



Learn2Earn

A Brown Administration college immersion program to promote post-secondary education through public-private partnership in Jacksonville, Florida

OVERVIEW

Learn2Earn is part of the hands on approach Jacksonville, Florida Mayor Alvin Brown is taking to boost the overall quality of education, inspire self-sufficiency in young people and build a stronger workforce to meet the challenges of the 21st Century economy.

The program hosts rising high school sophomores and juniors for an immersion experience in student life for one week on a residential college campus. The pilot year of Learn2Earn (2012) contained the necessary infrastructure to accept 200 students on a nomination basis from all areas of the city with a special focus on Title 1 (free or reduced school lunch) students and those from low-to-moderate income households. The students took part in classes, lived in dormitories and worked on-campus jobs under the supervision of highly qualified instructors that the City of Jacksonville recruited and screened from the already-vetted ranks of local Take Stock in Children and Teach for America efforts.

THE NEED

Learn2Earn serves a critical mission to boost the number of college-educated people in Jacksonville, a city where 25 percent of people ages 25 and up hold a bachelor's degree or higher. That percentage puts Jacksonville behind other cities in the Southeast – for example, the 46 percent attainment level in Atlanta – as well as the national average of 30 percent.

There are 34,502 high school students in the Duval County Public Schools system with thousands more in private schools and home school settings. A chief concern of the Brown Administration is raising the graduation rate well above the 71.2 percent recorded by the Florida Department of Education in 2010-11. Learn2Earn aspires to reverse the tide of dropouts by taking matters a step further to inspire college enrollment.

TARGET POPULATION

Learn2Earn is a summer program designed for high school students who are on summer break awaiting their sophomore or junior years. Students entering senior year may be granted exception to enroll. Learn2Earn is open to all students in public and private schools as well as home-schooled students.

Students of all geographic and economic backgrounds in Jacksonville are eligible, but Learn to Earn will place an emphasis on empowering the less well-to-do to work toward a college education. Sixty percent of the ranks will be filled by students who are Title 1-eligible or who come from low-to-moderate-income households. In Jacksonville, 55.3 percent of public school students receive free or reduced lunch, per capita income is \$25,948 and median household income is \$47,002. Both income numbers are below the national average. The city has a slightly higher poverty rate, 15.3 percent, when compared to the national average.

Students must have a GPA of 2.5 or higher, and they must have an acceptable disciplinary record, both in and out of school. Each student accepted into Learn2Earn will be nominated by a sponsor who can explain the student's potential. This sponsor may be a school administrator, parent or any other community leader who demonstrates an ability to objectively identify the student's strengths and weaknesses in terms of character and critical thinking skills. Students also may self-nominate, but must have one adult reference.

COMPONENTS

There are three residential college campuses in Jacksonville Florida: The University of North Florida, Jacksonville University and Edward Waters College. Learn2Earn is possible through the partnerships Mayor Brown has built with each. Learn2Earn would utilize the dormitories and facilities of these campuses for several weeks in June while high school students are on summer break and the majority of college students have temporarily moved out.

For six days, from a Sunday afternoon until dismissal the following Friday, the students will be immersed in the college experience. They will visit classrooms and be given course instruction as well as tips to more effectively study. They will have meals on campus. They will be assigned on-campus jobs at a pay rate of \$8 an hour for four hours daily to help complete a variety of tasks from stuffing envelopes and answering phones to chalking athletic fields. These earnings amount to \$128 weekly per student and will be paid by the Learn2Earn program as a benefit to the hosting colleges.

The experience is meant to fully mimic collegiate life in order to set reasonable expectations and reduce apprehensions at an optimal point in each of the students' high school careers to begin researching universities and submitting applications. Learn2Earn is designed to serve as encouragement and a unique alternative to "senior days" as well as the guided

recruitment tours typically hosted on university grounds. In the first year of Learn2Earn, there are two planned weeklong sessions to accommodate 100 students apiece.

INITIAL ROLLOUT

Eighty percent of the first Learn2Earn students were aiming to become the first in their family to go to college. Of the students, 82 percent qualified for free or reduced lunch, 76 percent were African-American, 4.5 percent were Hispanic, 2.5 percent were Asian and 10.5 percent were white. Two-thirds of the students were female. In total, the students represented 25 Jacksonville ZIP Codes, all 21 public high schools and nine private schools.

Teach for America helped to create curriculum with guidance of mayor's staff and education professionals who volunteered to consult on the overall efforts. Teach for America led efforts to host the first sessions on the Jacksonville University campus in June 2012 and Take Stock in Children was instrumental in hosting the second set of sessions in July 2012 at the University of North Florida. About 100 students attended each. Course curriculum focused on practical college rights-of-passage such as entrance essay writing and interview etiquette. The mayor made frequent appearances to encourage the students.

Lacking state and city funding, this inaugural effort was funded through \$150,000 generated through successful public-private partnership. The hope is to expand the program to up to 750 students in 2013 with a potential budget of \$535,500. The expansion also is proposed to help connect Learn2Earn to the Mayor's Summer Jobs Program, meaning that qualifying students would not only benefit from the educational experience, but they would have an opportunity to also earn work experience through a variety of job opportunities.

The Brown Administration's position is that increasing levels of college education helps greatly to build a stronger workforce and support the social fabric of any community. Learn2Earn is an innovative component that should compel the public sector's support because it is a proactive approach to evening the educational playing field for all students.

Data is being collected in cooperation with the students and the school system to track progress of Learn2Earn students. The Education Commissioner is in receipt of the student's first-quarter 2012 report cards with the intention being to continue quarterly collection for comparative data on grades and discipline. As part of follow-up efforts, the city's Public Affairs Office and Education Commissioner's Office has incorporated social media (Facebook) as an avenue for the students to remain engaged with one another as well as the officials from the program.

A reunion was held in December to reiterate the city's support of the students' drive and energy for post-secondary education. The alumni were presented with a chronological map of what students need to do to prepare for college admission in each grade level.