

# City of Alachua

*The Good Life Community*



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## EDUCATION TASK FORCE STRATEGIC PLAN 2025

Adopted June 17, 2025

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# MEMBERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION

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## **MEMBERSHIP**

Jeffrey Means, Chair  
Travis White, Vice Chair  
Lynn Hayes, Member  
Tanya Floyd, Member  
Dietra Sherman, Member

## **ADMINISTRATION**

Rodolfo Valladares, Interim City Manager  
David Wisener, Staff Liaison

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	1
IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN.....	2
STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1 .....	3
STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2 .....	4
STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 3 .....	5
STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 4.....	6
STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 5 .....	7
STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 6 .....	8

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Alachua City Commission determined the development of a strategy to improve the performance of schools within the City to be one of the highest-priority strategic initiatives within the 2023 Strategic Plan. Consequently, City Staff conducted research on peer cities across the United States that have become involved in improving education and found several that empowered special task forces to make recommendations to city governments on how best to proceed.

In response, the City of Alachua Education Task Force was created effective July 24, 2023 comprising of five (5) voting members and two (2) non-voting liaisons, one a member of the City Commission and one a member of City Staff, as appointed by the City Commission. The purpose of the Education Task Force is to recommend to the City Commission policies, procedures and suggestions for improving the quality of childhood education in the City, to include cooperation with all public, private and charter schools, and early childhood centers that offer preschool, daycare, or Head Start.

At the December 18, 2023 regular meeting of the Education Task Force, it was determined to hold a workshop to establish a Strategic Plan to guide the Task Force's efforts. A subsequent, publicly-announced workshop was held on January 29, 2024 in which the Task Force and public in attendance selected six strategic initiatives that comprised the initial 2024 Education Task Force Strategic Plan.

The six selected initiatives presented in this Strategic Plan in order of priority (1 being the highest) were selected and ranked during the April 14, 2025 regular meeting. Staff weighted each selection with a numeric score then added the points together to come up with a total score to determine the priority of the initiatives.

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# IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN

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The Staff Liaison further defined each Strategic Initiative as follows:

- State desired outcome;
- Provide summary background;
- Develop an action plan to accomplish the initiative;
- Assign a champion from the Education Task Force;
- Provide the estimated completion date for each action item; and
- Create Critical Success Metrics to support progress report.

The Staff Liaison will present the Strategic Plan at an Education Task Force meeting and request review and adoption annually by a majority vote of the Education Task Force.

It is envisioned that the Education Task Force Strategic Plan will be a living document, subject to adjustments and revisions as deemed necessary by the Task Force and the Staff Liaison. The Task Force, by a majority vote, shall be able to add or remove initiatives in the Plan during the annual adoption process or more often if deemed necessary. The Staff Liaison shall have the authority to revise the activities necessary to carry out the initiatives as these may change from time to time and are administrative in nature. Such changes by the Staff Liaison shall be incorporated in the subsequent annual adoption process.

The Staff Liaison will monitor progress and provide regular updates of the Strategic Initiatives. These updates will be in the form of a progress report and will be produced biannually unless set otherwise by a majority vote of the Education Task Force. In addition, the Staff Liaison reserves the right to bring up specific Strategic Initiatives to the Task Force if discussion is warranted.

Particular attention will be afforded to the metrics defined to support initiative progress. Some will be easily quantifiable. Other initiatives do not lend themselves to be easily measured, and the Staff will provide specific events and milestones that can be presented to the Education Task Force.

The ultimate goal of a Strategic Plan is to develop and implement specific action plans so that the community's growing needs and future vision are met in an efficient and equitable way.

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# STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1

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## Promote and advocate for home visitation programs for families of children aged 0 to 5

**Desired Outcome:** Increase parent awareness of home visitation programs offered through the School Board of Alachua County (SBAC) and Healthy Start of North Central Florida Coalition.

**Completion Date:** Ongoing

**Champion:** Tanya Floyd

**Background:** City Staff met with Dr. Herman Knopf, senior research scientist for the University of Florida Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies, on September 12, 2023. Dr. Knopf stated his opinion that home visitation programs such as Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) offered by SBAC and Parents as Teachers offered by Healthy Start of North Central Florida Coalition are quite effective in improving children’s learning development. As part of last year’s Strategic Plan, Staff met with HIPPY and learned that, at that time, the program covered 60 families within the County, none of which were within the City – to expand to the City, another full-time home visitor would be needed, with a salary of approximately \$37,000. Staff also met with Parents as Teachers, and it began tracking data for home visiting enrollment within the City and also partnered with NewboRN to introduce Parents as Teachers programs to families they serve in the City.

### Action Plan for 2025:

Action Steps		Estimated Completion Date
1.	Connect with SBAC HIPPY Coordinator Stacey Hill to coordinate giving a presentation to the City Commission.	July 2025
2.	Schedule HIPPY presentation with City Commission.	August 2025
3.	Connect with Parents as Teachers to coordinate promotion.	August 2025
4.	Contact Alachua Count Children’s Trust, Partnership for Strong Families, and Parents as Teachers to inquire about coordinating a community event.	September 2025
5.	Schedule a community event.	May 2026

### Critical Success Measures:

- Increase enrollment of City of Alachua-based families in home visitation programs.

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## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2

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### **Coordinate with the Children’s Home Society and SBAC to establish a Community Partnership School at either Mebane or Alachua Elementary**

**Desired Outcome:** Either Mebane Middle or Alachua Elementary School becomes a Children’s Home Society (CHS) Community Partnership School.

**Completion Date:** 2027 School Year

**Champion:** David Wisener

**Background:** In 2023, new Mebane Middle School Principle Michael Gamble introduced City Staff to the CHS Community Partnership School Program, something he was involved with during his time as principle at Howard Bishop Middle School in Gainesville. The program connects a local school with resources to help underprivileged students, and starting a program is a prolonged process requiring regular funding and extensive coordination. Staff met with CHS representatives in 2024 to discuss the possibility of establishing either Mebane or Alachua Elementary as a Community Partnership School, and there was mutual interest expressed in the possibility.

**Action Plan for 2025:**

Action Steps		Estimated Completion Date
1.	Reconnect with CHS representatives to reengage and check on the status of its continued interest in creating a Community Partnership School at either Mebane or Alachua Elementary.	August 2025
2.	Determine what next action steps would be needed to continue advocating for either Mebane or Alachua Elementary.	October 2025
3.	Follow the ensuing action steps.	Ongoing

**Critical Success Measures:**

- Either Mebane Middle or Alachua Elementary School becomes a Children’s Home Society (CHS) Community Partnership School.

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## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 3

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### **Coordinate with the Special Olympics to help some or all of our community schools become Unified Champion Schools**

**Desired Outcome:** One or more community schools becomes a Unified Champion School.

**Completion Date:** 2027 School Year

**Champion:** Travis White

**Background:** The Special Olympics Florida has a prior relationship with the City, having hosted its games at Legacy Park and made special presentations at previous City Commission meetings. During one such presentation, the Unified Champion Schools Program was explained, which is a program that “promotes social inclusion by bringing together young people with and without ID [intellectual disabilities] on sports teams...through inclusive student clubs, together in school or community-wide initiatives, and by fostering youth leadership” (Special Olympics Florida website).

**Action Plan for 2025:**

Action Steps		Estimated Completion Date
1.	Reconnect with Special Olympics representatives and determine what steps local schools would need to begin to take.	August 2025
2.	Coordinate introductions between Special Olympics and local schools.	October 2025
3.	Assist and guide local schools as needed toward becoming Unified Champion Schools.	November 2025

**Critical Success Measures:**

- At least one local school becomes a Unified Champion School.

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## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 4

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### **Coordinate with local businesses to create opportunities to recognize children’s achievements and successes**

**Desired Outcome:** Activate some local businesses to create programs that recognize children’s achievements and successes in school.

**Completion Date:** August 2026

**Champion:** Lynn Hayes

**Background:** Several members of the Education Task Force recalled either when they were children or while they were raising their children that some local businesses had programs in place that would provide children with rewards for academic achievements (such as Pizza Hut’s recognition of student achievements during the Million Minutes of Reading campaign). This is a small but nice way to reward and encourage children to work toward academic goals, and it also has the benefit of bringing additional business to local businesses through participating children and their families.

#### **Action Plan for 2025:**

<b>Action Steps</b>		<b>Estimated Completion Date</b>
1.	Create a list of local businesses to contact and encourage participation.	September 2025
2.	Contact local businesses and coordinate a timeline for responses from interested businesses.	October 2025
3.	Facilitate local businesses in activating their programs.	December 2025 and ongoing

#### **Critical Success Measures:**

- At least five local businesses create some form of a program that recognizes children’s achievements and successes.

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## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 5

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### Create an advertising / information sharing strategy to better promote available resources to parents, teachers, and students

**Desired Outcome:** Advertising and information sharing of available resources for parents, teachers, and students increases.

**Completion Date:** Ongoing

**Champion:** Jeff Means

**Background:** The Education Task Force has recognized that there are several wonderful organizations and resources that are available to assist parents, teachers, and students, but one of the main issues is that people are not aware that these resources exist. As part of the 2024 Strategic Plan, Staff created a centralized website that highlighted a variety of these resources in an effort to make this information easier for people to find. Yet, additional communication efforts are needed, even to better promote the existence of this centralized website.

#### Action Plan for 2025:

Action Steps		Estimated Completion Date
1.	Brainstorm ideas for how to better advertise or otherwise share information with the community.	September 2025
2.	Select at least three methods to participate in to improve communication.	October 2025
3.	Activate the three selected methods.	April 2026

#### Critical Success Measures:

- At least three new or expanded means of communication are undertaken.

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## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 6

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### **Identify sustainable funding sources from the private sector and/or State and Federal Government levels for subsidizing preschool programs for all children in economic need within the City**

**Desired Outcome:** Funding sources are identified that would adequately cover expenses for providing preschool / VPK services for all children in economic need within the City.

**Completion Date:** August 2027

**Champion:** Dietra Sherman

**Background:** As part of City Staff's research of peer communities prior to the establishment of the Education Task Force, a particular instance was discovered in which a city (West Sacramento, California – population 48,000) was able to successfully find ways to fund universal preschool for all children aged 0 to 5 within its limits. Because of the importance linked to this age group as being heavily influential and determinative of later academic success, it was noted at the time that an ideal scenario would be facilitating a similar program within the City of Alachua.

#### **Action Plan for 2025:**

<b>Action Steps</b>		<b>Estimated Completion Date</b>
1.	Establish contact with appropriate staff from West Sacramento, California to learn more about how its program operates.	October 2025
2.	Determine what information and data points will be needed (i.e., number of children in the City, number of available preschool / VPK seats, etc.).	October 2025
3.	Successfully acquire needed data.	February 2026
4.	Brainstorm funding sources and begin process of applying for any grants and/or connecting with potential sponsors.	August 2026

#### **Critical Success Measures:**

- Find sufficient funding sources to provide preschool for all children in economic need within the City.