



ORLANDO LEARNING COMMUNITY IMPACT

DREAM.BELIEVE.ACHIEVE.

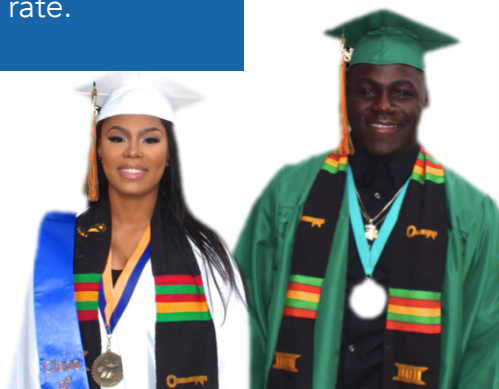
In March, 2016, a 4th grader at the Orlando Learning Center told a visiting researcher that he always carried a special drawing on a folded-up piece of paper which he used to calm himself down when he felt angry, a technique learned from Carvel Munroe, the Center Director. Helping young people from high-risk communities, especially those with incarcerated parents, learn strategies to succeed in all areas of life has been the motivating goal of the **U.S. Dream Academy** since its 1998 inception.

Today, we operate **seven Learning Centers** across the country in partnership with local schools. Unlike many afterschool programs focused solely on academics or recreation, we address multiple youth developmental needs through our three pillars of **Skills-, Character-, and Dream-Building**. Our DreamKids attend daily 3-hour afterschool sessions engaged in constructive activities that support academic, social and emotional growth. DreamKids also have weekly meetings with dedicated mentors.

The **Orlando Learning Community** is a particularly vibrant member of the thriving Dream Academy family. First established in Memorial Middle School in 2007, we expanded to Catalina Elementary in 2013 and Pineloch Elementary in 2014, and we currently serve 120 students in grades 3-12. Last year our volunteers provided 1,032 hours of mentoring for our youth. Many of Orlando's mentors are recruited through a local partnership with the National Society of Black Engineers chapter at the University of Central Florida.

Orlando also serves as a pilot site for our **DreamTeens** program. In 2014, the Dream Academy took a strong step to help ensure our DreamKids graduated from high school. We extended our program to support our former middle school students as they transitioned to Jones, Oak Ridge and Evans High Schools. Dream Academy staff provide bi-weekly on-site mentoring, arrange college tours and oversee college and career readiness activities. We had a cohort of 87 DreamTeens in grades 9-12, and 47 of 50 students eligible to graduate since 2014 successfully finished on time. Our **DreamTeens also gave back** – many served as peer mentors for our students at Memorial Middle School.

Over our pilot program's first three years, Orlando DreamTeens have a 94% on-time high school graduation rate.



Promoting literacy for all our DreamKids is a high priority, and we do so through Achieve3000, an online literacy program that provides individualized instruction in reading and writing. Last year, 99 Orlando students engaged with Achieve3000 and demonstrated an average gain of 123.7 Lexile points. Expected gains were 65.5 points, meaning our students exceeded expectations by 58.2 Lexile points.

Good job, DreamKids!

Achieve3000



The Dream Academy partnered with American Institutes for Research (AIR) to conduct an organization-wide evaluation of program implementation and outcomes in all of our Learning Centers over the 2015-16 school year. Orlando was one of two sites to have a more in-depth, on-site visit by AIR.

The AIR Evaluation Report highlights include:

On the Dream Academy Environment:

The overwhelming majority of students surveyed felt that their program provided a safe environment (96%) that introduced them to new experiences (92%). 90% noted that the activities made them think about their future, while another 90% felt they could "be yourself" at the Center. Feelings of safety and comfort sets the stage for building strong relationships with the adults with whom they interact.

"Once I get from my last class, I can't wait to get to Dream Academy. We get to do some fun stuff."
-Elementary School Student

On Quality Relationships With Adults:

"I'd tell someone thinking about becoming a mentor (with the Dream Academy) to 'just do it!' You can help yourself and someone younger than yourself find the right path."
-Mentor

Most students felt that Dream Academy staff had high expectations of them (84%) and gave them useful advice (80%). The vast majority of students (95%) felt that mentors helped them learn from their mistakes, and 92% felt that they "treat me like I am important and valued."

Further, 91% of students were "inspired by the example my mentor sets for me." AIR's analysis concluded that program attendance was positively correlated to increased student motivation and perseverance, demonstrating that the more time students spent interacting with trained Dream Academy adults (staff and mentors) resulted in improved social and emotional skills.

On Risky Behavior:

The majority of middle school students avoided risky behaviors that would hinder their academic performance and social emotional development. 87% had no in-school suspensions, while 71% avoided skipping school or being sent to the principal's office. The evaluation report concluded that Dream Academy students were less likely to engage in risky behaviors.

On Future Aspirations:

Almost all Dream Academy students were very hopeful for their future - 98% reported that it was "very important" or "important" for them to both graduate from high school and to attend college. 93% could imagine the person they want to be in the future, and 87% reported having concrete plans for their futures. Based on the analysis by AIR, the report concludes that the aspirations of students was positively impacted by the number of days they attended the program - those students that attended more frequently reported more positive aspirations for their future.

We also serve the parents of our DreamKids.

Dr. Don Sheffield designed and conducted parent workshops specifically for the Dream Academy on "Creating a Culture of Excellence." 97%

"He is more humble. He comes straight home. I don't even have to ask about homework because he sits right down and does it."
-Parent

of Orlando DreamParents who attended were "very satisfied" with the workshop offerings, and 98% believed the workshops helped "strengthen my relationship with my child."

"The Dream Academy targets some of the highest risk kids that we serve. They focus on a need that other programs don't."
-School Staff

DreamSmart: Teen Workforce Empowerment Project

To more effectively support our Orlando DreamTeens, in 2017 we are implementing a workforce development program with funding recently received from USA Fund. We will prepare 50 students to secure meaningful summer employment that links to their career and college choices through training and internships. In partnership with SkillSmart's customized online platform and soft skills training by Simon T. Bailey, we will help DreamTeens identify and build core employment skills to increase their marketability. We are seeking employers interested in providing job opportunities to well-prepared youth to join our partnership pool. We will expand this program nationwide once we have built a successful model here in Orlando.

"They ask you all the time about your goals and they gave me ideas for where to go to school and even helped me with applications."
-High School Student

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