Joshua Brown, 12, uses performing sternly at his public school. His grades were high and he was enrolled in advanced classes. Still, his mother Aquanas Brown didn’t think her son was fully stimulated. And the social environment at Joshua’s school wasn’t learning-focused.

“I was a little concerned about that because it seemed the students just wanted to play,” she said. “If you have a focused child, you want to keep them focused.”

Brown knew from experience that Joshua was headed for trouble if he remained at a school that wasn’t the right fit for him. Joshua’s older sister, Chanel, began her school career an excellent student but by the fourth grade, was failing math and performing poorly on exams.

Aquanas knew that a different academic setting would better suit her son. After a neighbor suggested setting a different academic environment at Joshua’s school wasn’t learning-focused.

Joshua focuses on school work here,” she said. “He has goals and he keeps his grades up.”

One of those goals is to be an orthodontist, Joshua said. “Joshua focuses on school work here,” she said.

Joshua’s former school was really, really strict but now I see how that has helped me.”

At Joshua’s former school, students “would fight other kids” he said. And at Heritage, everyone is focused on learning, he said.

“it challenges me,” he said. “I’m not a person who likes to do things easily. I like a challenge.”

Without Step Up For Students, Aquanas said she’s certain that Joshua and his sisters would have struggled along in their old school. The program has turned their lives around for the better, she said.

“I’m really grateful for both the school and the scholarship,” she said.

About Heritage Preparatory
Located in Orlando, Fla., Heritage Preparatory School is a private school with college preparatory curriculum for students in pre-school through 12th grade. The school currently serves 230 children, 116 of which are Step Up For Students scholarship recipients. The school annually admisters the Stanford Achievement Test. The annual tuition for grades K-12 is $5,050, not including books, registration fees or uniforms.
A new blog posts Step Up leaders in the national education debate

**redfinED**

the new definition of public education

**For too long, the debate over any education program begins first with an assumption that students in traditional neighborhood public schools can’t be trusted to opening the flood’s first post. “But today,” school reformers have public policies have exploded the historical discussion must end. It’s time our discussion did as well.**

**Contributors to the blog have gone on to write brief essays almost daily, ranging from commentary on the changing landscape of public education in Florida to thoughts on a new uncertainty for teachers. Their work has captured the attention of some notable education bloggers in the nation and has already led, in some cases, to spirited public debates.**

Andrew Bainbridge, perhaps the nation’s leading education blogger, told his readers about redfinED and wrote: “Broadcast focus than Florida and more issues than choice. Worth checking out.” Blogger Mike Auci- mucci wrote “dish one of the older and by this several.”

**University of Arizona education professor Jay P. Greene called redfinED a “great new blog” on his blog, Science.” The St. Petersburg Times Letterboard wrote: “Check the blog out. It could provide an interest- ing spark in our ongoing debates.”**

---

**Universal Academy of Florida / Tampa**

**Step Up For Students Scholarship**

**The school — whose nation can between $5,000 and $6,500—now boasts a computer classroom, two mobile computer labs, and a sci- ence lab. All students also can study Arabic, which is required learning for high school students. Extracurricular activities include the Science Club, Art Club, Student Council and the Hummingbird Outreach Club, which has raised money for cancer research and organized “One Day’s Pay” in an effort to benefit the campus. In the past three years, Universal Academy students have surpassed the state and national averages on SAT, AP and ACT examinations, with some students earning perfect scores. Among those who did was including last year’s valedictorian, who passed seven AP exams with an perfect scores of five.**

**The school also offers a variety of Advanced Placement courses includ- ing biology, chemistry and English. The program continues to be popular these years after its establishment, with almost students in the advanced classes this year, said Donna Yelverton, the school’s business director. Students’ annual progress is tracked using the Stanford Achieve- ment Test, with more than 90 per- cent of students scoring at or above the 90th percentile in math and English. To keep the school moving forward and maintain its culture of excellence, school officials have established a number of objectives, including the installation of electron- ic whiteboards in all classrooms and becoming a paperless school.**

**KidCare available to uninsured children**

Through Florida KidCare, the state offers health insurance for children from birth through age 18, even if one or both parents are working. KidCare is designed to provide affordable insurance with coverage that includes doctor visits, vaccinations, hospital care, emergency care, food stays and more. Most kids pay $5-$15 per month at all.

When families apply for the insur- ance, Florida KidCare will check each part the children may qualify by for: age and family income.

**MEDKIDS: children ages 1 through 4**

**HEALTHY KIDS: children ages 5 through 18**

**CHILDREN’S MEDICAL SERVICES NETWORK: children birth through 18 who have special health care needs**

**MEDCAID: children birth through 18. A child who has other health insur- ance may still qualify for Medicaid.**

For more information about the Florida KidCare program please visit, www.kidcare.org or call the Medicaid 1-800-342-0599.

**Parents seeking help to understand the evermore educational challenges facing by children from low-income and working class families, 2350 S. Lent Avenue, Tampa, Florida 33610 Phone (813) 251-5644**

---

**A diverse group of advocates for the Step Up For Students Scholarship entered the Florida campaign arena in October to challenge the candidates to support learning options for low-income children. At a press conference in Fort Lauderdale and a full-page advertisement in the Tallahassee Democrat, the group pressed its message that “Florida needs to embrace a new generation of learning options for all students. We have many great success stories.”**

“Jill Quinones-Garcia, executive director of the Coalition of Hispanic Parents of Florida, coalition to turn their children’s dreams around thanks to this program and our children birth through 18. A child who has other health insur- ance may still qualify for Medicaid.**

For more information about the Florida KidCare program please visit, www.kidcare.org or call the Medicaid 1-800-342-0599.

**Parents seeking help to understand the evermore educational challenges facing by children from low-income and working class families, 2350 S. Lent Avenue, Tampa, Florida 33610 Phone (813) 251-5644**

---

**The scholarship is serving thou- sands of students who wouldn’t have this opportunity otherwise.**

**Step Up For Students Scholarship**

**Additionally, American Stra- tegic Insurance’s contribution of $5.1 million has provided more than 1,400 scholarships. Progress Energy also was recognized for its commitment, making $1 million in contributions.**

Since the scholarship’s creation, more than $120 million in scholarships...**
Universal Academy of Florida / Tampa

The school – where nation can run between $5,000 and $8,000 – now boasts a computer classroom, two mobile computer labs, and a science lab. All students also can study Arabic, which is required for learning high schools. Extracurricular activities include the Science Club/Art Club, Student Council and the Starman Outreach Club, which has raised money for cancer research and operated “One U Day,” an effort to be respectful to the campus.

In the past three years, Universal Academy students have surpassed the state and national averages on SAT, ACT and AEP examinations, with some students earning perfect scores. Among those who did was including last year’s valedictorian, who passed seven AP exams with an perfect scores of five.

The school also offers a variety of Advanced Placement courses including biology, chemistry and English. The program continues to be popular three years after its establishment, with nine students enrolled in the advanced classes this year, said Moses Velez, the school’s business director.

Students’ annual progress is tracked using the Stanford Achievement Test, with more than 30 percent of the students scoring at or above the 90th percentile in math and English.

To keep the school moving forward and maintain its culture of excellence, school officials have established a number of objectives, including the installation of electronic whiteboards in all classrooms and becoming a paperless school.

KidCare available to uninsured children

Thanks for your willingness to keep our children's health insurance in place. Please keep us informed of any changes you see to our ongoing debates.

For more information about the Florida KidCare program please visit, www.fldhs.gov/health/medicaid/kidcare.

A diverse group of advocates for the Step Up For Students Scholarship entered the Florida campaign arena in October to challenge the candidates on their records of success, and in a full-page advertisement in The Palm Beach Post, the group pressed its case for the scholarships. Among the speakers who have written guest columns or made television appearances to promote the scholarships, Lincoln College President Allan Johnson was among the dozen students who have been able to turn their lives around thanks to this program and a health care needs.

Florida KidCare

For information about the Florida KidCare program please visit, www.fldhs.gov/health/medicaid/kidcare.

A diverse group of advocates for the Step Up For Students Scholarship entered the Florida campaign arena in October to challenge the candidates on their records of success, and in a full-page advertisement in The Palm Beach Post, the group pressed its case for the scholarships. Among the speakers who have written guest columns or made television appearances to promote the scholarships, Lincoln College President Allan Johnson was among the dozen students who have been able to turn their lives around thanks to this program and a health care needs.

Florida KidCare

For information about the Florida KidCare program please visit, www.fldhs.gov/health/medicaid/kidcare.

A diverse group of advocates for the Step Up For Students Scholarship entered the Florida campaign arena in October to challenge the candidates on their records of success, and in a full-page advertisement in The Palm Beach Post, the group pressed its case for the scholarships. Among the speakers who have written guest columns or made television appearances to promote the scholarships, Lincoln College President Allan Johnson was among the dozen students who have been able to turn their lives around thanks to this program and a health care needs.
Step Up For Students has reached a key milestone this school year that will allow it to serve more students and pay larger scholarships in the coming school year. But parents should be forewarned: Demand for the program is higher than ever, and they should apply as quickly as possible to secure their spots.

Applications for the 2011-12 school year open for existing families in early March, and scholarship administrators advise parents to begin the renewal process as soon as they can. Renewal students receive preference for scholarships as long as their applications are submitted by May.

"Because we had to close the application season early the last two years, we can expect more of the same, and the number of scholarships may be limited," said John LaFollette, the executive director for scholarship operations at Step Up For Students. The milestone that Step Up reached in fundraising. In December, just halfway through the new fiscal year, it reached the higher $140 million mark, which allows the program to receive scholarships in the coming school year barely three weeks after the school year begins, something it’s never done. Even after adding nearly 6,000 new students this year, the scholarship office still has a waiting list of 6,752.

Families renewing the scholarship will have priority when the new application season begins in early March. Only renewal families can apply during March and April. The season for new applicants is expected to begin in May.

About Heritage Preparatory
Located in Orlando, Fla., Heritage Preparatory School is a private school with college preparatory curriculum for students in primary through 12th grade. The school currently serves 230 children, 116 of which are Step Up For Students scholarship recipients. The school annually administers the Stanford Achievement Test. The annual tuition for grades K-12 is $5,050, not including books, registration fees or uniforms.

Joshua Brown, 12, whose performance steadily improved at his public school, his grades were high and he was enrolled in advanced classes.

Still, his mother Aquanas Brown didn’t think her son was fully stimulated. And the social environment at Joshua’s school wasn’t learning-focused.

“I was a little concerned about that because it seemed like he wasn’t eager to learn,” she said. “If you have a focused child, you want to keep them focused.”

Brown knew from experience that Joshua was headed for trouble if he remained at a school that wasn’t the right fit for him. Joshua’s older sister, Chanel, began her school career an excellent student but by the fourth grade, was failing math and performing poorly on exams.

Aquanas knew that a different academic setting was best for Chanel. After a neighbor told Aquanas and her husband Paul about the Step Up For Students program, they decided to apply and use the scholarship to enroll Chanel at Heritage Preparatory in Orlando. Not wanting to leave anything to chance, Aquanas sought out scholarships for Joshua and another daughter, Tamar, and enrolled them at the same school.

That was five years ago. At Heritage, Joshua – now a 7th grader – is an excellent student earning mostly straight A’s. Aquanas said the school’s small, close-knit setting and one-on-one attention from teachers have helped Joshua reach his potential.

Joshua enjoys a close rapport with Heritage’s principal and has established himself as a school leader, she said.

“Joshua focuses on school work here,” she said. “He has goals and he keeps his grades up.”

One of those goals is to be an orthodontist, Joshua said.

said. “Joshua said he likes Heritage because the teachers do their best to help students succeed. “They are really good,” he said. “One teacher was really really strict but now I see how that has helped me.”

At Joshua’s former school, students “would fight other kids” he said. But at Heritage, everyone is focused on learning, he said.

“If challenges me,” he said. “I am not a person who likes to do things easily. I like a challenge.”

Without Step Up For Students, Aquanas said she’s certain that Joshua and his sisters would not be where they are today.

“I’m really grateful for both the school and the scholarship,” she said.

**About Heritage Preparatory**
Located in Orlando, Fla., Heritage Preparatory School is a private school with college preparatory curriculum for students in preschool through 12th grade. The school currently serves 230 children, 116 of which are Step Up For Students scholarship recipients. The school annually administers the Stanford Achievement Test. The annual tuition for grades K-12 is $5,050, not including books, registration fees or uniforms.