

## **AQ Jones/Horizon Center/Reichert House Program Features**

Given the changing needs of students, shifts in student populations, and—most importantly—due to a need to better refine and improve the outcomes achieved in the district’s alternative educational programs, changes were made to both student attendance locations and in programming being provided at those centers. Ultimately, the objective was to relocate students attending Horizon Center to AQ Jones Center and to provide an educational setting on that site that would be more appropriate to the needs of the individual students who were attending the two separate schools but who had very similar requirements. Existing programs at AQ Jones were, simultaneously, relocated to another district center school where existing staff and facilities more appropriately meet the educational needs of that set of students. Programs at both locations were reworked and enhanced in order to better address the characteristics of attending students and to improve outcomes for students attending special programs in general

Broadly speaking, goals for the change in program location and in program configuration included:

- Providing a curricular approach that provides a full range of educational supports for each student, to include appropriate behavioral supports, social-emotional skill development, programming to meet emotional and mental health needs, and academic programming appropriate to each student.
- Improved alignment of intervention services to the needs of each student.
- Better alignment of staffing to the requirements of students attending the programs.
- Further alignment of student needs with available resources and expanding resources to include those provided through partnerships with non-school entities who have demonstrated unique skills in working with troubled youth.

### ***Positive Behavior Supports:***

Because program objectives include providing an educational setting on the AQ Jones site that is appropriate to the needs of the individual students, a Positive Behavior Support (PBS) system will be implemented school-wide. PBS is an empirically validated, function-based approach to eliminate challenging behaviors and replace them with prosocial skills. Use of PBS decreases the need for more intrusive or aversive interventions (i.e., punishment or suspension) and can lead to both systemic as well as individualized change. Use of a PBS system includes changing environmental variables, such as the physical setting, task demands for individual and groups of students, changes in curriculum, and changes in instructional pace and individualized reinforcement. PBS has been shown to be highly successful with a wide range of students, in a wide range of contexts, with a wide range of behaviors.

PBS is designed to be a collaborative effort among parents, school psychologists, teachers, counselors and administrators; all partners should be committed to the plan and its implementation. PBS is most effective when it includes the student as well as other significant individuals (i.e., peers, teachers, and parents).

***The Great Eight Model (GEM): A Community Partnership with the City of Gainesville***

The instructional programming delivered to students attending the AQ Jones Center will be supplemented through a community partnership with the City of Gainesville and the Reichert House Youth Academy. Programming provided through the Reichert House partnership includes assignment of small groups of students to “squads” led by an Intervention Specialist. Daily instruction will begin in squad groups and will include a homeroom component. Intervention specialists will provide wrap-around services by way of daily school interaction, home visits, and community engagement projects. Additionally, they will lead students through a systematic matriculation in the Great Eight Model (GEM)

Adopted from the Reichert House Youth Academy, the GEM includes eight levels that are geared toward rehabilitating students academically, emotionally, behaviorally, and socially. The model includes an intake phase in which student risk factors are formally assessed (to include trauma assessment and a physical); three phases concentrating on building the three “R’s” (respect, restraint, and responsibility); a “major programming” phase, in which academic skills are supplemented and enhanced through work in special programming areas (the arts, career tech education, etc.); a transition phase, which prepares students for return to their regular zoned school; and exit and follow up phase, during which the student is reassessed and a transition plan is developed to include follow up by an Intervention Specialist to ensure success during the return transition.

Eight Intervention Specialists will be employed by Alachua County Public Schools (ACPS). They will be trained in the Great Eight Model by Reichert House staff, and their daily activities will be coordinated by a Youth Program Assistant Director, employed by the City of Gainesville Reichert House. ACPS will reimburse the City for the cost of the Youth Program Assistant Director through a cooperative agreement. Additional training for both the Youth Program Assistant Director and Intervention Specialists is also being funded by ACPS. This training is specific to a specialized Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum, which will also be utilized at AQ Jones.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. Social and emotional skills are critical to being a good student, citizen and worker; and many risky behaviors (e.g., drug use, violence, bullying and dropping out) can be prevented or reduced when multiyear, integrated efforts are used to develop students' social and emotional skills. The SEL component will be delivered daily by the school's instructional staff and supported in the classroom by the Intervention Specialists.