Jacksonville Early Literacy Partnership

Jacksonville: Where Reading Begins

RALLY JACKSONVILLE!
LEADING WITH READING

2005-2006

Overview of the JELP
What Is Early Literacy?

Dear Friends:

As you know, improving early literacy in Jacksonville is one of my top priorities. One of the best ways to arm our children for the future is to teach them to read at an early age, and it's important to recognize that what we do to help them succeed academically has far-reaching consequences for the future of our community in today's knowledge-based economy.

In seeking to create and implement a community-wide early literacy initiative, I was fortunate to have the participation of all the city's major literacy advocates. This stellar group formed the Jacksonville Early Literacy Partnership (JELP), which has created a citywide collaboration that increases both the quality and quantity of early learning programs in Jacksonville.

Over the past year, the partnership has worked diligently to improve early literacy in Jacksonville. In this overview, you will learn some of the great successes we achieved in the inaugural year of RALLY Jacksonville! and the exciting opportunities that await as we press forward in our mission to teach vital reading skills to every child in Duval County.

I am grateful to JELP and I appreciate your interest in early literacy. I look forward to working with you to ensure that all of Jacksonville's children enter school ready to read and succeed.

Sincerely,

John Peyton
Mayor

Why is Quality Preschool Important?

- High-quality pre-K experiences can help all children, especially children from low-income families, come to school ready to read and succeed. Four major research studies demonstrate how children benefit from high-quality pre-K:
  - increased achievement test scores,
  - improved behavior and attitudes,
  - decreased special education referrals,
  - decreased crime and delinquency, and
  - increased high school graduation rates.¹

- Business and education leaders such as the Committee for Economic Development (CED) document an accumulating body of evidence to support an increased investment in high-quality preschool.²

  “The best way to improve the American workforce of the 21st century is to invest in early education to ensure that even the most disadvantaged children have the opportunity to succeed alongside their more advantaged peers.”

The corporate world recognizes that quality preschool yields a high return on investment.


Mayor John Peyton responded to the need for Jacksonville to invest in early care and learning by:

- Engaging the community in developing a shared vision for high-performing learning for all children;
- Mobilizing the spirit and resources of the Jacksonville community to make literacy and reading core values.
- Providing leadership to facilitate and sustain partnerships within the community to realize the vision;
- Stimulating and facilitating the improvement of early care and learning services that will lead to improved literacy-related outcomes for Jacksonville’s children by supporting research-based innovation.
- Securing additional resources and investing in ways to improve the quality of early care and learning in Jacksonville.
- Keeping the community focused on results and using what is learned to improve the quality of early learning and literacy opportunities for Jacksonville’s children.

The work of the Jacksonville Early Literacy Partnership (JELP) organization is aimed at building a vital and sustainable, city-wide collaboration that increases the quality and quantity of early literacy and learning services for young children (from birth to age 8). One of the primary accomplishments of Year I Implementation was the community-wide partnership that guides the work of the JELP.
To facilitate the delivery of services developed by the ten work teams, and recognizing the importance of a strong tie to families and communities, 15 Literacy Neighborhood Zones were established, anchored by neighborhood libraries. Zones were formed to incorporate as many intact neighborhoods as possible, and to include approximately the same number of preschool children. The map below reflects the location and boundaries of these literacy neighborhood zones.
The investment in Jacksonville’s youngest citizens is a long-term investment strategy. Measures of progress are being collected at every step of the way with the first year (2004-2005) having promising outcomes to report.

We know that alphabet letter recognition is a key early literacy skill. The Alphabet Letter Recognition Inventory (ALRI) is used at the beginning (fall) and end (spring) of the school year to determine how many letters children recognize. A national research study found that 66% of all children entering kindergarten were proficient at letter recognition (knowing at least 75% of letters). At the beginning of the school year, most JELP children recognized very few letters, but by the end of the year, they exceeded the level of letter recognition seen in the national study by having 76% of children proficient at letter recognition.

The Test of Early Reading Achievement (TERA-3) was also used as a standardized measure of early reading achievement for children participating in JELP programs and services. The gains shown by JELP children in letter recognition were also seen on the Alphabet Subtest of the TERA-3, and these gains helped generate overall improvement on the composite (total) score for this test - the Reading Quotient Score.

- By spring, fewer JELP preschool children (19%) than in the national comparison group (25%) were scoring in the lowest categories on the Alphabet Subtest, and more JELP preschool children (44%) were scoring in the highest scoring categories than would be expected (25%).

- At the national level, 25% of children scored in the bottom and top quartiles. By spring, JELP preschool children were closing the gap in readiness by reducing the percentage of children scoring in the bottom quartile from 46% to 35%.

While this positive trend in scores is encouraging we know there is much work yet to be done to ensure continued growth in children’s early reading readiness.

Summary of Year I Accomplishments (2004-2005)

Year I Implementation accomplishments clustered around three major themes:

1. **Heightened Community Awareness**

   Three work teams targeted their efforts to increase community understanding of the importance of early literacy to Jacksonville’s future prosperity. The JELP succeeded in making progress in this goal as evidenced by the numerous mayoral appearances, media exposures, the success of the Mayor’s Book Club, and Rally! Readers volunteer program.

2. **Multi-Level and Multi-Organization Collaboration**

   Over the past 30 years, the experience gained in many community and education reform efforts has verified the importance of collaboration, and the central role it plays in supporting and sustaining change. One of the hallmarks of Year I for the JELP was the establishment of the community-wide partnership that guides this work. In its first year of implementation, Jacksonville has achieved what many cities fail to do - establishes a well-functioning and committed partnership focused on common goals - something many communities have found it difficult to do.

3. **Improved Literacy-Focused Child Outcomes**

   One of the linchpins of the JELP is its commitment to evaluation and accountability. Early on, the JELP adopted a data-driven, outcome-based approach to planning and implementation. The JELP as a whole is guided by four research-based goals and Phase I (intermediate) outcomes. Each work team developed annual outcomes linked to the project goals. These annual outcomes required a plan for implementing activities and services needed to achieve these specific annual outcomes - thereby making progress toward the longer term Phase I Outcomes and Project Goals.

Year II (2005-2006) - Moving Ahead

The plans for Year II will focus and accelerate the progress of JELP toward reaching long-term phase I outcomes (2006-2007). Work in each of the Goal Areas (Advocacy, Preschool Quality, Neighborhood Involvement, and Accountability) will revolve around defining and developing Quality Trend indicators in each goal area. The figure below captures the spirit and essence of this ongoing work.
Jacksonville Early Literacy Partnership
2006 Community Advisory Board

Ms. Toni Crawford, Co-Chair
Community and Child Advocate

Ms. Deborah Gianoulis
TV Verité

Ms. Gertrude Peele
NCNW’s Child Watch Partnership of Jacksonville

Ms. Pam Paul, Co-Chair
Community and Child Advocate

Dr. Mark Workman
University of North Florida

Dr. Kerry Romesburg
Jacksonville University

Mr. Barry Allred
Elkins Constructors, Inc.

The Honorable Nat Glover
Community and Child Advocate

Mr. Steven Rosenbloom
Sheldrick, McGehee & Kohler, LLC

Ms. Deborah Gianoulis
TV Verité

Ms. Deborah Gianoulis
TV Verité

Ms. Gertrude Peele
NCNW’s Child Watch Partnership of Jacksonville

Ms. Pam Paul, Co-Chair
Community and Child Advocate

Dr. Mark Workman
University of North Florida

Dr. Kerry Romesburg
Jacksonville University

Mr. Barry Allred
Elkins Constructors, Inc.

The Honorable Nat Glover
Community and Child Advocate

Mr. Steven Rosenbloom
Sheldrick, McGehee & Kohler, LLC

Ms. Deborah Gianoulis
TV Verité

Ms. Deborah Gianoulis
TV Verité

Ms. Gertrude Peele
NCNW’s Child Watch Partnership of Jacksonville
A collaborative effort among the City of Jacksonville, Duval County Public Schools, Early Learning Coalition of Duval County, Episcopal Children’s Services, Florida Community College at Jacksonville, Jacksonville Children’s Commission, Nemours Children’s Clinic, The Community Foundation, Jacksonville Public Library, Jacksonville Urban League Head Start Program, United Way of Northeast Florida, University of North Florida and the Florida Institute of Education

Designed by: Justin Bergstrom and Sandra Guerrero
Florida Institute of Education at the University of North Florida