

City of St Petersburg, FL

Demographic Information

- ★ Self-reported urban area with population of 261,073
- ★ Poverty rate: 13.0

- ★ Race and Ethnicity breakdown:

Non-Hispanic White	71.0%
Non-Hispanic Black or African American	21.0%
Non-Hispanic Asian	3.0%
Non-Hispanic American Indian and Alaskan Native	0%
Non-Hispanic Other	0%
Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0%
Non-Hispanic Other race	1.0%
Non-Hispanic Multiracial (two or more races)	3.0%
Hispanic or Latino	6.0%

Overview

In the last five years Mayor Rick Baker has worked in partnership with our school system to increase the achievement of students in St. Petersburg. By awakening the corporate community to the importance of first-rate education to the future of our city, our schools have received many mentors, resources, and the benefits of business minded strategic thinking. In partnership with the Pinellas Education Foundation and the Pinellas County School Board the Mayor raises funds for college scholarships for low income, deserving students. St. Petersburg boasts groundbreaking programs for youth such as: • the Family Resources program called Youth Arts Corp that gives young artists and writers a chance to earn money as they learn as they intern or apprentice with one of several fine art venues in the city; • the Boys & Girls Club facility called the Royal Theater where students can learn the technical side of performing arts as well as performance; • extraordinary nationally recognized summer Teen camps, • Ebony Scholars and 500 Role Models of Excellence that encourage and support African American youth in excelling in school and attending college, • youth symphonies, sports leagues and gyms that encourage education first, and • one of the strongest most developed Any towns in the country.

In 1996, when late night civil disturbances happened involving several hundred youth at a popular downtown venue the answer was not to just create a curfew but to hold dialogues to solicit input from youth and the community. From that dialogue where youth were given a voice, changes were made and programs added as were described and requested by the youth. The Royal Theater is a refurbished building in Midtown that has a dance studio, a stage, a recording studio and related programming available to youth. Youth Arts Corps, at the Wildwood Center, has a clay studio, a computer graphics lab, a rehearsal studio, a sewing room, a photo lab, and a gallery to display the art. Neither of these facilities existed in an area of town that did not have any arts programming for anyone much less youth. In both cases our community came together to dream these facilities and build them, then find the perfect staff to welcome and teach our youth. City recreation programs have been in existence for decades and have been nationally recognized and emulated. City staff are frequently presenters at professional meetings. "St. Petersburg Promise – For the future of our children" continues to hold community events to educate parents, business, and community. The mission is to ensure that all students receive a great education and have access to opportunities We in the city of St. Petersburg are proud of our youth and recognize them as our future. The City of St. Petersburg and Mayor Baker, the Juvenile Welfare Board, Pinellas Education Foundation and a myriad of other youth and family serving agencies in St. Petersburg are major supporters of excellent programming and services for our youth. ST. PETERSBURG PROMISE – FOR OUR YOUTH, FOR OUR FUTURE.

Commitment, Collaboration, Awareness, Data and Advocacy

- ★ EARLY LEARNING COALITION an administrative and planning entity which disseminates funds contractually to community partners to provide efficient, comprehensive, high quality system of school readiness services early care and education and school-age programs, that enhances the emotional, social, cognitive, and physical development of all children through collaboration with the community, early care providers and families. ELC was incorporated in 2000 children served range in age from birth to 13 years and is governed by a Board of 23 community leaders. In 2003-2004, 13,898 children received scholarships to attend early childhood education programs 175 children received home visits to address risk factors related to school readiness 100 teachers of early education received scholarships to attend St. Petersburg College.
- ★ City of St. Petersburg/Pinellas Education Foundation Six years ago began a relationship. City provided 625 Doorways scholarships for low income students, represents \$7.8 million in scholarships, over 1,000 mentors trained, a strong record of partnership Juvenile Welfare Board (JWB) Pinellas County Schools (PCS) o In 2006 JWB in a menu of in-school services to targeted low income schools o offered \$6,200,000 to PCS Pinellas Education Foundation Pinellas County Schools Scholarships for students Mini-grants for teachers Teacher of the Year, Presidents as Principals, Great American Teach In NCCJ Pinellas County Schools Funds more than half of the eight Any town summer program so all youth wishing to attend can attend free City of St. Petersburg Youth Arts Corp (YAC)
- ★ TASCOCO stands for Teen Arts, Sports & Cultural Opportunities, offering a variety of positive youth development programs for teens in grades six through twelve. Operated by the City of St. Petersburg Recreation Department, activities include athletic, educational, entertainment programming, and include community service, special events and dances. Impressions is a quarterly multi-cultural teen publication which is run by teenagers. The magazine has expanded to 48 pages and 25,000 copies of each issue are printed. This program gives teens the opportunity to communicate their words and ideas to others as well as providing a positive social environment.

Alliance Priorities: Dropout Prevention/School Readiness and the National Action Strategies

- ★ The initiatives to ensure graduation and readiness for workforce are Doorways Scholarships through the Pinellas Education Foundation (PEF) are for low-income students. Scholarships are raised from all segments of the community. There are approximately 3000 students with scholarships in Pinellas County. Scholarships for Adult Vocational Education (SAVE) are given to low income students or students who have left school and want to get their GED. The scholarships support low income students in attending a vocational training program and covers tuition, tools, and books. GEDs are required.
- ★ Within our schools, parents have the opportunity to use Parent Connect, which is an innovative online system meant for checking on a student's progress by accessing homework and assignment due date information. Also gives parents direct access to teachers. School board policy reinforces that teachers must post/respond to inquiries. Major investment on School Board's behalf. In addition, 11 of our schools are part of the Council for Education Change program called P.A.S.S. (Partnership to Advance Student Success). Using P.A.S.S. funds, which are provided by a corporate partner aligned with the school, Parent Nights welcome parents/ families into the school.
- ★ At Northeast High School, the Full Service School Program involves cooperation among parents students, health, education, and social service providers to link students, families, and school faculty with needed resources. This collaborative effort aims to coordinate services to ensure at-risk students secure the services and support which will help them thrive and achieve their potentials, including academic success.
- ★ The Department of Children and Families determines eligibility for the Medicaid/ MediKids program. The Agency for Health Care Administration administers the MediKids program for children ages 1 through 4. The Agency also works with the federal government to make sure the program follows all federal laws and rules. The Department of Health administers the Children's Medical Services (CMS) Network for children with special health care needs from birth through age 18.
- ★ Mayor Baker awards his 125 scholarships at the sixth grade level to be able to match students with mentors before they enter high school. Students on free/reduced lunch are only 25% likely to graduate high school; with a mentor/scholarship they are 86% likely to graduate. Two of our City middle schools have attractor programs with a vocational/career focus. John Hopkins Middle offers Arts and Journalism and Bay Point Middle offers Math/Science/Technology. These attractors create a "feeder school" system so that parents are able to predict educational path in advance and build relationships with educational community.

Resources Youth Receive: The Five Promises

- ★ **Caring Adults:** The Mayors Mentors & More program has for the last five years been recruiting mentors for students in our schools. After the Mayor had encouraged all of our city employees to mentor, he turned to the corporate community. The Pinellas Education Foundation has funded a city staff person to lead the mentor training for new mentors, training over 500 mentors in two years.
- ★ **Safe Places:** In 2003, the Mayor began a program called Playin Close to Home. He planned to put a playground within a safe, half mile walk for every child in St. Petersburg. Eleven playgrounds were added over the next two years. Because St. Petersburg is built out, land was not readily available in every neighborhood. The Mayor approached the schools to place city purchased playgrounds on school property. It took a year to work out the legal and constitutional issues with the PCSB, and finally seven playgrounds were placed with fences that sheltered the school students during the day, and closed a fence to the school and opened to the community in the evening.
- ★ **A Healthy Start:** Five schools in St. Petersburg are participating in model programs sponsored by the US Department of Agriculture called Five a Day. Five a day refers to eating five different colors of foods. The program has brought healthy eating to all levels of schools by including salad bars and restricting fried and less nourishing foods. This year soft drink machines were banned on school property at the loss of considerable income to the discretionary funds.
- ★ **An Effective Education:** The Mayor established the corporate partners to go to schools and support our schools. The first year he had nine schools each with one corporate partner. Currently there are 79 corporate partners bringing resources, strategic planning and mentors to work together to increase achievement for our schools. To resolve a teacher retention problem Mayor Baker created a program called A+ Housing to recruit and retain experienced teachers in our St. Petersburg schools. So far 31 teachers have received loans. Many corporate partners have purchased computer banks for schools.
- ★ **Opportunities to Help Others:** St. Petersburg sponsors teen councils at all recreation centers. Teen Councils are self directed, plan service projects and programs. Teen Arts, Sports, and Culture Opportunities (TASCO), an outgrowth of the teen councils is an umbrella for a variety of programs including Scrubbin Da Burg. (SDB) SDB is an annual project this year in a one day event, over 600 teens cleaned up, painted and repaired 14 schools, four homes, and planted trees and shrubbery at 12 city parks.

Media Issues/Challenges Identified:

St. Petersburg's most challenging issue related to youth this year is relative student achievement. Relative student achievement refers to the achievement gap between black and white students in our school district. In 2006, only 29% of black males graduated high school, whereas the graduation rate for all students was 68%. Outcomes like this are only exacerbated by the political issues surrounding our school district. In 2000 Pinellas County was deemed unitary status by the court system. This meant that years of busing for the sake of integration would come to an end. Instead of student ratios based on race, the district proposed a new plan based on choice and "close to home schools," a student assignment plan that would assign students to schools based on where they lived. However, this proposal that would naturally follow the housing pattern of St. Petersburg's residents meant that large concentrations of low income students would be assigned to one school, particularly south St. Petersburg's Midtown area. Furthermore, these schools are already displaying low student achievement for African American students and high concentrations of students on free/reduced lunch.

One community initiative that has been proactive in addressing equitable resources for students throughout St. Petersburg and Pinellas County is PACT (Partners in Action Community Taskforce). The Independent Education taskforce led by former Pinellas County Administrators is composed of education experts, leaders, and parents to offer a new approach to community collaboration with the Pinellas County School Board. They serve as a special advisory group to Superintendent and as an action group driving non-school initiatives that have a significant impact on the achievement gap. Six immediate objectives to ensure that schools located in South St. Petersburg would receive equal resources: 1) The Mentor Match campaign seeks to eliminate the waiting list of black children awaiting mentors through BBBS, Mayor's Mentors, and Eckerd Youth Alternative by the end of 2007. In August there were 300 AA students wait listed, as of November only 100 remain without mentors. 2) The After school initiative seeks to increase the number of after-school slots available to school aged children in Midtown and Childs Park by the 2008-2009 school year, with the ultimate goal of universal after school availability by 2012, faith-based community partners will be utilized. 3) Parent Training seeks to provide parents with skills for remedying school related issues. 4) Youth Leadership Institute seeks to train youth in self empowerment, career-planning, and community leadership. 5) Tutoring Network seeks to strengthen existing after school programs by increasing the number of volunteer tutors. 6) Academic Acceleration seeks to offer an on-going series of age-appropriate immersion experiences for academic advancement and cultural enrichment.