

# Success By 6

## Behind Before They Start

The issues that lead to dropping out are complex and start early. The first five years of development are a critical period for learning. When children enter school without a basic knowledge of the world around them, their place in it, and the vocabulary and spatial skills they need to take the next steps in learning, they are at a disadvantage that can persist throughout their school career. Intervention at an early age through school readiness initiatives like United Way's Success By 6 is the easiest and most cost-effective way to even the gaps that can lead to disengagement and dropping out.

One of the reasons why so many youth fail to develop learning capacities is because they are not exposed to learning activities; they are not challenged and stimulated. Opportunities to gain early literacy skills are in the home and while in childcare settings. However, not all centers provide services aimed at teaching children. Licensing requirements for Jacksonville's childcare centers ensure basic safety, but requirements do not address quality of learning experiences.

Evidence documents that high-quality early education has a lasting positive effect and is more cost effective than efforts to intervene later in life, and that money spent to provide children with quality early learning experiences is vital to community health, not to mention children's futures. In looking at the local picture United Way has learned that quality early education is often out of the reach of those who could benefit the most.

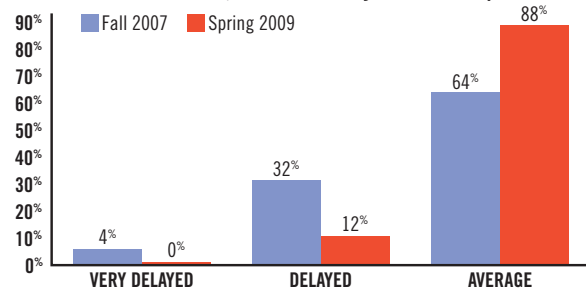
**Success By 6** offers two-year early education grants to hardworking families who do not qualify for state subsidies providing them access to high-quality early-learning care for their children. Participating

Current Success By 6 Centers are located throughout Clay, Baker, Nassau and Duval counties

families sign an agreement stating that they will meet certain involvement expectations with their child's preschool.

The Florida Institute of Education has evaluated the outcomes of Success By 6 by testing children receiving the early education grants for school readiness, and by measuring growth in parenting skills and home environment.

### School Readiness, Success By 6 Participants



Source: Florida Institute of Education at UNF

In Northeast Florida, between 18 and 35% of children entering kindergarten are not yet ready to learn language and literacy skills. Children from families at the lower end of the income scale suffer disproportionately. On average, they start kindergarten knowing 300 to 500 words. In contrast, their peers from middle class and high-income homes have an average vocabulary of 3,000 words. Helping children build vocabulary and other key literacy skills is an important goal for Success By 6 – too important to be limited to childcare hours. That is why Success By 6 parents must agree to attend free, interactive Born Learning™ workshops that are also open to grandparents and other caregivers. With a curriculum drawn from research-based materials provided by United Way Worldwide, in partnership with Civitas (a national child development research institute) and the Ad Council, Born Learning shows parents how to turn everyday moments – from shopping to cooking to a walk around the block – into learning moments.