

## PHILANTHROPY & PUBLIC EDUCATION Partnering in the Sunshine State

*Each year across Florida, scores of charitable grantmaking foundations research, evaluate and invest in innovative strategies to improve the quality of early childhood, primary and secondary education.*

*Each year in Tallahassee, Florida's elected officials and policymakers wrestle with the challenge of improving public education in the face of cultural shifts, political obstacles and finite resources.*

*Yet these two groups — foundations and policymakers — are largely strangers to one another. Despite their common interests, philanthropy seldom reaches out to the body politic, and most state-level policymakers know little about philanthropy's work in education, or about the ways philanthropy can be a resource for the public good.*

*To begin to bridge this gap, Florida Philanthropic Network has brought together a key group of philanthropic leaders who are working in the field of public education.*

*Called the Education Funders Affinity Group, these philanthropists are funding initiatives across the state addressing a range of educational issues, from early childhood learning to reducing dropouts and preparing students for post-secondary success.*

These foundation leaders tackle the challenges of improving education not only with their checkbook, but with a host of strategies intended to encourage innovation, recognize and replicate best practices, create strong collaborations to support change and build networks with resources inside and outside of Florida.

With this in mind, members of the Education Funders Affinity Group are eager to open up conversations with Florida's elected and appointed leaders. Their hope is that partnerships may emerge that have the potential to enhance the quality of public education across the Sunshine State.

### THE CHALLENGE AND THE OPPORTUNITY

In Florida, legislators and policymakers confront the needs of 2.6 million school children each year. The state's leaders know it is important for Florida to grow and support a robust public education system. High-quality public schools help attract businesses. They grow a stronger workforce for tomorrow, making the state more competitive in an increasingly complex global economy. And they nurture strong citizens, who will be engaged in the civic life of their communities and be more likely to become self-supporting adults.



**FLORIDA PHILANTHROPIC  
NETWORK & THE EDUCATION  
FUNDERS AFFINITY GROUP**

Florida Philanthropic Network is a statewide association of grantmakers working to build philanthropy to build a better Florida. FPN's members are private independent, corporate and family foundations, community foundations, public charity grantmakers and corporate giving programs — from Miami to Jacksonville, Naples to Pensacola — who hold more than \$6 billion in assets (excluding members located outside Florida) and invest more than \$420 million annually to improve the quality of life for our citizens. FPN's members share a commitment to promoting philanthropy, fostering collaboration and advancing public policy *by Floridians for Floridians*.

Through the years, FPN members have expressed concern about the state of public education in Florida, noting the state's consistently low rankings on various measures and the challenges of providing adequate public funding. In 2009, a group of FPN members created the informal Education Funders Affinity Group, with the goal of building stronger partnerships with government around education policy in Florida.

*FPN's Education Funders Affinity Group Members include:*

- » AT&T
- » Bank of America
- » Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- » The Chartrand Foundation
- » The Community Foundation in Jacksonville
- » Community Foundation of Broward
- » Conn Memorial Foundation
- » Darden Restaurants Foundation
- » The Dr. P. Phillips Foundation
- » Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice
- » Helios Education Foundation
- » Jessie Ball duPont Fund
- » John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
- » Southwest Florida Community Foundation
- » Wachovia, A Wells Fargo Company

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At the same time, an array of challenges make it difficult to sustain that robust education system.

Financial resources are limited and the electorate appears disinclined to accept higher taxes. Florida's business model, which relies on tourism and sales taxes for the bulk of its revenue, results in highly volatile revenue streams.

The student population is increasingly diverse, presenting the challenge of more non-English-speaking students, large numbers of less prosperous students and students who have not benefitted from strong early childhood education.

And Florida has a large and growing elderly population with fewer personal ties to public education and less interest in the financial and human investments required to sustain a strong public school system.

Add to that the great diversity of Florida's public school systems — from large urban systems in Miami-Dade, Tampa and Jacksonville, to small rural systems in places such as Gulf, Dixie or Okeechobee counties. At both ends of the spectrum there are unique challenges of culture, scale and resources.

In short, even those policymakers with the best of intentions face a daunting path when it comes to creating and sustaining a high-quality public education system in Florida.

But there is opportunity.

In Southwest Florida, in Northeast Florida and at other points across the state, philanthropy is playing an integral role in educational innovation at the local level. Foundations are leading community initiatives, school superintendents are working with philanthropic leaders and new partnerships are emerging that offer great promise for students and for local schools.

Philanthropy can play a similar role at the state level — sharing ideas, opening doors, building collaborations and providing resources.

***Florida's strong philanthropic community, in partnership with thoughtful state leaders, can leverage innovation in public education for the benefit of today's students and tomorrow's citizens.***



**BAD NEWS & GOOD NEWS**

Florida’s education challenges are well-documented. The state ranks near the bottom in the percentage of high school students who graduate on time. Its students’ performance on national standardized tests is weak. And across the state, too many young people are failing to complete high school, leaving them poorly prepared for work and career.

There are bright spots, however.

According to the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, Florida ranks in the top 5 among states for improvements to its graduation rate between 1997 and 2007.

And while older students in Florida still perform below the national average on standardized tests, elementary students perform above the national average, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

GRADUATION RATES FLORIDA RANKS IN BOTTOM 5	
FLORIDA	63.6%
MISSISSIPPI	63.5%
GEORGIA	62.4%
LOUISIANA	59.5%
NEVADA	55.8%
U.S.	73.2%

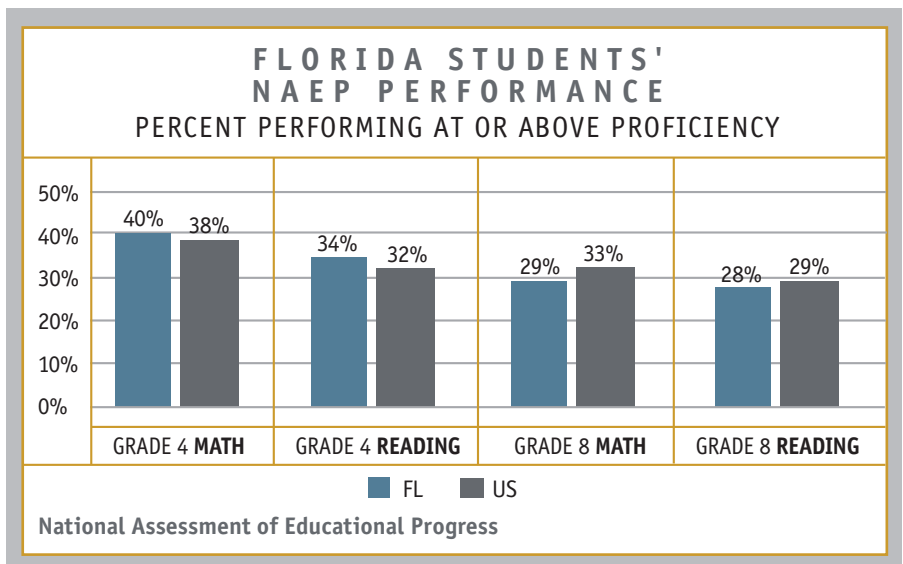
National Center for Education Statistics, Class of 2007

IMPROVING GRADUATION RATES FLORIDA RANKS IN TOP 5	
TENNESSEE	+13.2%
NEW YORK	+10.3%
NEW HAMPSHIRE	+9.8%
ARIZONA	+8.4%
FLORIDA	+7.8%
U.S.	+3.1%

Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 1997-2007

HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS 25 U.S. school districts produce one-fifth of all U.S. dropouts. Seven of those districts are in Florida.			
New York City	43,643	Orange County, FL	5,656
Los Angeles	42,174	Palm Beach County, FL	5,507
Clark County, NV	17,479	Prince George's County, MD	5,426
Chicago	16,731	Gwinnett County, GA	5,115
Miami-Dade County, FL	13,261	Dekalb County, GA	5,073
Philadelphia	9,324	San Bernardino City, CA	5,051
Houston	9,266	Baltimore	5,047
Broward County, FL	9,093	Duval County, FL	5,002
Detroit	8,754	San Diego	4,836
Dallas	8,054	Milwaukee	4,680
Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC	6,386	Albuquerque	4,637
Hillsborough County, FL	5,773	Pinellas County, FL	4,280
Hawaii	5,731		

Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, Class of 2007





## HOW PHILANTHROPY HELPS

Philanthropy is not the “silver bullet” for Florida’s education challenges. It can, however, bring important assets to the table, helping policymakers find points of leverage that can significantly improve public education.

Many people think of money as philanthropy’s only asset. Yet sophisticated charitable foundations bring much more than money; they bring expertise, a wealth of connections and their reputation as neutral conveners and honest brokers. They also can be more risk-tolerant than public bodies, such as school boards and administrators, and they can provide important political neutrality.

## EXPERTISE

The most effective charitable foundations only award grants after considerable research and study of the organization being funded and the work the organization plans to undertake. Through this research, foundations develop a depth of knowledge that is difficult for the layman to achieve. Foundations look at best practices in the field, the latest academic research and its current applications, and how other communities, states and nations are tackling similar issues. Their independence and resources enable them to take the time to thoroughly study an issue, learn from failures as well as successes, and develop perspectives informed by experience rather than ideology.

## CONNECTIONS

Because foundations take such care to research and understand the issues that they fund, they make connections with others who are doing — and funding — similar work. Across the country, a host of organizations have developed expertise in issues from early childhood learning to dropout prevention and systemic education reform. Foundations naturally connect with these groups in the course of their research and funding decisions.

When policymakers connect with foundations, they open the door to a broader set of networks and resources that can help them address current challenges.

## REPUTATION & CONVENING POWER

Because of their independence, charitable foundations often are seen as neutral parties who can bring together those with differing perspectives for constructive discussion and consultation. This “convening” role is an important asset that can help communities and stakeholders break through obstacles and move toward change.

This same independence, coupled with subject matter expertise, positions foundations to serve as thought leaders in the community — advancing ideas and concepts, or raising concerns and tough questions, when similar actions by others might be viewed with skepticism.

## TAKING RISKS

Charitable foundations frequently are more risk-tolerant than public entities, owing in part to their independence and financial resources. Consequently, they are in an ideal position to fund innovation and test ideas.

Sometimes policymakers want to take bold steps but the threat of backlash from certain groups can be intimidating. Philanthropy can help defuse some of that backlash, by supporting unbiased research, for example, or funding advocacy efforts.

## CONNECTING COMMUNITIES WITH RESOURCES

The Jessie Ball duPont Fund in Jacksonville learned of Nemours BrightStart!, a program at Jacksonville-based Nemours children’s clinic that screens pre-kindergarteners to detect early signs of dyslexia, which is the leading cause of reading failure in school.

BrightStart! provides special training to those children at risk, who then average a 128% gain in reading readiness scores.

The Jessie Ball duPont Fund introduced BrightStart! to educators in Gulf County, Florida, a rural Panhandle county, and is funding the second year of screening and training there.



## PHILANTHROPY'S STRENGTHS & LIMITATIONS

Florida philanthropy is unquestionably generous in its support of education.

According to the Foundation Center and Florida Philanthropic Network, Florida's foundations invest \$257 million a year in education, supporting initiatives from elementary through graduate and professional education. Three out of every five Florida foundations make some investment in education, with 18% of Florida foundation dollars going to education, making education the second-highest priority for Florida foundation investment (behind human services).

Nonetheless, philanthropy's investment in education pales beside the cost of education in Florida. The state's budget for K-12 education alone exceeds \$18

billion. It has been said that philanthropy could barely cover the budget for light bulbs in Florida public schools.

So any partnership between the government and philanthropy must be strategic, taking advantage of philanthropy's unique ability to leverage resources and create change.

*Philanthropy is at its best when it invests with great precision, finding the sweet spot, testing it, pushing it, proving it. Then, the larger community forces can determine whether, and how, to expand and grow what philanthropy has planted.*

## SHOULDERING THE RISK ON NEW INITIATIVES

In Hillsborough County, the Eckerd Family Foundation, which works with at-risk youth, funded a high school guidance counselor to support all high school youth in foster care in Hillsborough County.

Hundreds of foster care youth participated in educational planning with the counselor, and graduation rates for the group increased so much that the school system chose to continue funding the position.

Eckerd Family Foundation took the risk and tested the idea; the school system and students benefitted.

## EDUCATION PHILANTHROPY IN THE SUNSHINE STATE

**61%**

of Florida's 4,100 charitable foundations fund education.

**\$257 million**

is invested in education by Florida's foundations each year.

That support is divided among:

» **ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION** which receives 15%

» **HIGHER EDUCATION** which receives 33%

» **GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION** which receives 20%



# Building a Partnership

As members of FPN’s Education Funders Affinity Group, we seek to be pivotal partners with public policymakers around issues affecting public education. Ours is not a “special interest” group in the traditional sense, but a neutral voice that is informed by our own research and study and by the experiences of the organizations that we fund — organizations that are working on the ground throughout Florida to improve educational opportunities for the young people of our state. (To learn more about what individual foundations are doing, see Profiles in Education Philanthropy, beginning on page 7).

As experienced funders, the members of the Education Funders Group recognize:

- Though we come to the table with a finite amount of financial resources, those resources, when used strategically, can be powerful levers of change.
- In addition to financial resources, we bring to the table a wealth of knowledge, expertise and experience.
- While we are closely connected to the communities in which we work, it is only through partnerships at the state level that we can fully participate in efforts to improve public education in Florida.

This report is intended to provide an introduction and build the foundation for what we hope will be productive collaborations between state policymakers

and education funders going forward.

We encourage you, as policymakers, to join us in conversations, to call on us for information and to use us as sounding boards and community resources as you wrestle with the challenges of public education in the state.

Specifically, we encourage you to:

## Connect with Florida Philanthropic Network

FPN’s members represent a healthy mix of private foundations, community foundations, family foundations and corporate grantmakers located across the State of Florida. Each plays a significant role in its respective community, and for many of them, education funding is a priority issue. FPN staff can help you find the right connection to meet your needs. For more information on FPN, visit [www.fpnetwork.org](http://www.fpnetwork.org) or contact FPN at 813-983-7399.

To learn more about FPN's Education Funders Affinity Group, contact Maggie Osborn, Vice President of FPN, at 813-983-7397 or [mosborn@fpnetwork.org](mailto:mosborn@fpnetwork.org).

## Learn About the Work Of Florida Foundations

Members of the Education Funders Affinity Group are engaged in work covering a range of issues relevant to public education. These foundations can provide a wealth of knowledge and information on issues of concern to you and your constituents. In addition, each of these funders has strong relationships with community-based organizations that are doing work with public school systems and students, all of which have the potential to inform your decision-making. You can learn more about the education-related work of Florida foundations on the following pages.



# Profiles in Education Philanthropy

**To fully understand the potential that lies in partnership between philanthropy and public education systems, one need only study work now in progress in several Florida communities.**

**From Northeast Florida to Southwest Florida and elsewhere across the state, philanthropy is not only supporting, but providing community leadership in initiatives to strengthen public education.**



**THE CHARTRAND  
FOUNDATION**

**COMMUNITY:**

Duval County (Jacksonville)

**FOCUS:**

Early learning and continuous improvement of public education

**STRATEGIES:**

Building community infrastructure, encouraging innovation

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

Key supporter of new community resources

The Chartrand Foundation, a family foundation based in Jacksonville, focuses virtually all of its philanthropy on education, either early childhood learning or public education innovation and change.

Founded by marketing executive Gary Chartrand and his wife, Nancy, the Foundation is operated by son Jeff and daughter Meredith Chartrand Frisch. All four members of the family have been teachers at some point in their careers, stimulating their collective interest in educational opportunities for children, particularly at-risk children.

The Chartrand Foundation approaches education philanthropy at both the micro and macro levels.

Through its Inspire.Create.Achieve initiative, the Foundation invested comparatively small grant dollars in Duval County Public School classrooms to provide resources that would enhance the arts, sciences or civics. Jeff Chartrand said his years in the classroom taught him that rigor and accountability in public schools are noble causes, but learning must also be fun, compelling and tied in to students' everyday lives. Lessons from this initiative led to The Foundation's current work in advocacy and policy change.

At the same time, the Foundation has

supported larger efforts to build education infrastructure and bring new resources to Duval County.

The Foundation was a key supporter of the successful effort to attract Teach For America to Duval County. And Gary Chartrand played a leadership role in reinventing the local public education fund, now called the Jacksonville Public Education Fund.

The Foundation also has been a key supporter of KIPP Jacksonville, the first KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) school to open in Florida. KIPP is a network of charter schools that emphasizes more time on task and academic rigor for low-income students.

The Chartrands see no conflict between supporting charter schools and supporting public education. Charter schools stimulate innovation and create "living laboratories" where alternative education approaches can be demonstrated. This creates a richer diversity of educational options for students in the community and creates the potential for learning in both the charter and public school communities.

Going forward, the Foundation anticipates an increasing focus on investments in early childhood education and continuing support of initiatives that address public education policy.



**THE  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION**  
IN JACKSONVILLE

*Serving Northeast Florida*

**THE COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
IN JACKSONVILLE**

**COMMUNITY:**

Duval County (Jacksonville)

**FOCUS:**

Comprehensive public  
education reform

**STRATEGIES:**

Building community awareness,  
building community infrastructure,  
piloting programs targeting specific  
issues (reducing dropout rates,  
increasing graduation rates)

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

New community resources;  
groundbreaking research;  
partnership with school system;  
pilot programs in place

The Community Foundation in Jacksonville launched its Quality Education for *All* initiative in 2005, with a 10-year commitment and a goal of improving the academic performance of public school students in Duval County. It immediately set about building community awareness of the challenges confronting public education by hosting the Forum on Quality Education, an 18-month shared learning session for more than 30 community leaders. The Duval County School Superintendent, school board chair and teachers union president all participated, as did representatives from government, business, the nonprofit sector and philanthropy.

When the lack of community infrastructure became apparent, the Foundation was instrumental in attracting Teach For America to Jacksonville, helping to raise \$5 million in 90 days. It also engaged the Public Education Network to help reconstitute the local education fund, transforming it into an organization with the expertise and capacity to drive innovation in the community and the school system.

The Foundation’s work attracted the attention of the Pew Partnership for Civic Change, which selected Jacksonville as one of two national sites in which to launch Learning To Finish, an initiative to increase

the number of students graduating from high school on time. Under this banner, the Foundation spearheaded a groundbreaking longitudinal study of Duval County students’ progress through middle and high school that identified the scope of the community’s dropout crisis, the critical points where students were lost and the warning signs that indicated students were at risk of failure.

Armed with these data and expertise from national organizations, the Foundation worked with other community-based organizations to build the Learning To Finish Collaborative. In partnership with the school system, the collaborative has two pilot programs in place to identify students at risk of failure as early as the 6th grade, and to provide a coordinated system of supports to help at-risk students stay on track and graduate on time. Duval County will seek to expand the Learning To Finish work through its share of the state’s Race To The Top funding.

In August 2010, Jacksonville was ranked No. 5 in the nation by the Fordham Institute in its study of “America’s Best Cities for School Reform.” And the Foundation was asked to present its work on a panel before U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.



# CONN MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

## CONN MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

### COMMUNITY:

Hillsborough County

### FOCUS:

Early childhood education,  
out-of-school time programs

### STRATEGIES:

Organizational capacity building,  
community collaboration,  
teacher education and scholarships

### HIGHLIGHTS:

Collaborative engagement with  
seven pre-schools serving  
low-income, working families

For the Conn Memorial Foundation, investing in education is part of its core work, a reflection of its mission to lift children and families out of poverty and its belief that education and enrichment are the proven ways to stop cycles of despair.

In its home county of Hillsborough, Conn invests both in early childhood education and in out-of-school time enrichment programs. In both arenas, however, Conn’s efforts go beyond merely supporting specific programs or institutions.

Conn works with a network of seven Hillsborough County pre-schools, each serving a community of low-income, working families. Conn provides funding for a coach who helps staff with individual and professional development. In addition, Conn provides general operating support to each school and dollars to support student scholarships, which are awarded based on a sliding scale.

In two of the seven schools, Conn funds a staff family support staff person who works with families to develop a family plan and helps adults manage the sometimes overwhelming demands of work, parenting and everyday life.

Conn has leveraged its investment by partnering with the Helios Education Foundation, which has invested \$600,000 to support literacy acquisition in each of the seven pre-schools. This work

involves peer-to-peer training for staff, focused on ways to integrate literacy and language-acquisition curriculum into the early childhood education environment.

Conn also invests substantial resources in out-of-school time enrichment programs. Though often overlooked in conversations about education funding, programs that work with students after or before the school day are, in Conn’s view, a critical part of the child’s education, whether they are focused on tutoring or enrichment activities.

Conn helped the local YMCA establish a Community Learning Center at Hillsborough’s Sulphur Springs Elementary School. The Community Learning Center is intended to serve as a hub for programs that engage not only students, but also their families and school faculty.

Since the program began, Sulphur Springs Elementary has improved from a grade of “F” to “B,” school attendance has improved dramatically, more than 170 students are enrolled in the after-school program, and more than 250 parents typically attend evening and weekend activities at the school.



# BILL & MELINDA GATES *foundation*

## BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

### COMMUNITY:

Hillsborough County

### FOCUS:

Empowering effective teachers

### STRATEGIES:

Building partnerships with the schools and union; building knowledge of approaches to teacher evaluation; selecting best practices; measuring and assessing results

### HIGHLIGHTS:

Using national experts to build community understanding; connections with experienced organizations; thoughtful implementation over time

One of the goals of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is to ensure consistent access to effective teachers for all students, particularly those most in need. In late 2009, after an intensive application process, the Foundation chose to partner with Hillsborough County Public Schools to design and implement an improved teacher performance management system that would improve student performance.

Research shows that teachers impact student learning more than any other school-based factor, but most school districts lack the systems, policies and political will to act on this evidence, according to Ky Vu, Gates' lead program officer for the Hillsborough work. As a result, the burden of ineffective teaching falls disproportionately on the shoulders of high-needs students who rarely have consistent access to highly effective teachers.

The work in Hillsborough seeks to change that. In a multi-year, carefully thought-out plan supported by Gates, Hillsborough school leaders will work with national experts to devise a new system of teacher evaluation.

The new system fundamentally alters their approach to recruiting, supporting, evaluating, retaining, promoting, distributing and rewarding effective teachers.

When implemented, the components of a teacher's evaluation will be the principal's

written evaluation (30%); mentor and peer evaluators' written evaluations (30%); and gains in student achievement (40%). Hillsborough officials are training teachers to be peer evaluators, and working with the University of Wisconsin to develop the methodology for determining student achievement.

Similarly, principals will be evaluated differently, based on school-wide academic achievement and peer reviews, among other factors. Vanderbilt University is assisting with that work.

Hillsborough School Superintendent MaryEllen Elia called the work with Gates "a partnership," a sentiment echoed by Gates' Vu.

"We've worked very hard to not just give away the money and then step away and hope things get done," Vu said. "We really embrace the role of 'thought partner' and 'critical friend' to the district."

*The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and fighting hunger and poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life.*



# GULF COAST THE FOUNDATION OF COMMUNITY

## GULF COAST COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF VENICE

### COMMUNITY:

Sarasota County, Southwest Florida

### FOCUS:

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) Education

### STRATEGIES:

Improving teacher preparation and creating student learning opportunities

### HIGHLIGHTS:

A partnership with eight schools in Charlotte and Sarasota counties

The Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice looks for opportunities to invest in initiatives that have the potential to create long-term, strategic change. Improving STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) education is seen as an entry point where philanthropy can impact not only students and schools, but the economic vitality of the community.

Students in the United States rank low in science and math proficiency, compared with their peers across the globe. And students in Florida perform no better.

“STEM” initiatives involve more than teaching science, technology, engineering and math. At their best, STEM initiatives use a true interdisciplinary approach, seeing engineering as the application of science and math to design systems and processes to solve problems, and using technology to give students a platform to apply what they have learned.

In 2010, the Gulf Coast Community Foundation committed \$2.5 million to a five-year STEM initiative involving partnerships with eight public schools in Sarasota and Charlotte counties.

The initiative has two primary goals:

- Accelerate teachers’ readiness to meet the Next Generation math and science standards.
- Enhance opportunities for students that

increase achievement and promote readiness for STEM-related postsecondary programs and careers.

For teachers, it will provide a jump-start for learning the most recent state standards and developing new lesson plans by funding their participation in summer institutes. School districts will develop plans for ongoing teacher training and coaching.

For students, enhancement programs will focus on average students, which make up the largest number of students, creating opportunity for maximum impact.

Beyond the classroom, the Foundation will work to build understanding of the importance of STEM education among parents, businesses and community partners.

Ultimately, the impact of a strong STEM initiative extends well beyond the local school classroom. Students with strong secondary STEM education perform better in a post-secondary school environment and enrich the workforce, which has the potential to enhance the economic vitality of a region.

“This isn’t just an education issue; it’s an economic development and a quality-of-life issue,” said Foundation President Teri Hansen. “And it’s one that we will address as a community.”