



**Education, Truancy, Dropout & Literacy Subcommittee  
Truancy and Dropouts Workgroup  
2/15/08**

This packet contains handouts that were distributed at the Education, Truancy, Dropout & Literacy Subcommittee/Truancy and Dropouts Workgroup meeting on February 15, 2008 and includes the following item:

- JCCI document - Making the Move: *Transitions to Middle School*



**Making the Move: *Transitions to Middle School***  
Recommendation to Jacksonville Journey Truancy and  
Dropout Prevention Subcommittee  
February 14, 2008

**BACKGROUND**

**Making The Move: *Transitions to Middle School*** is a grantmaking program that is part of Quality Education for *All*, The Community Foundation's 10-year initiative to improve public education in Duval County. The Foundation provided two consecutive years of up to \$10,000/year grants to each of 6 middle schools for Making the Move: *Transitions to Middle School* in 2006 and 2007. This investment resulted in identifying the most effective program design for generating improved outcomes in student attendance, behavior and academics. The Foundation is recommending that DCPS institutionalizes Making the Move in all middle schools through its own resources or in partnership with Jacksonville Journey. This will allow the Foundation to focus its next grantmaking effort in piloting middle to high school transition programming, another time that needs significant support to prevent students from dropping out.

**Helping students transition from elementary to middle school reduces the disengagement factors that lead to dropping out.** Research shows that students often struggle with major transitions in their educational continuum – from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school. The transition from elementary to middle is particularly difficult because it coincides with the student's passage through the turbulent adolescent years. It is during this transition that students begin to disengage from school or deepen disengagement that began earlier. This is evident in poor grades, grades, poor attendance and poor behavior. The Foundation's local research revealed that the academic and behavioral performance of Duval County middle school students was significantly poorer – year after year – than that of elementary students. National research shows that the process of dropping out begins in sixth grade but can be stemmed with appropriate whole school prevention and more targeted early intervention. Transition programs that help support students during this critical time lead to better outcomes in attendance, behavior and academic performance and prevent the dropout process from ever beginning.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Community Foundation recommends the replication of Kirby-Smith Middle School's Making the Move summer orientation program for rising 6<sup>th</sup> grade students at all Duval county Middle Schools. The cost per school is \$15,000 for a four-day camp to precede the first day of school. The camp familiarizes new students with the school campus, teachers, classrooms and procedures as well as provides student and teacher team building and other fun activities that build confidence and relationships. The total cost for all middle schools (28) is \$420,000.

The results of Kirby Smith's program in the first nine weeks of 2006-2007 are striking: Discipline referrals for sixth graders dropped 73% from 1800 in 2005-06 to 500 in 2006-2007.

An outline of the program design is as follows:

#### Program Objective

Improve 6<sup>th</sup> grade student outcomes (focus on 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr; compared with pre-grant outcomes):

- Reduce minor disciplinary infractions (including dress code infractions)
- Improve attendance (including reduction in tardiness)
- Improved 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr GPA (overall)

#### Stakeholders (Expand to all Duval County Public School 6<sup>th</sup> grade)

- Students
- Teachers/Administrators
- Parents
- Community Partners

#### Program Strategies

- Eliminate the Unknown
- Build Relationships

#### Tactics

- Design "summer camp" (specific to needs of school) with all stakeholder input
- Develop budget:
  - Teacher/administrator salaries (14) \$10,000
  - Camp supplies \$ 5,000
- Build timeline beginning March through end of 1Q
- Hire appropriate teaching & administrative staff for "summer camp"
- Develop effective communication and registration processes
- 4-day summer orientation for stakeholders:
  - Locker assignments & practice
  - School tours
  - Special location orientation: cafeteria, media center, administrative offices
  - Distribute schedules & student IDs
  - Orientation to course offerings
  - Seminars on Physical Education & Development
  - Transportation
  - Student Code of Conduct & Dress Code
  - Safety
  - Organizational skills
  - Q & A for all stakeholders