

Envision Alachua Phase II Educators Committee

Summary of Meeting #1

April 11, 2013

prepared by

Rose Fagler, Plum Creek

Albert White, consultant to Plum Creek

May 2013

in support of the Envision Alachua
process convened by Plum Creek



Background

On April 11, 2013, Plum Creek convened an Educators Committee comprised of current and retired education professionals who have a focus on quality education from kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12), as well as minority students. The Educators Committee is in direct response to the regular and consistent comments provided through the Envision Alachua process regarding education as it relates to quality of life and job readiness. Envision Alachua is a community planning process to discuss future economic, environmental and community opportunities in Alachua County on lands owned by Plum Creek who is the largest private landowner in Alachua County with 65,000 acres. Nearly 24,000 of these acres are permanently conserved. The company's holdings are located throughout northern and eastern Alachua County. Plum Creek is considering future uses for its lands that could be aligned with community needs. Phase I of the process yielded a community vision, goals and guiding principles to guide Plum Creek's decision making as it explores potential opportunities for lands in East County that are suitable for uses other than timber. The Educators Committee meeting is part of the effort to transition the Task Force vision from the Envision Alachua process into community preparation to act upon the economic opportunities that could be associated with an approved 50-year, long term master plan for Plum Creek's holdings within Alachua County.

The overall objectives for the Educators Committee is to discuss the situation of K-12 education within Alachua County, what are the strengths and areas of improvement within K-12, how does the education experience relate to job readiness, and what steps can be taken including partnership with other organizations in order to have students ready for job opportunities upon graduation from high school. The objectives for the inaugural Educators Committee meeting were:

- Broad discussion concerning readiness for future job opportunities
 - What do students see as their futures
 - Where are we strong and where do we need additional efforts
 - What is needed to be ready
 - How do we have 'trainable students'
- Where do we go from here and who do we bring along with us

This document summarizes the general discussion comments made by the facilitators (Mr. Albert White and Mrs. Rose Fagler) and the Committee members during the April 11, 2013 meeting. It is intended only as a summary and should not be considered a transcription of the meeting. Meeting materials, information about the meeting will be posted at www.envisionalachua.com.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Albert White, consultant to Plum Creek, opened the meeting welcoming the participants who self-introduced themselves while recognizing our Envision Alachua Task Force Members on the Committee (Dr. Karen Cole-Smith and Dr. Gladys Wright). Albert reviewed the meeting agenda (included with this summary) sharing how this Committee was an offshoot of Envision Alachua supporting the economic development goal of the Community's vision. He then introduced Rose Fagler, Manager of Community Relations Florida, Plum Creek, who provided an overview of Plum Creek and the Envision Alachua process.

II. Why is Plum Creek Convening the Educators Committee?

Rose then explained why Plum Creek, through the Envision Alachua process, was convening this Educators Committee. Through the comments made by Task Force and community members, education and job training related comments were the most consistent comments. With the topic of education, comments ranged from: 1) welcomed job growth in the eastern portion of the county supporting nearby schools which are under enrolled, 2) increased tax base supporting school investments needs, 3) the need for quality jobs (such as advanced manufacturing) not requiring a four-year college degree, 4) the concern for education meeting future job-skill needs for employment. Rose also explained the benchmark research done on the "Brain Hub Cities" which are cities with a large concentration of highly-educated workers, especially scientists, engineers and entrepreneurs. These cities are home to at least one major research university and become magnets for financial investment into university-related licensed technology, research and spin-off companies. These cities also become magnets for advanced manufacturing and businesses that support these companies or locate to benefit from the graduating talent of the university and availability of local job force. Some of the Brain Hub Cities studied during Phase I were cities that the Gainesville area claims to emulate. Brain Hub Cities examples are Austin, TX and Gainesville, FL. (Brain Hub Cities case study from Envision Alachua Phase II is posted on www.EnvisionAlachua.com.)

While reviewing the Brain Hub Cities, it became evident that some cities did a better job with attracting companies that employed more residents of the city thereby reducing the poverty rate (as seen in the comparison of "Free and Reduced Lunches") and increasing the graduation rate/reducing the drop-out rate. One Brain Hub City in particular that did this well, while representing a similarly diverse population as Gainesville, was Huntsville, AL. However, some Brain Hub Cities were either not as diverse as Gainesville nor had the income disparity gap issue of Gainesville so using some of these Brain Hub Cities as models for success is not always possible. On the contrary, some Brain Hub Cities such as Austin, TX did not show an improvement in reducing poverty or drop-out rates with its increased employment-opportunity success. From the research, it appears that the population

meant to benefit from attracting a wider range of employment opportunities, did not benefit. (Those employment opportunities are being characterized locally as “the GED/High School Degree to the Ph.D” as opposed to being characterized as “the four-year degree to the Ph.D.”) The missed opportunities beg the questions: Why? Why didn’t segments of the population benefit from increased and varied job opportunities? Was it due to an education process not relating to the job market? Was it due to a lack of awareness to the job market? Was it due to a lack of job training matching job-skills needs? Was it a combination of these things or other reasons? Regardless of the reasoning, the point was that Austin, TX missed an opportunity to reduce its poverty rate, increase its high school graduation rate and increase its residents’ quality of life. Since there is time to plan for upcoming job opportunities, there is time to determine where our area’s education and job training statuses are and what our community needs to do to prepare our K-12 students for those job opportunities.

III. Broad Discussion of Readiness & How to Become Ready

Albert facilitated the broad discussion ensuring all committee members had the opportunity to voice comments to the questions:

- What do students see as their futures
- Where are we strong and where do we need additional efforts
- What is needed to be ready
- How do we have ‘trainable students’

Rose noted the main points conveyed on a wall-sized piece of paper (photo of the notes included in this report).

The main points made were:

1. Two separate kids in school
 - a. College bound
 - b. Work bound
2. State of Florida considering two high school diploma tracks
 - a. Career-prep diploma
 - b. College-prep diploma
 - i. Currently need 24 credits for graduation and students must pass the last state test (FCAT); if cannot pass FCAT, cannot graduate high school
 - c. Having two tracks for a high school diploma would be helpful to lowering drop-out rates and increasing chances for better employment options
 - i. Need to track kids through the education process to help guide them to best option – career/workforce or college
3. Need consistent communications of businesses with schools and schools with businesses

4. Need for job options awareness
5. Need for job apprenticeships
 - a. Foster continued partnership with business and education communities
 - b. Would companies be willing to start apprentice programs?
 - c. Would companies invest in the workforce by informing and working with the school system to ensure needed skills are being taught?
 - d. Need for business community to be active with the schools
 - e. Teacher internships with local businesses to understand what is required for incoming employees
 - i. So teachers can relate the education to the students and to the job opportunities for the students upon graduation
6. Additional magnet programs needed
 - a. Exposure to careers
 - i. Communicate at the kids' levels and in their language
 - ii. Kids need to understand what things cost and how to make money
 - b. Journey training
 - c. Use programs that teach career readiness (such as Junior Achievement) and mentor (like Take Stock in Children)
7. Need for a large training facility(s)
 - a. Centers & incubators
8. Utilize MyFlorida Ready to Work program
 - a. Correct skill-set will be taught and matched to job
 - b. Levels of participation: Gold, Silver, Bronze
 - c. Reading proficiency is necessary
 - d. Participants will have a "job ready" card
9. Need emphasis on elementary basics – reading, writing, math
 - a. By middle school, kids have already given up
10. Literacy needed in
 - a. Financial
 - b. Technical
 - c. Reading
11. Stop pretending our kids are going to be OK and passing them forward
 - a. Need to be real
 - b. Need reality check with students
 - c. African Americans graduation rate is 34%
 - d. Need to study and understand the mindset of students
12. Need to attach school board to the plan (economic plan)
 - a. We're losing students for lack of hope
 - b. Need to replant the tech, trade and soft skills
13. Recognition of Santa Fe College and Workforce Florida as main partners in educating and training workforce
14. Consider starting a Leadership Gainesville for youth (students)
15. Parents not self-sufficient
 - a. Need for parent empowerment training
 - b. Skills and strategies to teach parents

IV. Where do we go from here and who do we bring along us?

Rose explained that, through her participation in Innovation Gainesville (iG), nonprofits and Envision Alachua, she has learned of many efforts looking at aspects of these issues – education & graduation rates, mentoring, job training & readiness, reducing poverty. Rose wanted the Committee to consider if it should eventually link with the other efforts within the community so it could learn from the other groups as well as ensure these other efforts included the voice and needs of the African American student population. Linking efforts could potentially allow for a more comprehensive body of solutions and a more effective community voice to move towards community improvements on a measurable scale. The group was asked to consider:

What do we do now?

- What do we want to accomplish
- How often do we want to meet
- Who do we want to meet with
 - To determine common ground, goals, build larger advocacy body
 - Who do we advocate with and to

Rose would like to introduce the Committee to other groups working on this issue:

- Dale Brill of ThinkSpot and Chris Hart Workforce Florida (State level)
- The Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce – through iG it has an education committee led by Rick Staubb of Tyler’s Hope
 - Through iG the Chamber has Mentoring and Reducing High School drop-out rates initiatives
- Junior Achievement – Diane Smith and board member Mitch Glaeser (current Chair of Chamber of Commerce)
 - Would like to see this program or something similar permanently and consistently offered in all schools from elementary through high school on the off FCAT years
- Workforce Florida – Angela Pate, Sonia Douglas, Kim Tesch-Vaught, Ian Fletcher (Chamber liaison)
- The Action Network & HIPPY – Pastors Kevin Thorpe and Lamonte Newsome
- Santa Fe College – Dr. Karen Cole-Smith and Dug Jones
- The Alachua County Public Education Foundation – Judy Boles
 - Take Stock in Children
 - Columbia County’s logistics academy
- Retired Principal Joe Clark – resides in Gainesville
- Assistant Superintendent Hershel Lyons and Dave Edwards (Director of Career and Technical Education)

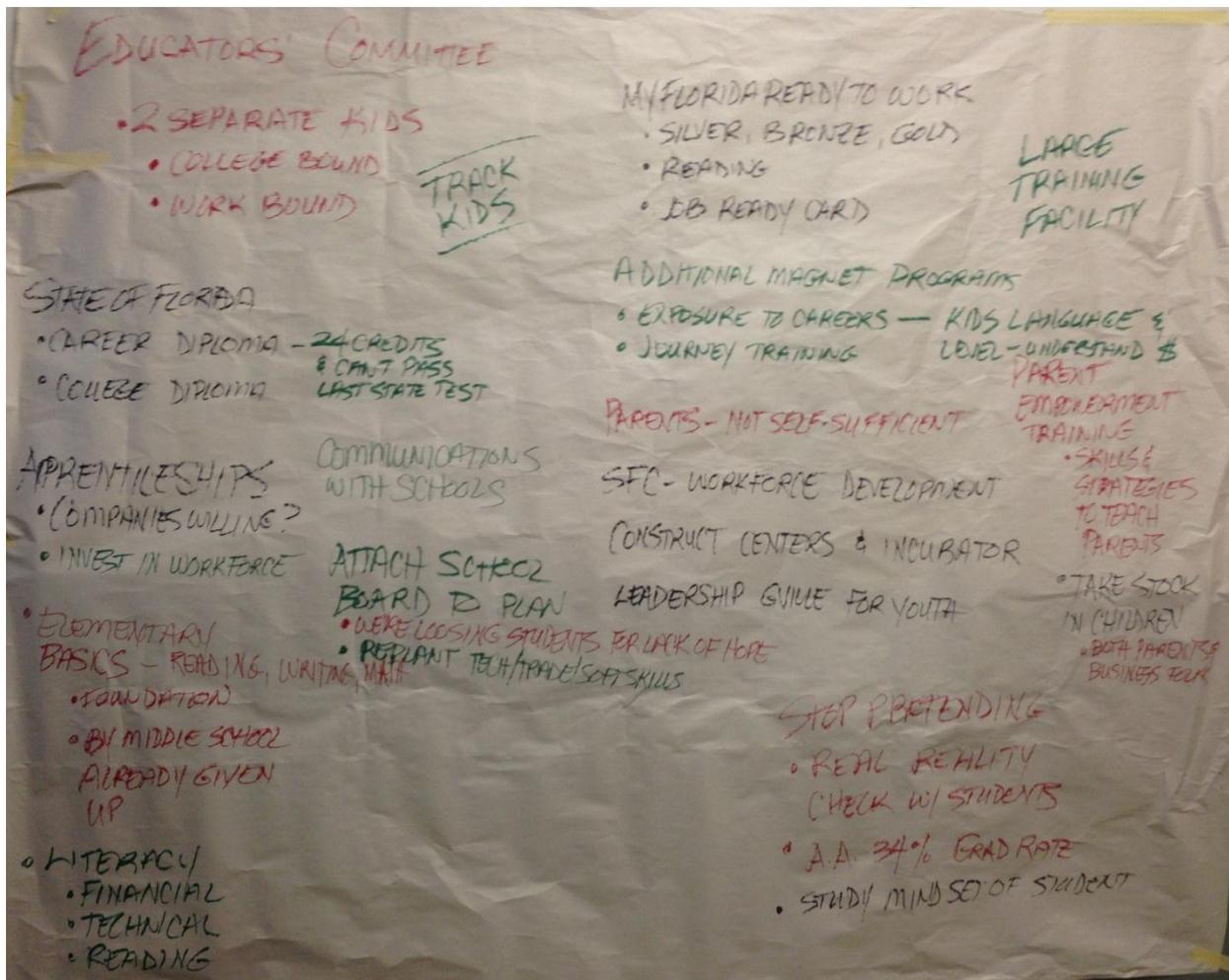
Should the Committee want, it could consider visiting the following school programs:

- Eastside Rams Café and Institute of Culinary Arts, Chef Billie DeNunzio

- She teaches career skills through the culinary curriculum
- Professional Academies of Loften High School
- Gainesville High School Academies of Health Professions and Lodging
- Buchholz High School Academies of Entrepreneurship and Finances

V. Summary & Next Steps

The Committee agreed to meet again in mid-summer to set priorities for meeting frequency, where to go next and whom to include. Rose also distributed a copy of three recent news articles that pertained to the issues discussed. (included in this report)



Envision Alachua Educators Committee – Meeting #1 – April 11, 2013

Educators Committee Attendance

Lawson Brown
Duval Elementary School

Linda Butler
Rawlings Elementary School (retired)

Aaron Carter
Kanapaha Middle School

Veita Jackson-Carter
Hawthorne Middle & High Schools

Dr. Karen Cole-Smith*
Santa Fe College

Carrie Davis
Eastside High School

Debra Fields
FW Buchholz High School

Dr. Bessie Jackson
Gainesville High School (retired)

Dr. Simon Johnson
Caring & Sharing Learning Schools, Inc.

Verna Johnson
Caring & Sharing Learning Schools, Inc.

Jean Kiner
Caring & Sharing Learning Schools, Inc.

Leonard Marshall
Rawlings Elementary School

Stephanie Seawright (observer)
City of Gainesville, CRA

Karl V Smith
Greater Bethel AME Church

James Speer
Horizon Center

Dr. Gladys Wright*
Chester Shell Elementary School
(retired)

**Envision Alachua Task Force Members*