

Low-income Families Can Choose Children's School

First Coast News

JACKSONVILLE, FL — The Step Up For Students program allows low-income parents to choose where to send their children to school, thanks to millions of dollars in scholarship funding from corporations.

Step Up For Students, or the Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship program, is in its sixth year in Florida.

Since 2001, more than \$400 million in corporate contributions have gone to help the parents of low-income families make a choice otherwise out of their reach: where to send their children to school.

This year alone, 22,000 kindergarten-12th grade students across Florida are receiving the scholarships, including 2,500 in Duval County.

Step Up For Students has allowed children like 18-year-old Christina Long to find success.

For years, Long attended public school in Duval County.

Her grades were poor, and she says she felt little motivation to graduate.

What Christina longed for was a small classroom environment where she could receive more one-on-one help from a teacher, but as a single father of

three, Michael Long says he could not afford private school for his daughter.

Right before Christina's sophomore year of high school, the Longs learned about Step Up For Students and applied.

Michael's daughter spent the last three years of high school at Jacksonville Christian Academy, where he says Christina made a turnaround.

Not only did she excel academically, the recent graduate now plans to attend college for a Masters in Education, so she can give other children the help they need.

Monday, Governor Charlie Crist joined former Duval Sheriff Nat Glover and other local leaders in education to commend the project.

At a rally held at The Potters House Christian Academy, Crist praised the children who have excelled as a result of the program, and thanked corporate sponsors who donated millions of dollars to make it happen.

Different children learn in different ways.

Through the program, parents are able to choose a private school or an out-of-district public school that might better suit their child's learning needs.



Corporations receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for their contributions.

Qualifying guidelines include:

-The child must be 5 by Sept. 1, 2008

-If the child is entering 2nd grade or higher, the child must have attended a Florida public school the prior year.

-The household income must be at or below \$25,900 for two people; \$32,560 for three people; plus \$6,660 for each additional person.

These families, on average, pay \$1,000 out of their own pockets to make up the difference between the scholarship and the full cost of the private tuition.

To learn more about Step Up For Students, [click here](#).