



LEARN. LEAD. EVOLVE.

Celebrating 30 years of educational excellence in St Johns County.

St. Johns County Education Foundation | 2023 - 2024 Impact Report





MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Supporters and Future Supporters,

In 2024, we proudly celebrated the 30th anniversary of INK! and its continuous support of our teachers and students. We are grateful to the thousands of people who have led our school district over time and approved the life-altering programs that have supported teachers and ignited our students' imaginations.

We share memories, and there are new ones to make. This report spotlights significant milestones, our steadfast commitment to learning, and our leadership in addressing the growing school district's ever-changing challenges, assuring INK! programs evolve to be the best.

For those unfamiliar with our work, since its inception in 1994, INK! has been the sole organization in St. Johns County dedicated to providing our teachers with opportunities to enhance their professional skills and obtain the classroom materials they need. This support directly contributes to the academic success of our over 50,000 students and 3,200 teachers. When students are inspired and equipped with the necessary resources, they flourish academically and learn valuable life lessons.

You will enjoy reading the timeline about the significant advancement of our earliest programs and the accomplishments and promises of our newest programs. We are evolving each to become more meaningful opportunities for students to gain the support they require to overcome academic and personal challenges.

I am pleased to report that 2023/2024 was an exciting and successful year for the St. Johns County Education Foundation, operating as Investing in Kids (INK!). In September 2023, INK! received significant funding from the Consortium of Florida Education Foundations and the Florida Department of Education to support the development of resiliency skills in our students through the Resiliency Through the Community project. INK! collaborated with the St. Johns County School District and community organizations to coordinate and finance school and community-based initiatives focused on resiliency and character education. Together, we integrated resiliency resources into our schools and the community to address



the growing concerns regarding youth mental health and well-being.

As a parent of children in our schools, I have the privilege of having a front-row seat to watch my children thrive. I have also developed a greater appreciation for the dedication and passion of our teachers and administrators, along with a deeper understanding of their needs. We are fortunate that our school district has an abundance of devoted and highly skilled teachers, administrators, and support professionals.

As we reflect on the past year, I am thankful to have served as the Executive Director of this remarkable organization. It has been a year of growth.

I am deeply grateful to our dedicated staff, board members, volunteers, St. Johns County School District administration, teachers, students, parents, donors, and community members. Your collective efforts allow INK! to realize its mission.

I look forward to continuing our work together.

With gratitude,

Catherine Newman,
Executive Director,
Investing in Kids (INK!)

EDUCATORS THRIVING

Educating children and young adults is a complex, fast-changing task that requires meeting individual student academic and mental health needs, resource management, evolving expectations and demands from administration, parents, government agencies, technology, and a stream of policy changes.



Given the increasing complexity and demands of the education sector, recruiting and retaining talented teachers has become more challenging since 2020.

In 2023, INK! was awarded funding to infuse resiliency resources in our schools through the Resiliency Through the Community (RTC) project. Understanding that to effectively support student resiliency, we must first address educator burnout and well-being, we launched Educators Thriving in September 2023. INK! sought to implement the Educators Thriving research-based personal development programming to increase the resilience and well-being of our teachers.

For 30 years, INK! has focused on providing teachers with the resources they need to be successful.

Our objectives for this 7-session program were clear:

- Reduce burnout, depression, and anxiety while increasing resilience and subjective well-being.
- Engage as many educators as possible.
- Expand the awareness of and engagement with INK! in the St. Johns County School District.

INK! hosted four 7-week cohorts: one in the fall and three in the spring. Over 200 teachers participated.

- 84% of participants agree that participating in the program increased their well-being.
- 83% of participants would participate again to learn additional strategies.
- 80% of participants indicated that they have applied one or more strategies learned in their classroom or daily life.
- 85% of participants indicated that they intend to stay at their school or the SJCS D for at least 5 years (up from 75% at the beginning of the program).
- Participants reported a significant increase in job satisfaction over time.
- Participants reported a decline in emotional exhaustion, depletion, and anxiety associated with work over time.
- Participants reported increases in workplace and individual well-being over time.

We are excited to continue offering the Educators Thriving program to our teachers through the 2024-2025 school year. As we move forward into the future, we will actively seek sponsors and grants to help us expand this program to impact more teachers, and we invite you to be part of this journey.

MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT



Dear INK! Supporters,

As we reflect on the 2023-2024 year, I am profoundly grateful to write to you on behalf of INK! (Investing in Kids). Together, we have achieved remarkable milestones, transforming lives and changing generations within our St. Johns County community by supporting our teachers and students.

Through your generous support, INK! has continued to be a vital pillar of the St. Johns County School District, serving as its direct support foundation. We address critical gaps by providing innovative programming, classroom funding, tutoring, and scholarships, ensuring students and educators have the necessary tools and resources to succeed.

Our initiatives have provided countless opportunities for growth, learning, and connection this year. Through our tutoring programs, we've seen students overcome barriers to academic success, teachers empowered to create enriching classroom experiences with funding grants, and families inspired by the possibilities education can bring. These efforts do more than support individuals — they strengthen the fabric of our community, ensuring a brighter future for all.

For over 15 years, I've served INK! as a volunteer, committee member, board member, and now President of the Board of Directors. My commitment to this organization stems from a deeply held belief: a healthy, thriving community begins with a strong education system that holistically supports students, families, and educators. INK! embodies this vision, and I am honored to continue this work alongside each of you.

Your unwavering dedication to our mission inspires us to reach new heights. We are changing lives together—one student, teacher, and classroom at a time. Thank you for believing in education's power and being integral to the INK! story.

I invite you to continue this journey with us as we look ahead. Let's build on this incredible momentum and ensure every student and teacher in St. Johns County has the support they need to thrive.

With heartfelt gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Holly Hill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Holly" and last name "Hill" clearly distinguishable.

Holly Hill
President, Board of Directors
INK! (Investing in Kids)

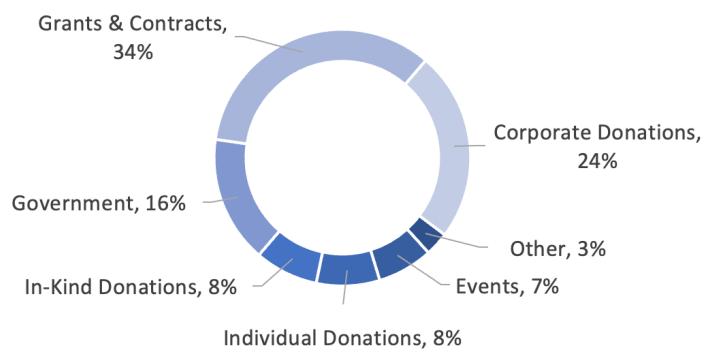
OUR MISSION

To provide innovative programs, teacher support, and classroom resources to support the academic success of St. Johns County public school students.

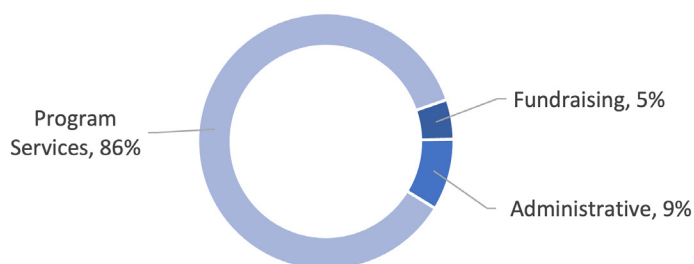
As a 501(c)(3) non-profit, INK! (Investing in Kids!) leads efforts to directly benefit the educators and students within the St. Johns County School District. Our programs strive to provide the tools and resources that are necessary to help each child reach their full academic potential.

Since 1994, INK! has led the effort to cultivate success for students and teachers through funding, initiatives, and inspiration. By constantly monitoring the success of our programs, we maximize the benefits of our expenditures. We are not afraid to discontinue programs that are not effective.

INCOME BREAKDOWN



PROGRAMMATIC BREAKDOWN



JOINING FORCES TO INCREASE ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES



Through the Resiliency Through the Community project, INK! collaborated with members of the St. Johns County Behavioral Health Consortium to coordinate and fund community-based initiatives focused on resiliency.

In 2024, we launched SJCResilient.com to increase access to mental health resources for our students, families, and the community. The online-based effort provides a wealth of information and resources to help those who are not sure where to turn for help navigating life's challenges. Visit SJCResilient.com to learn more.

CELEBRATING OUR LEGACY

Our Story

From the late 1980s until 1994, a dedicated group of teachers and volunteers, led by the visionary Dr. Joe Gordy of Flagler Hospital and the St. Johns School District (SJCS), worked to identify effective ways to support teachers and students in a steadily expanding school system. This group recruited other donors and partners to support the school district. During this time, volunteers established a classroom supply program that would significantly impact students and teachers-the precursor to the Tools 4 Schools program. This initiative, fueled by the dedication of volunteers and the community's support, began collecting supplies for teachers to share with students who lacked basic school supplies, thereby lessening teachers' financial burden and ensuring that students had access to essential classroom supplies.

1994: The St. Johns County Education Foundation (SJCEF) was established as a direct support organization for the St. Johns County School District. The Foundation continued with what we now know as Tools 4 Schools and assumed responsibility for hosting the Teacher of the Year banquet from the St. Johns County Medical Alliance, which had previously hosted it.

1998: The Foundation becomes the local affiliate for the Take Stock in Children program. Launched in 1995, this statewide program provides mentors for low-income middle and high school students with college potential. Mentors worked weekly with their students to navigate high school and plan for college and careers. Upon graduation, each student earns the equivalent of a two-year scholarship to a Florida state college.

2000: Learning from programs and successes as they grew, the Education Foundation believes celebrating teachers wasn't enough. Teacher and classroom grants become a linchpin for the Foundation.

2001: INK! celebrates the graduation of the first class of Take Stock in Children St. Johns County students.

2006: Donna Lueders becomes the Foundation's first Executive Director. SJCEF develops the organization's first website.

2008: Introduce the Rookie of the Year teacher award to celebrate the innovation of new teachers during their first three years in the classroom and encourage new teachers to be leaders in their schools.

2009: The Foundation's classroom supply program is branded as the Tools 4 School program and expanded to support every school within the SJCSd. The first community-wide summer collection is hosted in partnership with local businesses, partners, donors, and volunteers.

2012: The Bailey Group Resource Depot Opens. After years of fulfilling teacher requests through summertime collection drives and teacher pop-up shops, The Bailey Group invests in a permanent location on the Evelyn Hamblen Center campus to house Tools 4 Schools classroom supplies.



OUR PROGRAMS

INK!'s programs help students thrive, recognize and support educators, and foster community involvement.



Take Stock in Children®

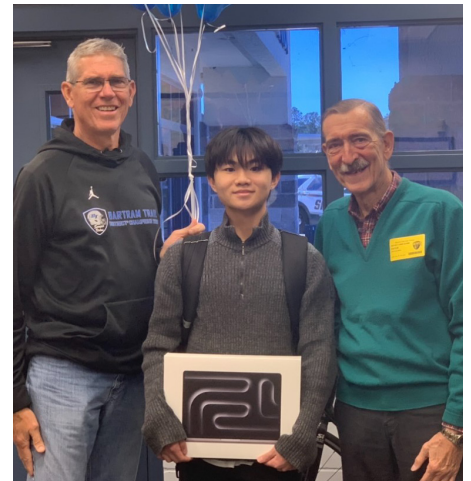
Providing education opportunities for low-income students to pursue their academic goals since 1998.

To date, 248 students have graduated and received scholarships through the Take Stock in Children - St. Johns program. As eighth graders, students meet their community mentors, including many of you reading this report. Mentors help students navigate their school years and ensure they are well-prepared for success in college and life.

Jun Pan is the second Leaders for Life scholarship winner from St. Johns County and one of only six students selected in the state for this prestigious award. The Leaders for Life scholarship covers all student expenses and provides four years of leadership training and internship opportunities. We are incredibly proud of Jun's accomplishments and grateful for his mentor's guidance throughout his five years in the Take Stock in Children program.

“ I'll never forget our first meeting when Jun was in eighth grade. Walking towards me down the hall, he waved. That started a tradition throughout our meetings until he graduated. One of the things that I remember the most about Jun is his sense of responsibility. As the years went by, our relationship grew stronger. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to have worked with Jun. ”

– Jeffrey Adams, Take Stock in Children Mentor, St. Johns County



▲ Principal Chris Phelps, Jun Pan and Mentor Jeffrey Adams

▼ Jun Pan and Family with College Success Coach Mike Michel





FLY and New Worlds Reading Initiative Programs

Studies prove that early literary skills, such as letter identification and sight words, can improve students' future by setting them up for both academic success and throughout their lives.

Five Learning Years (FLY)

Celebrating its tenth year, FLY began as a pilot program helping our pre-K and kindergarten students build a solid foundation in reading skills. As we learned from our success, we added First Graders to the program.

Our 12 tutors worked at 16 pre-k, kindergarten, and first-grade locations this year. The information below highlights the results of the students who completed the year-long program. Those who dropped the program during the year still delivered improved scores.

Pre-K - 71 Students completed the program

- Get Ready to Read (GRTR) scores improved by 113% at the end of the program
- The literacy gap was reduced from 88% to 6%

Daycare Voluntary Pre-K (VPK)- 67 students completed the program

This year, through the generosity of a private donor, we are proud of evolving our successful Pre-K program into a Daycare Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) program with 75 students in seven private centers.

- GRTR scores improved by 50% after receiving the intervention program
- The literacy gap started at 42% and dropped to 0 after receiving the intervention program

Kindergarten - 93 students completed the program

- The letter identification gap was reduced from 208% to 2% after the FLY intervention program
- The letter sound gap was reduced from 367% to 4% after the FLY intervention program

First Graders - 32 Students completed the Wilson Foundations® intervention program

- Students gained 186% on the Developmental Spelling analysis screener
- The 100 sight words recognition increased by 212%, from 26 to 81 words

Over the past nine years, FLY has shown consistent growth in student participation and improved literacy proficiency. We take great pride in the program's results and our students' academic progress. We learn from our experiences each year and enhance the program for even greater success.

New Worlds Reading Initiative

INK! is proud to partner with the Consortium of Florida Education Foundations and the University of Florida Lastinger Center to introduce the New Worlds Reading Initiative to families in St. Johns County. The New Worlds Reading Initiative is Florida's free home literacy program for eligible students enrolled in VPK through 5th grade at a Florida public or charter school. The program helps striving readers strengthen their literacy skills, build reading confidence and foster a lifelong love of reading.

We are thrilled to share that 543 individuals, including 280 students and their families, joined us for eight literacy events this year. We distributed over 700 books, 200 Scholastic magazines, and 280 reading logs. Student volunteers from three high schools supported us at the events. New Worlds Reading and community literacy events such as these help children discover the power of their imagination through a love of reading.



PIVOT Program

We all love a good story about the underdog, the overlooked or underestimated person, who, against all odds, overcomes their challenges and wins in the end. It is a story as old as time.

The INK! PIVOT program aligns with the District's beliefs, often stated by Superintendent Tim Forson, that "Every student should have the opportunity to walk across the graduation stage. The District believes in the PIVOT program because it helps the students with the greatest needs in our system."

At the heart of the PIVOT program are the tutors, mentors, and coaches who provide a safe place and actively listen to the students share their physical and mental health traumas. These educators help them develop the skills they need to achieve their academic and personal potential.

At INK!, we believe in happy endings and will continue improving PIVOT. Cue the music as PIVOT students prepare for their moment of victory: walking across the graduation stage to thunderous applause.

The program is delivering results:

- Students recorded impressive gains in their grades and test scores this year.
- Only 22% of PIVOT students from our first year (2022-2023) were required to return to Gaines for the 2023-2024 school year.



Tools 4 Schools

After years of fulfilling multiple requests to support schools across the county through summertime collection drives and teacher pop-up shops, The Bailey Group made a significant decision. Witnessing the increasing number of schools and wanting to maintain a high-touch experience to ensure teachers feel

appreciated and supported, with the continued involvement of INK!, the company moved from the annual teacher supply drive to opening The Bailey Group Depot in 2012. The depot provided a permanent Tools 4 School classroom supplies program location on the Evelyn Hamblen Center campus.

Mark Bailey, CEO of The Bailey Group, and his team are committed to and involved in the program's success. However, as he recently stated, "As the county welcomes more students and teachers, the challenges in the next three to five years will require more people power to expand the depot's support and delivery to teachers. We want to be responsive to teachers in a way they find most helpful and in sync with their planning."

In 2023/24, Tools for Schools fulfilled 2,213 teacher classroom supply orders, a 13% increase over last year. What do teachers need? Would you guess that glue sticks are the most requested item and No. 2 pencils are the most distributed item? Well, they are! We thank our donors and partners for providing \$135,000 to meet our teachers' classroom supply requests this year.





Teacher and Rookie of the Year 2023-2024

Teacher of the Year – Tina Hemby

For 44 years, the Florida State Department of Education has celebrated teacher excellence with the Teacher of the Year Award. INK! has proudly managed our district's program since its founding in 1994. At this year's gala, we recognized the contributions of St. Johns County School District's 3,552 instructional staff teachers from all 51 schools.

In Florida's number one school district, selecting our Teacher of the Year from among the 51 school-level winners is challenging.

Tina Hemby, an eighth-grade pre-algebra teacher at Mill Creek Academy, topped our list. With 29 years of experience and a list of credentials, committees, honors, and awards too long to list here, it is noteworthy that Hemby was presented with the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

Hemby cultivates a positive learning environment and builds solid teacher-student relationships. Last spring, over 80 percent of her eighth-grade students scored a mastery level on the Florida Assessment Student Thinking test while meeting or exceeding the mastery of the state's student algebra benchmarks, a testament to her teaching skills.

The Teacher of the Year distinction includes participation in the state's year-long professional development and leadership program.

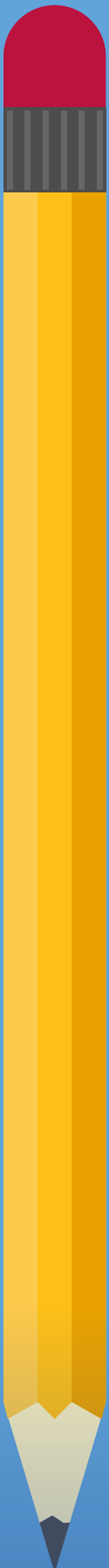
At the annual Teacher of the Year Gala, a student shared that her Teacher's success is because she cares enough to understand how each of her students learns and finds opportunities to make math fun for them. "We learn math better if it's fun," she said.

Rookie of the Year – Aimee Monie

By incorporating the teaching methods of the best and most experienced teachers, Monie incorporates inquiry-based learning techniques in her classroom to engage students and help them develop critical thinking skills in her chemistry classes at Toco Creek High School.

A teacher with outstanding and intuitive skills, students and other rookie teachers seek Monie out for tutoring and unofficial training. She is also an enthusiastic teacher-volunteer for multiple on-campus organizations. We are excited to watch Monie continue her development as one of our best teachers.





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