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[www.childrenfirstflorida.org](http://www.childrenfirstflorida.org).

## IMPORTANT UPDATES ON SCHOOL CHOICE IN FLORIDA

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



**Preyonna Simmons**  
Yvonne C. Reed Christian School

Preyonna Simmons is a fourth grader attending Yvonne C. Reed Christian School in St. Petersburg on a Step Up For Students Scholarship. Once a student who had failed the third grade twice, Preyonna is now an honor role student!

Preyonna's educational experiences were not always positive. Before attending Yvonne C. Reed Christian, she went to a public school and fell behind in reading comprehension. Her grades plummeted and she had a hard time keeping up with the other students in her class. Preyonna was not benefiting from public school and her mother knew something had to change. Thankfully, the Step Up For Students Scholarship offered

the Simmons' a way to seek out a better educational setting.

Since attending Yvonne C. Reed Christian School, Preyonna has demonstrated significant improvements. After two years on the scholarship, Preyonna now brings home great test scores that have since placed her on the honor roll. She has a positive attitude toward school and looks forward to going every day. Her teachers are a great support team and give guidance towards creating and completing goals.

Step Up For Students salutes Preyonna Simmons for her perseverance and hard work. She is realizing her potential and using the available resources to improve her life.

**Want to nominate your student for our Student Spotlight?**  
Visit [www.stepupforstudents.com/parents.htm](http://www.stepupforstudents.com/parents.htm) to send us your story.  
Or contact Jillian Metz at [jmetz@feff.org](mailto:jmetz@feff.org) or call (866) 590-5364.

# HIGH MARKS



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER



OF STEP UP FOR STUDENTS

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Your Voices Were Heard in Tallahassee and Your Child's Scholarship is Now Worth \$3,950!

On May 2, the Florida legislature delivered a great victory to Florida's low-income families by passing our bill, which expands the Step Up For Students Scholarship Program and increases the scholarship amount for our families.

We would like to thank our parents and schools for their dedication and support in raising awareness and contacting your Senator and House member. This landmark legislation could not have passed without your help.

The vote to raise your child's scholarship was met with overwhelming support from both Republicans and Democrats. In fact, the vote included 50 percent of the Black House of

Representative Members and 36 percent of all House of Representative Democrats. This truly shows that the need for parents like yourself to have a voice in your child's education is quickly becoming a universal cause.

Also, we are sincerely grateful for those of you who traveled to Tallahassee during the week of March 24 to join in the Tallahassee Blitz. For the three days, we had over 300 scholarship supporters at the Capitol and together we confirmed support for your child's scholarship and your voices were heard.

It is also important to thank the Florida legislature for their incredible leadership in passing this bill, especially the bill sponsors Representative Trey Traviesa (R-Tampa) and Senator Don Gaetz (R-Niceville).



**Rep. Terry Fields, (D-Jacksonville) co-sponsor of our bill, discussed the importance of the scholarship with his constituents.**

### **STARTING THIS FALL:**

- ▶ **Your child's scholarship will now be worth \$3,950 beginning for the 2008-2009 school year.**
- ▶ **The scholarship can now be used to cover tuition and fees at your child's school starting this Fall.**
- ▶ **Add-on siblings in a renewal family can now qualify under the higher renewal guidelines (200% of poverty) for the 2008-2009 school year.**
- ▶ **The cap on scholarship donations will increase to a maximum of \$118 million allowing for 6,000 additional scholarship children for the 2008-2009 school year.**



**Rep. Charles Chestnut, (D-Gainesville) co-sponsor of our bill, greets scholarship representatives at his Tallahassee office.**

**>> INSIDE: Unsung civil rights hero, Rev. HK Matthews, visits scholarship schools.**



## MEET THE SCHOLARSHIP STAFF



**Michael Benjamin**  
Grassroots Manager

Meet Michael Benjamin who humbly works to unite school choice supporters throughout the state and the nation in order to advance the school choice program here in Florida. Many of you may have had the pleasure of meeting Michael at parent and school meetings as well as the Rallies in Tallahassee.

As one of its pioneers, Michael has been with Step Up For Students for seven years managing the grassroots efforts. He does

a great job of working with parents and schools while keeping them informed on our progress, as Step Up For Students works to expand and defend educational options for Florida's underprivileged.

Michael enjoys spending his free time with his wife and kids, working with his local AAU basketball teams and mentoring youth.

Have a question for Michael? He'd love to hear from you at [mbrjamin@face.org](mailto:mbrjamin@face.org)

**DONOR  
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## BURGER KING

Founded in 1954 in Miami, Florida, the BURGER KING® system is the second largest fast food hamburger chain in the world, operating more than 11,400 restaurants in 70 countries and U.S. territories. Approximately 90 percent of BURGER KING® restaurants are owned and operated by independent franchisees, many of them family-owned operations that have been in business for decades.

Known for its HAVE IT YOUR WAY® brand promise, BURGER KING® restaurants serve great food to over 11 million guests each day, exactly the way they want it. Now, through its partnership with Step Up For Students, Burger King Corporation is providing educational options for low-income families to choose the right school for their child. The company joined Step Up For Students in 2007 with a donation of \$1 million dollars, which funded scholarships for more than 266



children.

"Burger King Corporation is excited about contributing to a program which empowers and engages parents in the future success of their children,"

said Amin Maredia, vice president, strategic planning and treasurer.

The company was also a sponsor of the December 2007 Step Up For Students Donor Appreciation Rally in Miami.

As a global citizen, Burger King Corporation is committed to corporate social responsibility through programs that focus on diversity and inclusion, food safety and animal welfare, sensitivity towards the environment, and a range of civic and charitable priorities that promote the company's shared future in the communities it serves.

We applaud the BURGER KING® brand for giving Florida's children the opportunity to learn in an academic environment that is right for them.

## DISCOUNTED PHONE PLAN

The Lifeline Assistance Program and Link-Up Florida offers financial assistance to residential and cellular telephone customers who meet certain income requirements.

Many of our scholarship families qualify!

The Lifeline Program provides a credit worth up to \$13.50 on local monthly phone bills, and Link-Up Florida provides up to a 50 percent discount in the telephone service hook-up charge. A savings worth up to \$30.00!

If you have any questions, or would like to know if you are eligible to participate in the programs, please call your local telephone company and ask for the Lifeline Discount, or Link-Up Discount.

You may also get discounts for other services such as Caller ID as well as blocking your long distance service without a deposit by requesting the discount from your phone provider.

After speaking with your phone company, if you have more questions please call the state PSC at **1-800-342-3552**, email the PSC at [contact@psc.state.fl.us](mailto:contact@psc.state.fl.us), or write to the:

**Florida Public Service Commission  
Division of Regulatory Compliance  
and Consumer Assistance**

2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0850.



# REV. HK MATTHEWS: A ROLE MODEL FOR ALL

The Reverend HK Matthews, a civil rights activist and a strong believer in parental choice in education, has spent this spring visiting scholarship schools to discuss civil rights battles of yesterday and today. His fight for civil rights in America began in the 1950's while he marched alongside the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and was jailed 35 times for his civil rights demonstrations.

Matthews dedicated his time to talk to scholarship students about civil rights in America at Potter's House Christian Fellowship (Jacksonville), St. Marks Preparatory School (Orlando), Miami Union Academy (Miami) and Phyl's Academy (Ft. Lauderdale). Matthews shared his experiences during his fight for equality that began nearly 60 years ago and how he is currently fighting for parental choice in education.

"It shouldn't matter the color of your skin, or your socioeconomic status, we are all Americans and have the right to a great education," Matthews said.

Matthews dedicated time at the conclusion of his speech to participate in a roundtable discussion about his fight for civil rights and signed his book, "Victory After the Fall," for the students.



**The Rev. HK Matthews greets scholarship students at St. Marks Preparatory School on Feb. 26.**



## Tips for Creating an Educational Summer

- ▶ **LIBRARY** — Create a summer reading list appropriate for your child's age. Visit <http://www.publiclibraries.com/florida.htm> to find the library closest to your home.
- ▶ **SUMMER CAMPS** — There are a variety of summer camps available to students in Florida! Not only do they provide structured events such as learning and game playing, they also provide an opportunity for your child to meet new friends and socialize without the pressures of school. Check with your child's school to see if they can recommend a summer camp provider close to your home.
- ▶ **BRAINSTORMING PUZZLES** — Have you challenged yourself to a puzzle lately? Recent studies show that stimulating yourself through puzzles, like sudoku, will expand your mind. Visit [www.dailysudoku.com](http://www.dailysudoku.com) for a new puzzle each day.
- ▶ **WRITING** — Encourage your child to write short stories, poems, or songs. They will think creatively and imaginatively to produce their own works of art!