomes become the guide for subsequent actions.

It has proven challenging to develop a database and infrastructure for defining, collecting, and reporting data across multiple agencies and organizations. Procedures for identifying children, collecting data, and the scoring and reporting of assessment data have all been established and now provide a strong foundation for future efforts.

Now that the process for identifying annual outcomes and assessing the extent to which they have been achieved is in place, attention can be given to finalizing JELP Performance Measures for the two JELP Strategic Initiatives: Preschool Quality and Community Engagement. A set of School Readiness Indicators will also be finalized in 2006-2007 to answer the question: “To what extent is Jacksonville making progress toward achieving the shared goal and expected outcome: ‘every child enters kindergarten ready to read, ready to learn, and ready to succeed?’”
The Jacksonville Early Literacy Partnership (JELP) funded 2005-2006 implementation activities from two primary sources: the Mayor’s Office and City of Jacksonville via the Jacksonville Children’s Commission, and the Early Learning Coalition of Duval. In addition, three collaboratively developed grants designed to support JELP activities were awarded to JELP partners. The Jacksonville Children’s Commission received $997,763 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; the Florida Institute of Education at UNF received $595,200 from the U.S. Department of Education; and the Early Learning Coalition of Duval received $50,000 from the Rice Foundation.

During 2005-2006, the Jacksonville business community, civic organizations, early learning practitioners, K-12 and post-secondary education institutions, and individual child advocates continued to invest in Jacksonville’s young children. By providing in excess of $3,026,342 in cash and in-kind contributions, the Jacksonville community continued to demonstrate its understanding of the importance of improving early literacy outcomes for Jacksonville’s youngest citizens and a commitment to helping making that goal a reality.

Taken together, a total of $11,222,549 funded 2005-2006 activities. Figure 1 depicts total JELP revenue sources.

*Figure 1. JELP Revenue Sources: 2005-2006*

$2,334,254

$3,026,342

$580,400

$5,281,553

\[1\] Due to the discontinuity among JELP project year and partner fiscal year cycles— the City of Jacksonville, Mayor’s Early Literacy Funding via JCC is reported as budgeted expenditures; the Early Learning Coalition of Duval is reported as actual expenditures; and estimated grant expenditures are reported.
Members of the JELP Policy Council worked collaboratively to implement programs related to two Strategic Initiatives and two Support Initiatives:

- **Strategic Initiative One**: Quality Preschool
- **Strategic Initiative Two**: Community Engagement
- **Support Initiative One**: Evaluation and Accountability
- **Support Initiative Two**: Communication

Thirteen work teams (see Appendix B) were organized and charged with carrying out specific activities related to one of the programs embedded in each of the initiatives. During 2005-2006, special attention was given to expanding support to early care and learning programs serving children living in low-income neighborhoods.

Figure 2 provides a breakdown of how the total 2005-2006 funds were allocated to the JELP strategic and support initiatives. As noted in Figure 4, the majority of funds (61%) provided direct support (both human and material) to frontline practitioners working with Jacksonville’s most vulnerable children, thereby improving the quality of preschool services those children received.

**Figure 2. JELP Revenue Sources: 2005-2006**

![Pie chart showing revenue sources for JELP initiatives]

**Cash and In-Kind Contributions**

The Jacksonville community contributed cash and in-kind donations to support JELP activities during 2005-2006. Table 1 provides a breakdown of donors and information about the ways in which their contributions, totaling **more than $3 million dollars**, were used.
### Citywide Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donation Made By</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Cash/In-Kind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bank of America</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>RALLY Readers! materials, books</td>
<td>Cash</td>
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<tr>
<td>BellSouth Telecommunications</td>
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<td>Mayor’s Book Club</td>
<td>Cash</td>
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<td>Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Florida</td>
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<td>Mayor’s Book Club backpacks</td>
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<td>Book Donations</td>
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<td>RALLY Book Drive!</td>
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<td>City of Jacksonville</td>
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<td>Mayor’s Literacy Summit sponsor</td>
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<td>CSX</td>
<td>$37,500</td>
<td>Parent Guides, Book Marks, Door Hangers</td>
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<td>Florida Community College at Jacksonville</td>
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<td>Chair, Career Ladder work team</td>
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<td>Florida Community College at Jacksonville</td>
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<td>Career ladder curriculum development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>$143,675</td>
<td>Mayor’s Book Club - TV show production</td>
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<td>Holland + Knight Reading is Fundamental</td>
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<td>Books distributed to child care centers</td>
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<td>Jacksonville Jaguar Foundation</td>
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<td>Jacksonville Public Library Foundation</td>
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<td>VyStar Credit Union</td>
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<td>Wal*Mart</td>
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# Neighborhood Engagement with Citywide Implications

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<td>Duval County Public Schools</td>
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<td>Woodson/St. Clair Evans Early Learning HUB coaching support and materials</td>
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<td>Folds Family</td>
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<td>IBM</td>
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<td>Walton Family</td>
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## Strategic Initiative: Quality Preschool

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<td>Center for Early Literacy and Learning at UNF</td>
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<td>Duval County Public Schools</td>
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<td>Duval County Public Schools</td>
<td>$4,200</td>
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<td>Episcopal Children’s Services</td>
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<td>Jacksonville Beach Kiwanis</td>
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<td>Jacksonville Urban League Head Start</td>
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<td>Nemours BrightStart! Dyslexia Initiative</td>
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<td>BrightStart! Program implementation</td>
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<td>Walt Disney</td>
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<td>Westside Kiwanis</td>
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## Policy Council

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<td>JELP Partners</td>
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**In-Kind Total:** $1,195,309  
**Cash Total:** $1,831,033  
**Grand Total:** $3,026,342
Children participating in JELP’s high-quality preschool programs exceeded the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten (ECLS-K), a national benchmark for proficiency in letter recognition (see page 26).
Successes to Date and Challenges Ahead
Concerns about the quality of the future workforce and the challenge of sustaining economic prosperity in a knowledge-intensive economy have made early education a national, state, and local concern. Locally, citizens have become increasingly aware of and concerned about the achievement gap in K-12 education. The gap is multifaceted, affecting every area of the curriculum and every category of children that the schools have traditionally not served well: children from poor families, children from minority groups, and children with special learning needs. And increasingly, policy makers, researchers, educators, and other human service professionals have recognized that the achievement gap begins well before children enter school. The first five years of a child’s life are critical to the child’s long-term intellectual and emotional development. The early learning gap has multiple causes, but one is the uneven quality of early child care and early learning experiences.

In 1999, the Florida School Readiness Act was passed by the Florida Legislature and signed into law by Governor Jeb Bush. This act transformed the charge to the child care industry from providing custodial care to providing quality learning care that ensures children enter school ready to learn and succeed. Recognizing the importance of early learning for all children, this commitment to reform was further reinforced when Florida citizens passed a constitutional amendment creating the Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK) in 2002.

Jacksonville’s local response significantly expanded in 2003 with the establishment of the Jacksonville Early Literacy Partnership (JELP), an initiative convened by Mayor John Peyton in recognition of the urgency to improve the quality of early care and learning services in the local community. The JELP was charged with developing a focused vision supported by a portfolio of short- and long-term strategies designed to improve the readiness outcomes of Jacksonville’s youngest citizens, beginning with our most vulnerable children.

2003-2004 was a planning year for the JELP, followed by two years of implementation. It was clear that the goal of ensuring every child enters kindergarten ready to read, ready to learn, and ready to succeed was a complex undertaking. There is a wide array of educational, economic, health, community, and family factors that influence children’s readiness.

While it is difficult to tackle all areas of concern at the same time, it is possible to identify one critical point to begin taking action. This was the tack taken by Mayor Peyton and the JELP partners. Improving children’s school readiness outcomes by focusing on quality early care and learning opportunities for young children was identified as the aspect with the greatest potential for a high rate of return on investment and most immediate impact.
Mayor Peyton and the JELP recognized that fundamental and long-lasting change will not happen overnight and does not happen by chance. It takes purposeful action, measuring progress, and the commitment and engagement of the entire community over a sustained period of time to achieve success.

From research findings and best practices, the JELP identified eight areas in which changes are needed:

- **Improving the quality of center-based and family care home-based programs**, including the quality of the environment, learning opportunities, and interactions between caregivers and the children with whom they work;
- **Increasing caregiver credentials** and opportunities for advancement and retention in the field;
- **Building individual and organizational capacities** by improving the access to and quality of professional development offered in Jacksonville;
- **Addressing sustainability and funding issues** associated with improving quality;
- **Helping families and the community** identify high-quality programs;
- **Increasing parent and family engagement** in their children’s development and learning;
- **Monitoring program and children’s readiness outcomes** and using the results to fuel continuous improvement; and
- **Raising community awareness and commitment** to take and sustain action.

During the first two years of implementation (2004-2005 and 2005-2006), short- and long-term strategies were implemented to address the eight areas of needed change. At the end of the second year of implementation, members of the JELP Policy Council paused to take stock and identify the successes Jacksonville has achieved and the challenges that lay ahead. The following pages summarize those successes and challenges, and present the JELP’s prognosis for the future.
Successes to Date

Citywide Collaboration

- JELP 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.
Challenges Ahead

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.
Prognosis for the Future

The successes of JELP in its first two years show that we can improve early care and learning for young children in Jacksonville. Each of our accomplishments is significant, and each required the combined efforts of many individuals and community agencies.

The challenges ahead are also substantial. However, families, educators, policy makers, and other citizens are united in recognizing that our goal is critical to Jacksonville’s future:

Every Jacksonville child enters kindergarten ready to read, ready to learn, and ready to succeed.

Working together, we know our community will be successful.
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</tbody>
</table>