

**SUMMARY OF REPORT OF THE EDUCATIONAL
OUTCOMES STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE
GREATER WINTER HAVEN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

The future of Winter Haven depends on the educational outcomes of its schools. Out of concern for the quality of Winter Haven's public schools The Greater Winter Haven Chamber of Commerce ("The Chamber") formed the Educational Outcomes Steering Committee (the "Committee"), to survey the public schools and recommend strategies to improve the schools through community involvement.

In furtherance of this mission, the Committee interviewed teachers, administrators, parents, students and others within the community as detailed in the report. The Committee reviewed statistical data of the student population, FCAT performance, school grades, and other data relating to the performance of the schools. Moreover, the Committee consulted with representatives of the School Board, City of Winter Haven, and others within the community who have a heart for education. Based on the Committee's research, it is the conclusion of the Committee that the community, its institutions, businesses, and citizens, have the talent and the resources to partner with the schools to substantively elevate the quality of our public schools.

The Committee proposes that the community, and those involved the implementation of the strategies, consider the following recommendations:

- Create a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to support Winter Haven's public schools. - a partnership that reflects all sectors within the community and whose membership has a heart for quality education. Within the structure of this organization as described in Section VI of this report, the City, the District, PSC, the Chamber, and other entities and local organizations would be expected to participate for purposes of supporting, advocating, and expanding support for this educational mission to all sectors within the community.
- Partner with the local schools and the District to specifically address the problem of absenteeism in the schools. Truancy is a complex issue because it is caused by many factors outside the schools. Consequently, the approach must involve more than developing a school environment that attracts students, but working with parents, churches, law enforcement and others to increase awareness of the problem and counsel students and their families on the importance of school attendance.
- Development of elementary school reading programs similar to Beymer Methodist Church's program at Inwood, that would expand such a community based program to all of Winter Haven's public elementary schools, and would include volunteers from the various minority communities to assist students who have reading problems because English is their second language.
- Expand successful after school and summer programs that currently exist within the schools, and develop other such programs as appropriate for the needs of the individual schools. Support the traditional after school and summer programs in the community, so programs like those offered by the Boys and Girls Clubs, COLA, Florence Villa Community Development Corporation, Girls, Inc., scouting, and the youth athletic programs, can expand and accommodate larger numbers of children.
- Transform WHHS into A Center for Technology and Applied Science, where technology related career academies are developed by the District with the support of the City, which plans to connect Winter Haven's schools to its fiber optic system, and through partnerships involving technology firms, PSC and USF Polytechnic. Develop an IB program at WHHS to be introduced as soon as possible for students who qualify and live in the greater Winter Haven area.
- Transform LRHS into a Business Enterprise Center, where more business related career academies, like the successful IMAG Academy, are developed by the District in partnership with the business community, Chamber, and Webber International University, as a potential partner whose curriculum is focused on business education.

- Introduce STEAM, a curriculum that introduces an arts component into the high schools, at both LRHS and WHHS, and foster partnerships between the schools and the thriving arts community in Winter Haven.
- Diligently implement pre-career academy programs at Denison and Westwood that would naturally transition to the career academies at WHHS and LRHS.
- Recognizing that physical health is a key component to academic achievement, focus on the development of sports and physical education programs at the middle schools. This initiative includes the construction of gymnasiums or covered areas to accommodate athletic and sports programs.
- Develop a community-wide mentoring program that is organized, dependable, and consists of mentors who have varying talents or skills so that mentors can be paired to students who have differing needs and interests. Partner with the faith-based community and organizations like Big Brother and Big Sisters to reach every student who needs a mentor.
- Develop a leadership program through the Chamber, that is supported financially through the business community, for select seniors at WHHS and LRHS who demonstrate business leadership potential. This program would be an abbreviated version of the Chamber's Leadership Winter Haven program, but focused on the interests of young adults.
- Through the involvement of educators, administrators, school psychologists, counselors, parents, students and the community, develop an approach to discipline that will enhance civility within the schools and foster respect for all. Introduce character building programs led by students into the middle and high schools, but immediately initiate such programs starting the 2011-2012 school year in the 9th grade academies at LRHS and WHHS. Discipline protocols should be combined with character development and enhanced academic and behavioral expectations for each and every student who attends Winter Haven's public schools.
- That the City and PSC develop a program for high school students with an interest in government and public administration as practical experience and as a feeder to PSC's bachelor's degree program in public administration.
- That PSC partner with the District and Winter Haven Hospital to develop a pre-nursing career academy in one of Winter Haven's high schools.

Ultimately, the proposals outlined in this report must have the support of the community and those who implement them. These proposals have been discussed with members of the community, and are at varying stages of development - both in concept and implementation. All of these proposals remain to be further aired and refined in the public domain. The Committee notes, however, that there is substantial support for strategies described in this report.

It is anticipated that these initiatives will evolve as they are implemented over time. In the event the community decides to adopt these recommendations and embark on the journey ahead, the Committee believes that time is of the essence. The forces at work that created the situation in our schools are still with us. The Committee believes that today is the day to make a difference in our schools and our community.