



LEARN & EARN

**PRESS & MEDIA
RELEASES**

July, 2008

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Atlanta Journal Constitution

Fulton to pay students in after-school program

| 01/23/2008 | Michelle E. Shaw

Posted on **Tuesday, January 22, 2008 3:29:55 PM** by **too much time**

Fulton County schools want to pay students to stay in school a little longer.

Forty students from Creekside High and Bear Creek Middle schools in Fairburn will be the first to try the "Learn & Earn" program, where students will get paid to attend after-school tutoring programs.

Students will make approximately \$8 an hour, and be eligible for bonuses if their grades improve, said Kirk Wilks, district spokesman. The initial students are in the eighth and 11th grades.

There will be a community kick-off Thursday at 3 p.m. in the Creekside High media center, 7405 Herndon Rd., Fairburn.

With the support of Fulton County Commissioner Robb Pitts, the pilot program will last 15 weeks and pay students for participation and performance. The object of the program is to determine if paying students to study will improve classroom attendance, grades and test scores, according to a news release from the district.

The initiative is funded by Charles Loudermilk, chairman and chief executive officer of Aaron Rents, through the Learning Makes A Difference Foundation. The foundation is a local non-profit designed to improve education through creative programs.

The students chosen for the program were picked by school staff, based on attendance, grades, test scores and free or reduced lunch status, the release said.



Paying Students To Learn

By Bridget Gutierrez | Tuesday, January 22, 2008, 01:37 PM
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

With metro Atlanta public schools regularly offering goodies — such as MP3 players and bikes — to encourage students to attend classes, perhaps it was only a matter of time local educators decided to bait kids with cold hard cash.

According to a media advisory e-mailed to reporters this morning, Fulton County Schools will announce a new “Learn & Earn” initiative Thursday that will “test the hypothesis that extrinsic motivation (pay for attendance and participation) will improve academic performance....”

(Seriously, folks. I’m not making this up.)

For 15 weeks, 40 selected eighth-graders from Bear Creek Middle School and 11th-graders from Creekside High School — both in Fairburn — will be paid to attend free after-school tutoring in math and science.

According to the news advisory, the plan was conceived by former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich and will be privately funded by Charles Loudermilk, founder of the Aaron Rents furnishings company.

“There are numerous variables involved when a student performs below expectations in school, including economics,” the e-mail stated. “The study seeks to show whether monetary incentives do, in fact, improve classroom attendance, grades and test scores.” I wonder if it will also determine whether kids learn the value of an education?

UPDATE: AJC education reporter Michelle Shaw got some interesting reactions to Fulton’s initiative. Kati Haycock, president of the Washington-based Education Trust, which advocates for minority students, told her: “Are there risks of this? Sure. But are there risks of not trying it? Oh yeah, probably bigger ones.”

Georgia Public Broadcasting News: The latest statewide news & features, sights & sounds, all webcast in streaming audio, video, & broadcast on your local GPB station

 **WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2008**

[Schools pay students to study](#)

A Georgia school system is set to pay students to study. Fulton County says the new "Learn & Earn" program is being offered to more than 40 students. They earn \$8 an hour to study. The privately funded program also will offer cash bonuses to students who improve their in-school performance.

Posted by Rickey Bevington at [1/23/2008 03:39:00 PM](#)  

Labels: [fulton county georgia](#), [learn and earn](#)

Atlanta Journal & Constitution

Main Edition

Wednesday, 1/23/2008
News A1
MICHELLE E. SHAW / Staff
mshaw@ajc.com

What's it worth to study? \$8/hour

A privately funded trial run at 2 Fulton schools also will offer bonuses to students who improve their performance.

Fulton County school officials have a new program to encourage selected students to study after school: cold, hard cash.

The Fulton school system is instituting "Learn & Earn, " offering 40 students from Creekside High and Bear Creek Middle schools in Fairburn \$8 an hour to study after school. The privately funded program will also offer cash bonuses to students who improve in-school performance.

"One could easily pick this apart, but I'm not sure I want to, " said Kati Haycock, president of the Washington D.C.-based Education Trust. "Are there risks of this? Sure. But are there risks of not trying it? Oh yeah, probably bigger ones."

The 15-week trial run will be conducted with students in the eighth and 11th grades. The students chosen for the program were picked by school staff, based on attendance, grades, test scores and free- or reduced-lunch status. The object, according to the school district, is to determine if paying students to study will improve classroom performance.

School systems across the country have experimented with incentive programs to motivate students. Some give prizes and awards --- including cash --- for perfect attendance or improved test scores. Various metro Atlanta districts offer such rewards as bikes, food and tickets to theme parks.

Fulton schools spokesman Kirk Wilks would not release further details of the program Tuesday, saying all questions would be answered Thursday at a news conference. There will be a community kick-off Thursday at 3 p.m. in the Creekside High media center.

The initiative is funded by Charles Loudermilk, chairman and chief executive officer of Aaron Rents, through the Learning Makes A Difference Foundation, a local nonprofit

designed to improve education.

Ronald Ferguson, director of the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University, said of the initiative, "Here you are asking kids to go above and beyond school. Anybody who would be critical of it, if they were on the side to receive the money, they would probably not turn it down."

Michael Petrilli, vice president of national and programing policy for the Fordham Foundation, based in D.C., said it seems worthwhile.

He said there is the concern about sending the "wrong message, " but for needy students who must work after school, the concept might be a good option. The program piqued the interest of Michaela Kron, a senior at North Springs Charter School.

An honors student taking four advanced-placement classes, Michaela said she would understand if the cash incentives were left to the students who struggled with basic academic concepts.

"If the opportunity was given to me for the level of class work I'm taking, I'd sure do it, " she said. "But I really think this could get the attention of the students who need it."



Top News

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Ga. program tests paying students to learn

Published: Jan. 23, 2008 at 3:48 PM

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[Email to a friend](#)

ATLANTA, Jan. 23 (UPI) -- A Georgia school district plans to pay students \$8 an hour to attend an after-school program, with the rate going up as grades improve.

Fulton County, which includes Atlanta, kicks off a 15-week pilot program Thursday, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported. The first participants are to be 40 students from Creekside High School and Bear Creek Middle School in Fairburn.

School officials said in a press release students were selected for the program based on grades, attendance and whether they are eligible for free lunches. The goal is to test whether paying students will motivate them to improve their academic standing.

Charles Loudermilk, head of Aaron Rents, donated funding for the program through the Learning Makes A Difference Foundation, an Atlanta-area foundation.

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Students Paid To Study After School

2 Fulton County schools will pay students to study



Posted: Wednesday, January 23, 2008 at 12:58 p.m.

ATLANTA, GA. (AP) -- Fulton County School officials will pay students to study after school in a new program designed to improve their classroom performance. The program called "Learn & Earn" is being offered to 40 students from Creekside High and Bear Creek Middle schools in Fairburn. The students will give students \$8 an hour to study after school. The privately funded program also will offer cash bonuses to students who improve their in-school performance. School officials say the goal is to determine whether paying students to study will improve their performance. The 15-week trial program will be conducted with students in the eighth and 11th grades. Students were selected by school staff, based on attendance, grades, test scores and free or reduced-lunch status. A community kickoff ceremony is planned for 3 p.m. Thursday in the media center at Creekside High School.

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Georgia After-School Program Will Pay Students to Study

Wednesday, January 23, 2008

ATLANTA — Fulton County school officials will pay students to study after school in a new program designed to improve their classroom performance.

The program, called "Learn & Earn," is being offered to 40 students from Creekside High and Bear Creek Middle schools in Fairburn. The program will give students \$8 an hour to study after school.

The privately funded program also will offer cash bonuses to students who improve their in-school performance.

School officials say the goal is to determine whether paying students to study will improve their performance.

The 15-week trial program will be conducted with students in the eighth and 11th grades. Students were selected by school staff, based on attendance, grades, test scores and free or reduced-lunch status.

A community kickoff ceremony is planned for 3 p.m. Thursday in the media center at Creekside High School.

January 24, 2008

2 Ga. Schools to pay students to study

ATLANTA - Fulton County school officials will pay students to study after school in a new program designed to improve their classroom performance.

The program, called "Learn & Earn," is being offered to 40 students from Creekside High and Bear Creek Middle schools in Fairburn. The program will give students \$8 an hour to study after school.

The privately funded program also will offer cash bonuses to students who improve their in-school performance.

School officials say the goal is to determine whether paying students to study will improve their performance.

The 15-week trial program will be conducted with students in the eighth and 11th grades. Students were selected by school staff, based on attendance, grades, test scores and free or reduced-lunch status.

A community kickoff ceremony is planned for 3 p.m. Thursday in the media center at Creekside High School.



Atlanta magazine is one of the largest custom publishers in Atlanta. *Atlanta* magazine's Custom Publishing division produces turnkey publications for several organizations

Paying Kids to Study & Getting Rid of Fractions

There are two interesting education stories in the news this week that caught my eye.

First, lucky kids in a privately funded program at a couple schools in Fulton County are going to be paid to study. That's right, paid to do what they're supposed to be doing anyway. The "Learn & Earn" program will pay some 40 kids at Creekside High and Bear Creek Middle schools \$8 an hour to study after school. The kids were hand-picked for the program and the goal is to figure out if kids perform better if they're paid.

This reminds me of when Luke was in first grade and he came home from school only days after his first report card. One girl in his class -- his FIRST GRADE class -- had gone to school boasting that her parents had given her an iPod because she earned straight A's. IN FIRST GRADE. Excuse my ignorance, but how hard is it to earn straight A's in first grade? If you start doling out iPods when they're six, what are you going to give the kids by the time they're in high school?

We personally don't pay for good grades. We tell him over and over how proud we are of him and he knows it, but we don't tell him that we'll buy him presents for every A. But then we have a motivated student. Maybe non-motivated kids will study if there are dollar signs involved. I guess Fulton County is aiming to find out.

In related news, a University of Pennsylvania math professor wants kids to stop learning fractions. He says that in today's decimal-driven world, they're as obsolete as Roman numerals. Some people argue that we need fractions for things like cooking and carpentry. But, as the mother of a child who used to bring home homework that involved intricate multiplication of compound fractions, I'm all for it. Because you just can't cheat with that stuff by using a calculator.

Posted by Mary Jo DiLonardo at 01/24/2008 07:36:11 AM |



Two Georgia Schools to Pay Students to Study

Associated Press
January 24, 2008
By Errin Haines

FAIRBURN, Ga. (AP) Learning is supposed to be its own reward, but when that doesn't work, should students get paid to do it?

That's the question two Georgia schools are asking in a 15-week pilot program that is paying high-schoolers struggling in math and science \$8 an hour to attend study hall for four hours a week.

The privately funded "Learn & Earn" initiative, an idea from former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, is touted as the first of its kind in the state and one of a few similar programs nationwide.

"We want to try something new," said Jackie Cushman, Gingrich's daughter and co-founder of the group funding the initiative. "We're trying to figure out what works. Is it the answer? No. Is it a possible idea that might work? Yes."

Forty students at Bear Creek Middle School and Creekside High School, both in the Atlanta suburb of Fairburn, began participating in the program Tuesday. The eighth- and 11th-graders chosen had to be underperforming in math and science, and many are eligible for free or reduced-cost lunches.

The hope is that the bribes will boost students' motivation to learn, attend class and get better grades.

Aside from the hourly wage, eighth-graders will get a \$75 bonus, and 11th-graders \$125, if they improve their math and science grades to a B and achieve certain test scores. For the older kids, that adds up to \$605 for a semester of studying.

Cushman said the initiative is aimed at math and science because many student struggle in those subjects even if they excel in others.

The offer could help poor students who need the money and otherwise might choose a minimum-wage job over studying, said Jerome Morris, an associate professor at the University of Georgia's College of Education. He also noted that parents who have the means to reward their children for performing well in school have done so for decades.

"Poor families just can't do that," Morris said. "They have to tell their children, 'You have to go to school just to learn.'"

The director of a private center aimed at improving motivation, however, said plying kids with cash is a desperate move by school officials.

"They have not figured out a way to self-motivate these kids," said Peter A. Spevak, director of the Center for Applied Motivation in Washington, D.C. "What really drives a person is the desire to do well and the good feeling you have after doing your best every day."

Paying children to learn may work in the short term, but before long, the luster could wear off and they may look to up the ante, Spevak said. Ultimately, it could become a losing game.

"When you take the money away, assuming it has been effective, people sometimes get angry or disillusioned," he said. "They may start to wonder where the next prize is coming from."

The \$60,000 initiative is being funded by Atlanta businessman Charles Loudermilk, founder of Aaron Rents, through the Learning Makes a Difference Foundation Inc., an Atlanta-based nonprofit that funds innovative education programs and was founded by Gingrich's daughters.

40 students to test pay-for-study plan

BYLINE: MICHELLE E. SHAW

DATE: January 25, 2008

PUBLICATION: Atlanta Journal-Constitution, The (GA)

EDITION: Main; The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

SECTION: Metro News

PAGE: E5

It won't be the easiest \$8 an hour Jailyn Brown has earned, he said, but he's willing to give the idea a try.

The 14-year-old is among a small group of Fulton County students taking part in Learn & Earn, a pilot program that pays participants for attending after-school tutoring.

At the rate of \$32 a week, Jailyn and 19 other eighth-graders from Bear Creek Middle School could earn \$480 by the end of the school year.

"My grades could be better," Jailyn said. "And I want them to get better, so I'm going to do it."

Jailyn said he'd asked his mother about getting a job after school, but may hold off now. He said he'd use some of his earnings to help his mother with household expenses.

The details of Learn & Earn were explained at a news conference Thursday at Creekside High, attended by several community members, educators and local and national media outlets.

The program, which began Tuesday for some, is being conducted at Bear Creek Middle and neighboring Creekside High. Twenty students from each school are in the trial group. Students barely making academic standards, or those performing below the mark in math and science, were picked for the first run, said Greg Fields, assistant superintendent for high schools in Fulton County.

The program -- two hours a day, two days a week -- runs 15 weeks. Tutoring in math and science only will be offered from 4 to 6 p.m. Transportation is provided for students in the program.

Much like a job in the corporate arena, attendance and participation will impact pay. Tardiness, leaving early, missing sessions, goofing off or napping will not be tolerated, Fields said.

Eleventh-graders who raise their grades in math and science to a B average, and meet state testing standards, could get an additional \$125 at the end of the school year. Eighth-graders will be eligible to receive another \$75 on top of their hourly pay.

Fields said the idea is akin to parents paying or rewarding their children for improved effort or good grades.

"We're looking at kids, in many cases, who aren't able to see those kinds of rewards at home," he said.

The initiative is funded by Charles Loudermilk, chairman and chief executive officer of Aaron Rents, through the Learning Makes a Difference Foundation, a local nonprofit designed to improve education. Loudermilk, who did not attend the announcement, has committed the entire budget of \$60,000.

Learn & Earn has some political support as well.

Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich endorses the program because it is one of his ideas, said his daughter Jackie Cushman, president of the foundation's board of directors.

"It's an idea," Cushman said. "Is it the answer? No. But is it an idea? Yes. We have to find out what works."

She said there have been incentive programs across the country before, but contends this one is different.

"We haven't seen anything exactly like this," she said. "I'm excited to see what happens at the end of the trial run." If the trial is successful, additional private funding would be sought so the program could be expanded.

Fulton County Commissioner Robb Pitts, who brought the idea to the system, has heard the voices of the naysayers, but refuses to listen. He also said the idea of students doing poorly in school just to get in the program is "nonsense."

"Why not give this a try?" asked James Wilson, superintendent of schools.

Friday, January 25, 2008

Learn and Earn" tutoring program draws national spotlight

Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich envisioned the idea back in 2003. Fulton County Commissioner Robb Pitts championed the idea since first hearing of it in 2007. Charles Loudermilk, founder, chairman and CEO of Aaron Rents Inc., agreed to fund the idea that same year through the Learning Makes a Difference Foundation Inc. And the Fulton County School System now puts the idea to the test.



What is it? "Learn & Earn" is a pioneering 15-week study to test the hypothesis that paying students to attend and participate in tutorial sessions will improve their academic performance.

Forty students – 20 in the 11th grade at Creekside High School and 20 in the eighth grade at Bear Creek Middle School, both in Fairburn, Ga. – have been selected for study participation by their principals, teachers and counselors based on attendance records, grades and test scores in math and science and their free- and/or reduced-lunch status.

"This is unique and exciting," said Pitts, who believed in the idea since first learning about it from Gingrich, the brainchild behind the initiative, at a Buckhead Coalition meeting. "Our objectives are to stimulate and motivate student interest – and to ultimately help students improve test performance and raise their grades."

Gingrich agrees. "It's great to see this original concept now being tested in local classrooms. We're looking forward to seeing the study's end results and have to believe that incentivizing these students to improve their grades will be a win-win for everyone – not only for the students but also for our community and society as a whole," Gingrich said.

There are numerous variables involved when a student performs below expectations in school, including economics. The study's principal investigator, James Emshoff, Ph.D., from EMSTAR Research Inc., seeks to show whether monetary incentives do, in fact, improve classroom attendance, grades and test scores.

"Four Fulton County teachers have been chosen to conduct the tutorials, which began January 22 and run through May 15," said Greg Fields, Ed.D, assistant superintendent for high school curriculum with the Fulton County School System. "Students will receive four hours of free afterschool tutorial assistance in math

and science each week – and get paid \$8 an hour (\$32 a week). Students will also receive additional cash rewards, up to \$125 for 11th graders and \$75 for 8th graders, if math and science grades are brought up to a B level and targeted state test scores are achieved.”

Similar programs have launched nationally, but this is believed to be the first in Georgia. Education Week, the leading trade journal for educational issues, touted the success of “money-for-achievement” programs in its January 16, 2008 issue.

Learning Makes a Difference Foundation Inc. is an Atlanta-based non-profit whose mission is to accelerate education through innovative programs. It’s funded through private donations by individuals, corporations, grants and foundations.

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January 25, 2008

'Learn and Earn' the latest education gimmick

Schools are getting desperate. Or maybe, they are finally getting realistic.

A trial program called "Learn and Earn" has middle and high school students in the Fulton County (Atlanta) School System being paid to attend after-school tutoring programs. The students will be paid \$8 per hour and be eligible for unspecified bonuses if they improve their grades.

The program will last 15 weeks and according to a story in the Jan. 23 Atlanta Journal-Constitution, will "determine if paying students to study will improve classroom attendance, grades and test scores."

Don't worry, a private foundation is footing the bill for the program.

At first glance, this proposal appears insane. The questions started popping into my head one after another:

- Are we really going to pay the students that are doing poorly?
- What about the idea that hard work was its own reward?
- Aren't students supposed to be working hard in school to gain an education that will help them succeed in life?
- Isn't paying poor students going to drive marginal students to fail in the hope that they too can get paid to do what they are supposed to do for free?
- Isn't this just reinforcing the instant gratification generation that we are raising?
- Are we increasing the disconnect between the education system and the real world by introducing a program that rewards failure? I have yet to work at a job that functions in a similar way (Although government may be a refuge for some of these failures.).
- Does this reflect the level of despair in urban schools, where the pressure to keep up with the testing demands of No Child Left Behind has exhausted every other option?
- Who came up with this cockamamie idea in the first place?
- What is wrong with kids these days? And, where are their parents in all this?

I could go on, but you get the picture. The situation in many schools is grim. Students are

not learning, and we appear to be out of ideas about how to inspire them. We seem to be left with, "Money talks and b.s. walks."

Schools have used incentives in the past, rewarding students with perfect attendance or those who earn a perfect score on the SAT. These are extraordinary achievements - and are rare enough to merit recognition.

The bag of tricks that teachers have seems to be empty. Bribing every kid just to get them to do homework may be the next step. But we can't blame the teachers.

We can, however, blame the parents. Parents should be doing everything possible to make sure their children have a safe and effective learning environment at home and that schoolwork is being completed accurately and on time. Getting parents intimately involved in their children's education is not too much to ask and is the most effective way to boost student achievement.

As a child, I remember being rewarded by my parents for a good report card after the fact. There was no arrangement at the beginning of the semester that stated what I'd receive if I earned top marks. There was, however, an implicit threat about what might happen should I not receive the marks I was capable of earning. This was a very effective system.

(Jonathan Maziarz is the editor of the Tribune & Georgian and a regular Friday columnist.)

The Walton Tribune

Getting paid to do homework?

By Brian Arrington

The Walton Tribune

Published January 27, 2008

It has finally come to this.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported last week that 40 students from Creekside High and Bear Creek Middle schools in Fairburn will be paid to do their school work.

Yes, paid.

The new program, called "Learn & Earn," will pay students about \$8 per hour to go to after-school tutoring programs.

Plus, they may get bonuses if their grades improve, the AJC reports.

The Fulton County school district says it is trying to find out if paying the students will translate into better "classroom attendance, grades and test scores."

Excuse me, but isn't this just old-fashioned bribery?

Isn't getting good grades, getting into a good college and finding a good job enough incentive to get kids to show up to class and do a little bit of homework?

If a student needs to be paid to do their schoolwork, they shouldn't be in school to begin with.

What type of lesson does this teach these children?

It seems this program is doing nothing but creating a generation of people expecting to get a hand out for doing nothing.

Like we need another generation of people sitting on their butts waiting for a hand out.

Thumbs down to this program.

CNN Student News Transcript: January 28, 2008

Learn to Earn

LLOYD: Turning from the campaign trail to the classroom, a program in some Georgia schools is raising quite a bit of controversy. Some people think it's a bad idea; others think it's great. And on our blog, opinions on the issue are just as split. So, what is it we're talking about? Paying students to study! Josh Levs looks at both sides of the argument.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOSH LEVS, CNN REPORTER: Kids study to learn, get good grades, get into a good college. But should they study for money? At Creekside High near Atlanta, these kids are getting eight bucks an hour to be tutored in math and science, an experimental program targeting promising students with low grades.

ROBB PITTS, FULTON COUNTY COMMISSIONER: If we don't do something, we're doing a disservice to our children.

LEVS: The idea came from Newt Gingrich. There's no taxpayer money involved. His daughter heads a foundation sponsoring the program.

JACKIE CUSHMAN, LEARNING MAKES A DIFFERENCE FOUNDATION: Is it the answer? No. Is it a possible idea that might work? Yes.

LEVS: Some people wrote the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, calling the program "unfair to kids who work hard to begin with" and "one of the dumbest things I have ever heard." Some experts say it could make kids less interested in learning when they're not being paid.

ALFIE KOHN, AUTHOR, "PUNISHED BY REWARDS": Rewards aren't just ineffective, they're counterproductive. And we've seen this over and over again.

LEVS: Some studies suggest rewards for grades or test scores may work. But these kids get paid for showing up, two hours twice a week.

LEVS: There are about 2,500 students at this school, but for this program, only 20 were chosen. As for the money:

PITTS: In many instances, these kids are working because whatever they earn, their families need that.

LEVS: Organizers say kids with jobs could cut back work hours. But for some:

ALEXIS YARGER, 11TH GRADER: The money doesn't really matter. I just need extra help in math.

LEVS: 14-year-old Jaily Brown is in the same program at a nearby middle school. He has plans for the money.

JAILY BROWN, 8TH GRADE: Probably give it to my mom. She needs it.

LEVS: After 15 weeks, organizers will check all 40 students' grades and test scores.

PITTS: And if the results are as we think they will be, those naysayers will go away and we'll be able to export this program nationwide.

LEVS: At the least, maybe the pay will give some students new incentive to care about math. Josh Levs, CNN, Atlanta.

(END VIDEO CLIP)



January 28, 2008

Performance pay

"Academic incentives" — paying students for good grades or test scores — are all the rage, as education writer [Greg Toppo](#) reports today.

Last week, a high school in Macon, Ga., [offered a flat-screen television](#) in a drawing aimed at students making the honor roll. In Baltimore, the school system [plans to pay](#) each student up to \$110 for improving scores on state graduation tests.

In suburban Atlanta, students in Fulton County's Learn & Earn program [will get paid](#) to attend after-school tutoring programs. And earlier this month, the Utah Board of Regents proposed awarding scholarships to high school students who complete a college-preparatory curriculum.

All this probably sounds abhorrent to traditionalists who believe that motivations for learning should be pure and intrinsic. And, yes, the connection between a good education and a good income later in life should be readily apparent. Even so, if properly structured and targeted, incentive programs have a place — and they show promise.

Call them bribes if you will, but the reality is that many upper- and middle-income parents already reward children for getting good grades with cash or dinner at a favorite restaurant. Most of the students in pay-for-grades programs, usually sponsored by private donors, come from neighborhoods where dinners out are rarities.

The argument for offering academic incentives goes beyond theory. In Texas, researchers found significant benefits in a program offering up to \$500 to students from high-poverty, mostly minority schools who pass an Advanced Placement exam. Schools participating in the program discovered a [sharp increase](#) in scores on SAT and ACT college admissions tests.

University of Pennsylvania researchers used randomly selected control groups to study a foundation-sponsored program that paid poor students to maintain good grades. The conclusion was that it worked.

At Amphitheater High School in Tucson, an experimental program offers \$25 a week for those with C-averages or better, perfect attendance and no discipline referrals. Students making the honor roll can get \$100 bonuses at the end of the semester. The 75 students selected for the program live in neighborhoods where the average annual family income is no more than \$15,000.

Amphitheater High's principal, Patricia Harris, says the program's early results are encouraging. Attendance has improved, and eight students improved their performance enough to win the \$100 bonuses.

Students growing up in poverty in Tucson and elsewhere frequently lack role models who succeed in life by trying hard in school. Many of those students simply don't see the point in trying, which is where the prize strategy kicks in: It supplies a point.

With luck, they'll eventually discover other points to getting an education.

Posted at 12:21 AM/ET, January 28, 2008 in Education - Editorial, Pay/Income issues - Editorial, USA TODAY editorial | [Permalink](#)

Hughs: Reading skills open the world to students

By [Ina Hughs](#) ([Contact](#))

Thursday, January 31, 2008

I think I read it right.

I know I read it right because I went over it at least three times.

Two Georgia schools are paying kids to do their homework.

The first time I read the story, I was flummoxed.

After the third reading, I was more thoughtful, calmed down - and even hopeful.

Let's go back to the beginning.

The "Learn and Earn" initiative conceived by former House Speaker Newt Gingrich and his daughter, Jackie Cushman, is a pilot program in Georgia, representing a trend in similar programs nationwide, albeit at this stage of the game, only a few.

Kids who are underachievers in math and science are getting a financial incentive to do their homework; eighth-graders in the program get \$8 an hour to study four hours a week.

Aside from this, they get a \$75 bonus (11th-graders get \$125) if they raise their math and science grades to a B.

If you add it all together and keep tabs, this "Learn and Earn" initiative could, for older students, add up to \$605 for a semester of studying.

Back in the middle of the previous century when I was middle school, that idea wouldn't have had a chance in hell. Pardon the French, but hell is the nice way to describe how I felt about logarithms, and the hot look on my father's face when he read bad report cards came straight from down under.

I am 67 years old.

When I was in school, there were only two things that happened when my parents saw the report card and had to sign it. I either got a smile - or a sermon.

My grades, thanks to genes over which I had no control and parental guidance which marked me one of the lucky ones, were a little iffy in math but otherwise OK.

When my own kids came along, we decided to lick the homework arguments by declaring no TV whatsoever on school nights.

That pretty much solved the problem. Kids sit in their rooms staring at wallpaper for so many hours, and finally, homework isn't all that bad an option.

Of course, this was before kids had their own computer, iPod, cell phone and Game Boy.

It must be a lot harder for parents today to keep the kids on task when it comes to doing homework. There are so many distractions. So paying underachievers who are headed down a path of self-destruction, likely to drop out or fail out - well, I have to agree with Gingrich's daughter: "We're trying to figure out what works. Is it the answer? No. Is it a possible idea that might work? Yes."

No doubt there will be people who are irked that public money (their money) is being used to pay lazy kids to do something they ought to be doing by their own initiative.

But, if these naysayers can do simple math themselves, they could figure out that paying kids to do homework is cheaper than supporting them and their families later - on welfare or, worse, in prison.

I paid my kids for good grades. An "A" got them \$5, a "B," \$4. A "C," being average, was not rewarded. It seemed to work. Kids, especially middle schoolers, aren't into sermons and well-meaning advice.

But money talks.

I hope this new initiative works. What stuns me, however, is that anybody could think four hours per week is going to be enough study time to bring up a low grade in math and science to a B.

And why just math and science?

Underachievers in language arts and/or reading are much more likely to fall into the briar patch than those who can't do algebra.

Learning to read, loving to read, is the most crucial life skill we have, the best crime fighter we know: It wipes out boredom, bombards ignorance. It gives people a sense of place, opens up possibilities.

It takes one out of self into a larger world. It can bring you to your knees, and it can knock you off your feet.

These aren't normally the kinds of things you depend on numbers or equations to do, even if you study like hell. For free.

It Does Pay to Learn -- Literally: S.J. Officials, Schools Weigh in on Cash Incentives to Boost Grades

Posted on: Monday, 4 February 2008, 12:00 CST

By Keith Reid, The Record, Stockton, Calif.

Feb. 4--Bear Creek High junior Dustin Evans stood outside the doors of his north Stockton school's campus Thursday, waiting for his ride home.

Evans, 17, considers himself a typical high school student who carries a C average in his classes, although he says he rarely studies after school or on weekends.

"I do other stuff," he said. "I don't study. I do OK."

But what if someone paid Dustin, say \$8 per hour, to study? "For \$8 an hour, I'd study all the time. I'd be getting straight A's," Evans said excitedly. "Money, money, money. That would get me to study."

The idea of paying students to study isn't all that far-fetched. The Fulton County School System in Atlanta is in its second week of paying students \$8 an hour to study up to four hours a week.

Fulton County spokeswoman Susan Hale said the program, dubbed "Learn & Earn," is paid for by a \$62,000 grant and will run for 15 weeks, about the length of a semester. For the pilot program, 40 students -- 20 middle schoolers and 20 high schoolers -- can earn as much as \$32 a week by attending two-hour after-school study sessions.

"It's an effort to get these students to improve in math and science, which are subjects that are emphasized in Georgia and (that) we are slipping in nationally," Hale said. "If their math and science grades go up to a B by the end of the semester, the middle school students can earn a \$75 bonus and high schoolers can get an extra \$125."

Hale said the program also pays teachers to tutor the students, and the study sessions are focused and intensive.

"They can't just put their head on their desk and sleep through it," Hale said.

At first, local educators were somewhat taken aback at Fulton's pay-to-learn program. However, after thinking it through, several area school principals said the political pressure to increase standardized test scores would prompt them to try it if it's proven effective in Atlanta and if there was money available.

"I've always told my students it is their job to study and learn," Lodi High Principal Bill Atterberry said. "But the way government programs work, and (with) the No Child Left Behind Act's overreliance on standardized tests for evaluating schools, if the money was offered, we'd be fools not to use it."

Atterberry's thoughts were echoed by other San Joaquin County administrators

"This is a good opportunity for students to learn that they are capable of improving performance if they apply themselves. It should be a great motivator," George Bush Elementary School Principal Sylvia Ulmer said.

But is paying students to study sending the wrong message?

Michael Elium, a University of the Pacific special education professor and former director of psychological services at the Pittsburgh Unified School District in the Bay Area, says no. He said providing incentives to students is healthy and productive.

"For years, we've done things like gift certificates, pizza parties or other rewards," Elium said. "Any reward or social praise linked with success can get a student through the next step or next day. Eventually, it gets to a point where they can see a connection between school and their future career."

Elium said providing hourly wages to students is no different than offering them money for good grades on report cards, or buying them a computer or other gift for a school achievement.

With California's budget becoming even tighter as the governor attempts to dent the state's \$14.5 billion shortfall, California educators will likely not have the monetary opportunity to implement a Learn & Earn program. Students like Evans and 16-year-old Bear Creek sophomore Jesse Vargas hope that will change before they exit high school, however.

"It would motivate me, for sure," Vargas said.

FIRST COAST NEWS

February 5, 2008

2 Fulton County Schools Will Pay Students to Study

Edited by [Jonathan Cordell](#) ■ 4 months ago

ATLANTA (AP) -- Fulton County school officials will pay students to study after school in a new program designed to improve their classroom performance.

The program called "Learn & Earn" is being offered to 40 students from Creekside High and Bear Creek Middle schools in Fairburn. The program will give students \$8 an hour to study after school. The privately funded program also will offer cash bonuses to students who improve their in-school performance.

School officials say the goal is to determine whether paying students to study will improve their performance.

The 15-week trial program will be conducted with students in the eighth and 11th grades. Students were selected by school staff, based on attendance, grades, test scores and free or reduced-lunch status.

A community kickoff ceremony is planned for 3 p.m. Thursday in the media center at Creekside High School.

Schools use cash as incentive to get youths to study

February 12, 2008



John Amis, Associated Press

Alexis Yarger, 16, smiles after Learn & Earn news conference in Fairburn, Ga.

FAIRBURN, Ga. — Learning is supposed to be its own reward, but when that doesn't work, should students get paid to do it?

That's the question two Georgia schools are asking in a 15-week pilot program that is paying high-schoolers struggling in math and science \$8 an hour to attend study hall for four hours a week.

The privately funded Learn & Earn initiative, an idea from former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, is touted as the first of its kind in the state and one of a few similar programs nationwide.

"We want to try something new," said Jackie Cushman, Gingrich's daughter and co-founder of the group funding the initiative. "We're trying to figure out what works. Is it the answer? No. Is it a possible idea that might work? Yes."

Forty students at Bear Creek Middle School and Creekside High School, both in the Atlanta suburb of Fairburn, began participating in the program recently. The eighth- and 11th-graders chosen had to be underperforming in math and science, and many are eligible for free or reduced-cost lunches.

The hope is that the bribes will boost students' motivation to learn, attend class and get better grades.

Aside from the hourly wage, eighth-graders will get a \$75 bonus, and 11th-graders \$125, if they improve their math and science grades to a B and achieve certain test scores. For the older kids, that adds up to \$605 for a semester of studying. Cushman said the initiative is aimed at math and science because many students struggle in those subjects even if they excel in others.

The offer could help poor students who need the money and otherwise might choose a minimum-wage job over studying, said Jerome Morris, an associate professor at the University of Georgia's College of Education. He also noted that parents who have the means to reward their children for performing well in school have done so for decades.

"Poor families just can't do that," Morris said. "They have to tell their children, 'You have to go to school just to learn.'"

The director of a private center aimed at improving motivation, however, said plying kids with cash is a desperate move by school officials.

"They have not figured out a way to self-motivate these kids," said Peter A. Spevak, director of the Center for Applied Motivation in Washington, D.C. "What really drives a person is the desire to do well and the good feeling you have after doing your best every day."

Paying children to learn may work in the short term, but before long, the luster could wear off, and they may look to up the ante, Spevak said. Ultimately, it could become a losing game.

"When you take the money away, assuming it has been effective, people sometimes get angry or disillusioned," he said. "They may start to wonder where the next prize is coming from."

The \$60,000 initiative is being funded by Atlanta businessman Charles Loudermilk, founder of Aaron Rents, through the Learning Makes a Difference Foundation Inc., an Atlanta-based nonprofit that funds innovative education programs and was founded by Gingrich's daughters.

Alexis Yarger, one of the Fairburn program's participants, is eager to try anything to improve her grades.

The 16-year-old Creekside junior plans to attend Spelman College and says that although she's doing OK in science, "Math is not my best."

Yarger, who has a part-time job at Burger King, said she was interested in the program even before she heard about the financial incentives. She would have taken part even without the money, she said, but her father said the cash doesn't hurt.

"It's a good motivational tactic," Anthony Yarger said. "Whether it's a dollar or a candy bar, if it's helpful, I support it."

Promises of Money Meant to Heighten Student Motivation

Does motivating students to study harder with the promise of cash sound like innovation—or bribery?

That's a question educators and researchers have been debating, amid concerns that money-for-achievement programs actually decrease students' intrinsic motivation to learn and send mixed messages about studying.

But the idea is catching on, with new cash-incentive programs planning to give money to students this school year in the Baltimore school district and some schools in an Atlanta suburb. Last school year, the 1.1 million-student New York City school system began a program to evaluate the effect of paying students for academic performance, joining a growing list of those testing the idea.

"The possible outcomes from ... not graduating from high school are so great that I felt that putting a program in place that could rescue some of these students was a small risk to take," said Andrés Alonso, the chief executive officer of the 82,000-student Baltimore system, which is in the process of launching its new money-for-achievement program.

The program will award 10th and 11th graders who have failed at least one of their state graduation exams \$25 if they show a 5 percent increase on the first of their benchmark assessments, which students take throughout the year.

Students are then eligible to earn another \$35 if they increase their scores by an additional 15 percent on the next benchmark assessment, and \$50 if they raise their scores by another 20 percent after that, bringing their total potential earnings to as much as \$110 a year.

The program is especially geared to students who may not be able to take advantage of after-school tutoring programs because of financial needs that require them to have jobs, Mr. Alonso added. "This is a way to reimburse them for missing that work," he said.

Doubts Overcome

Mr. Alonso concedes the \$110 is not nearly as much they could earn working after school. (It amounts to about 18 hours of work at the minimum wage in Maryland of \$6.15 an hour.) But it could be enough for students to take a few days off to attend tutoring sessions.

The state expects to pay \$935,000 for the incentives, which are part of a \$6.3 million Maryland initiative aimed at increasing state graduation-exam scores. That initiative also includes money to pay high school peer tutors at a rate of \$10 per hour.

Blog: Motivation Matters

For regular updates on research and policies regarding student motivation, read Education Week 's Motivation Matters .

"I think [the incentive program] is a very, very positive thing," said Benia C. Richardson, a senior at Western High School in Baltimore and the president of her school's Student Government Association. "[School officials] have to say, OK, [students] want to graduate, but what's going to keep them here right now?"

Ms. Richardson admitted that she was skeptical about the program when it was first introduced in January, but now that her initial questions have been answered, she fully supports the effort.

"There is a lot of energy behind [this]," she said. "You're always going to have doubters, ... but I think the only way you can be a doubter is if you don't know [the specifics of the program]."

Similarly, in suburban Atlanta, two schools in the 88,000-student Fulton County, Ga., district will take part in a privately financed, 15-week pilot program, called Learn and Earn, which aims to boost students' progress and achievement in mathematics and science through cash incentives.

Twenty 11th graders from the 2,500-student Creekside High School and 20 8th graders from the 985-student Bear Creek Middle School have been selected to participate in the program, launched in January, based on their attendance records, grades, previous test scores, and socioeconomic status.

Like Baltimore's program, Learn and Earn especially targets 11th graders who have part-time jobs and have trouble attending after-school study sessions, said Gregory O. Fields, the Fulton County schools' assistant superintendent for high school curriculum.

The students earn \$8 an hour by attending the after-school math and science tutorial sessions for up to four hours a week, and they can earn a bonus—\$75 for 8th graders and \$125 for 11th graders—if they achieve at least a B average in both their math and science courses and pass the state exams in those subjects.

"The most important outcome within all of this is to help these students build the necessary confidence and awareness of their genuine educational abilities to be successful in school and life," Mr. Fields said.

The \$60,000 program has been funded by Charles Loudermilk, the founder, chairman, and chief executive officer of Aaron Rents Inc., through the Atlanta-based Learning Makes a Difference Foundation.

"You would love for students to be self-motivated, but ... if [they] don't realize that's achievable, [they] don't necessarily strive to do that," said Jackie Cushman, the chairman of the Learning Makes a Difference board of directors.

'Tangible for Kids'

In starting Baltimore's money-for-achievement program, Mr. Alonso was influenced by a similar initiative launched in the New York City district. He was the deputy chancellor there while that program was being formed.

The privately-funded New York program, established by Roland G. Fryer, the chief equality officer for the city's department of education and an assistant professor of economics at Harvard University, rewards 4th and 7th graders with cash based on their performance on year-round assessments. Fourth-graders could earn up to \$250 per year, while 7th-graders could earn as much as \$500.

The program, which is part of a bigger initiative aimed at expanding opportunities for low-income families called Opportunity NYC, has a budget of \$6 million over two years.

“If you live in a more affluent neighborhood, you see automatically that education pays off. When you live in [a low-income community], it’s harder to understand,” Mr. Fryer said. “These programs, when done right, are trying to make education more tangible for kids.”

So far, the city has no data on the outcomes of the initiative, which began in 60 schools last June.

Research on other programs has begun to trickle in, although the jury is still out on their effectiveness.



Paying Kids to Study (An Early Business Lesson)

POSTED BY [DONALD J. TRUMP](#) ON 2/13/2008 AT 6:53 AM



In a pilot program in metro Atlanta called “[Learn and Earn](#),” several schools are paying kids to study.

In Fulton County, specially chosen middle school and high school students who aren't performing well in math and science are paid \$8 an hour to attend study hall after school. If their grades actually improve, they can earn an extra \$125 each semester. That ends up being as much as \$600, which is a pretty decent amount of money when you're a kid.

Although some people are critical of the plan, saying that we shouldn't be paying kids to do what they're supposed to be doing anyway, I certainly understand the effort. Ideally, you'd like kids to be motivated to get good grades just because they want to do well in school, but all kids aren't like that.

Out in the real world they'll quickly learn that almost all of our rewards on the job come in the form of cash in one way or another. We quickly learn that money is a great motivator in life. The better you do, the more money you'll make. They're just learning that lesson a little early.

For the kids' sake, I hope it works.

[Donald J. Trump](#) is Chairman of Trump University.

Experiment tries bribes to motivate struggling students

Two Georgia schools participate in project

By **ERRIN HAINES**

Associated Press

FAIRBURN, Ga. — Learning is supposed to be its own reward, but when that doesn't work, should students get paid to do it?

That's the question two Georgia schools are asking in a 15-week pilot program that is paying high-schoolers struggling in math and science \$8 an hour to attend study hall for four hours a week.

The privately funded "Learn & Earn" initiative, an idea from former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, is touted as the first of its kind in the state and one of a few similar programs nationwide.

"We want to try something new," said Jackie Cushman, Gingrich's daughter and co-founder of the group funding the initiative.

"We're trying to figure out what works. Is it the answer? No. Is it a possible idea that might work? Yes."

Forty students at Bear Creek Middle School and Creekside High School, both in the Atlanta suburb of Fairburn, began participating in the program Tuesday.

The eighth- and 11th-graders chosen had to be underperforming in math and science, and many are eligible for free or reduced-cost lunches.

The hope is that the bribes will boost students' motivation to learn, attend class and get better grades.

Aside from the hourly wage, eighth-graders will get a \$75 bonus, and 11th-graders \$125, if they improve their math and science grades to a B and achieve certain test scores.

For the older kids, that adds up to \$605 for a semester of studying.

Cushman said the initiative is aimed at math and science because many students struggle in those subjects even if

they excel in others.

The offer could help poor students who need the money and otherwise might choose a minimum-wage job over studying, said Jerome Morris, an associate professor at the University of Georgia's College of Education.

He also noted that parents who have the means to reward their children for performing well in school have done so for decades.

"Poor families just can't do that," Morris said.

"They have to tell their children, 'You have to go to school just to learn.'"

Concept is criticized

The director of a private center aimed at improving motivation, however, said plying kids with cash is a desperate move by school officials.

"They have not figured out a way to self-motivate these kids," said Peter Spevak, director of the Center for Applied Motivation in Washington, D.C.

"What really drives a person is the desire to do well and the good feeling you have after doing your best every day."

Paying children to learn may work in the short term, but before long, the luster could wear off and they may look to up the ante, Spevak said. Ultimately, it could become a losing game.

"When you take the money away, assuming it has been effective, people sometimes get angry or disillusioned," he said. "They may start to wonder where the next prize is coming from."

The \$60,000 initiative is being funded by Atlanta businessman Charles Loudermilk, founder of Aaron Rents, through the Learning Makes a Difference Foundation Inc., an Atlanta-based nonprofit that funds innovative education programs and was founded by Gingrich's daughters.

Pay-for-study teaching kids the wrong lesson

One of the zaniest ideas to come down the pipe in a long time is to pay school students to study. I'm getting old and forgetful, but I swear on my mama's grave that I am not making this up.

In Fulton County, they have initiated a program called Learn & Earn, a program that pays kids to attend after-school tutoring sessions — pays them \$8 an hour! That's more money per hour than some folks earn at their jobs.

Students barely making academic standards, or those not doing well in math and science, were picked for the first trial group at Creekside High School and Bear Creek Middle School.

Not only are they paid, transportation is furnished for them! Do they get dinner, too? Oh, and if their grades come up, the high-schoolers could get a bonus of \$125 at the end of the year and the middle-schoolers \$75.

An official of the Fulton County School System said in an article in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution that the idea is akin to parents paying or rewarding their children for improved effort or good grades. If parents want to reward their children in this manner, fine, but the school system shouldn't be sanctioning such programs. What's next?

This program, thank goodness, is funded by private money. And it is an idea of my friend Newt Gingrich, former speaker of the House, but I have to disagree with him on this one. I've never thought anyone should be paid to do what they are supposed to do, especially children who should be learning the value of hard work and dedication and that some things are necessary and important and should be done without material rewards. If they go through life thinking that they deserve pay for everything they



do, what a miserable life they will lead and what a winding road for society to take.

And with today's hesitancy to do anything that might harm self-esteem, are they going to cut the pay or withhold it from those who don't complete the requirements and responsibilities of their "job"? Today, we give a trophy to everyone, and that is part of the problem.

I can just imagine when I was in high school expecting pay for studying or for bringing home good grades. If I didn't bring home acceptable grades, I was "paid" all right, but it wasn't with money. It was with required extra study time and fewer privileges, maybe even a whipping. Oh, but I forget, you can't do that these days.

It was just expected that Johnny or Suzy would do their best in school. Most were not "bribed" with gifts or money or allowances of cash. But we were blessed with many "allowances." We were "allowed" a roof over our heads; we were allowed a bed in which to sleep; we were allowed food to eat; we were allowed clothes and shoes to wear. And to "pay" for that, we were "allowed" to help clean the house, to mow the lawn, to wash the car and to do our dead-level best in school to bring home good grades, but most of all to respect those in authority over us, especially our parents.

Gingrich's daughter Jackie Cushman, who is president of the foundation's board of directors of the Learn & Earn program, said in the AJC article: "It's an idea. Is it the answer? No. But is it an idea? Yes. We have to find out what works."

Seems to me we long ago abandoned what works in education. Maybe we should try it again.

March 19, 2008

State considers paying students for good grades

State lawmakers are looking into paying Tennessee students for good grades.

The "Education Pays" act is making its way through the General Assembly. 12 states across the country have a similar measure in place that rewards students for good grades with cold hard cash.

"I think kids respond to cash," said Rep. Brian Kelsey. "I think we all respond to cash and then we hope at that point they will also respond and appreciate learning."

The proposal is for a pilot program in the top four counties with the highest number of "At Risk" students.

For instance, in Memphis, 175 students, the top students in one grade in one high school would get \$100. \$100 would go to the top 50 students in one Hamilton County high school.

In Knox County, the money would go to 50 elementary students and in Davidson County, it would apply to 50 middle school students.

One advocate from Georgia, who testified before lawmakers in Tennessee, said why not give it a try.

Jackie Cushman, "Education Pays" advocate, said, "The real question is does it work and that's why you have a pilot program. Does it actually work? We know something's don't work. The question is will this work and I think we won't know until we try it."

Students wouldn't be the only ones making the grade moneywise, their parents would get \$50 as well.

Kim Chambers, parent, said, "I think that would be good. I think it would give the kids incentives to work harder.

Patty Brown, parent, said, "I think anything that can encourage kids to do better in school is very important."

Sue Knowles, parent, said, "It would probably work for my kids but whether or not I agree with it? No, I don't think I agree with that one."

The "Education Pays" act has now passed in the House Education Committee. Its Senate counterpart may take it up next week.

Texas is among the 12 states already trying some form of paying for grades at 10 schools in Dallas.

Officials said they have seen a dramatic rise in the number of students passing advanced math and science exams, attending college and scoring higher on college entrance exams.



Ga. Program Pays Low-Income Students to Study

by Odette Yousef

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Morning Edition, April 22, 2008 · Some kids in Fulton County, Ga., are earning a paycheck just for doing their homework. A pilot project sponsored by a local foundation is offering a group of low-income students \$8 an hour to go to after-school study sessions twice a week.

Jackie Cushman, engineer of the Learn and Earn program, said she hopes the money will get the kids into the classroom, but that, once there, they'll start to enjoy learning.

Cushman is the founder of the Atlanta-based nonprofit Learning Makes a Difference. She's also the daughter of former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who suggested paying low-income students to improve their grades in a 2005 speech at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

Cushman launched Learn and Earn this year after an Atlanta businessman offered to sponsor it, and Creekside High School in Fairburn, Ga., and neighboring Bear Creek Middle School fit the right profile for it. More than 60 percent of the students are considered low-income; more than 90 percent are minorities; and the schools trail district-wide achievement rates by eye-popping margins.

The students who participate in the program say it's helping them, but some educators are troubled by it.

"This message really reinforces that these low-income kids are destined to a life of wage-earning," said Richard Lakes, associate professor in educational policy at Georgia State University, who called the program "morally bankrupt."

"It reinforces that these children in particular are going to be servants of the middle and upper classes," he said.

Lakes said he doesn't believe that an external motivator, like money, can trigger the intrinsic love of learning and achievement that Cushman is hoping for.

Does 'Learn and Earn' make the grade?

For now, money talks to get students hooked on studies

By Jackie Cushman
For the Journal-Constitution
Published on: 05/04/08

The Learning Makes a Difference Foundation effort has sparked a needed conversation about how to best motivate students to learn. It could not have come too soon.

"Cities in Crisis: A Special Analytical Report on High School Graduation," by Christopher B. Swanson, reports nationwide high school graduation rates at only 69.9 percent. Georgia lags even that, with a graduation rate of 56 percent.

The Alliance for Excellent Education states, "Each year over 59,300 students in Georgia do not graduate." The cost to Georgia? More than \$15.4 billion in lost wages, taxes and productivity over the lifetimes of the 2007 dropouts alone. In his piece, "Learning and Earning," (Education Week, June 12, 2007) Swanson reported that, on average, students who graduate from high school with no further education earn 42 percent more than those who do not graduate.

Moreover, the 2001 Hart-Rudman Commission identified the nation's failure in math and science education as the second-biggest threat to our national security. A moral imperative calls for new approaches.

While it would be great if all students were self-motivated, clearly they are not. The learning foundation is trying what works everywhere else — incentives. By focusing on innovative learning programs, new ideas and pioneering approaches, the LMD Foundation believes we will get the breakthroughs we need to motivate our students to learn.

The "Learn and Earn," program, funded by Charlie Loudermilk through the learning foundation, and championed by Fulton County Commissioner Robb Pitts, replicates what many parents have successfully done for years — providing incentives for academic performance.

"Cities in Crisis" listed Fulton County schools' graduation rate of 67 percent (today's figures show it at 79.1 percent). This is higher than the state average, because of the school system practicing its motto of "Students Come First." This is exhibited in the system's willingness to try innovative programs, providing their students with every opportunity to succeed.

Designed to provide students with incentive and educational support to improve their math and science abilities, key components of "Learn and Earn" include:

- > Focusing on students who were underperforming in math and science.

> Enabling students to earn up to \$8 per hour for participating in after-school sessions for two hours, twice per week.

> Tying incentive pay to student performance.

> Providing master instructors as tutors.

> Keeping the instructor-to-student ratios near 1-to-10.

> Using independent third parties to evaluate results.

> Providing positive earning alternatives to part-time jobs.

As one of the instructors noted, the cash was the incentive that "hooked" the students, but it is the student-teacher interaction that motivated them to stay and learn.

The results so far are encouraging:

The instructors report that all of the participants have improved their performance in math and science.

One student who initially sat, book closed, not interested or involved — is now actively engaged in learning math.

Another student told me, "I was failing." The key word in the sentence is "was." He is now passing. He believes he can succeed and is excited about learning.

One parent told us, "This program has turned my child around."

We have only started, but it is a good start.

Learning Makes a Difference is encouraged by the enormous interest. But some have already decided one way or the other whether it will work. The truth is, right now we don't know. So, let's wait. The statistical report by EmStar Research regarding this pilot will be completed this summer and available at www.lmndfoundation.org.

Until then, if the "Learn and Earn" pilot program continues to stimulate a dialogue on how best to engage and motivate students, while improving participants' performance, then it will be a success.

What we know now is that students are taking ownership of their studies and forming an appreciation for learning. Learn and Earn does not purport to be "the" answer, but it is a building block toward answering the question: How do we create the desire, motivation and engagement among students so they are eager to learn?

> Jackie Cushman is president of the board of directors of Learning Makes a Difference Foundation Inc. Her group is piloting the "Learn and Earn" program in Fulton County schools.

Does 'Learn and Earn' make the grade?

Superficial incentives fail to instill long-term values

By Richard D. Lakes
For the Journal-Constitution
Published on: 05/04/08

Students should unionize to protect themselves from the constant onslaught of business imperatives in the classroom. Seriously. The latest boardroom scheme is a sincere but misguided attempt to pay low achievers among Atlanta's urban poor a miserly \$8 per hour for studying.

The "Learn and Earn" after-school program, funded by Charles Loudermilk, the CEO of Aaron Rents, and directed through a nonprofit founded by Jackie Cushman, the daughter of Newt Gingrich, is a short-term, top-down initiative that aims to help students get better grades and test scores in math and science.

Their idea is to inspire academic motivation and curb dropping-out by using extrinsic rewards — a curious notion that paying someone to learn now will somehow be internalized continuously over time when the funding stops. Whatever its intentions, "Learn and Earn" serves not to build up a marginalized subgroup of kids but to hold them down, to reinforce their roles as members of the servant class in the new economy.

One way of reading school failure in business terms is to consider that learning is an individualized project, a personal and emotional investment in the self. This line of thinking demands that young people in poverty jettison inadequate parents and embrace outsiders' help to manage the risks of upward mobility and craft promising life trajectories.

Children from upper-income families already have learned how to make the right choices; they embody the entrepreneurial values of self-reliance and responsibility so important in the highly competitive global marketplace. We admire how groomed and suited they are for success, easily transitioning into planned educational and employment pathways.

We do not consider the ensemble of personalized support propping up these kids: demanding, monied, educated family members, relatives, teachers, tutors, coaches and counselors, therapists and doctors. Neither do we know about the contacts developed and doors opened from time spent at pedigreed programs in selective schools and colleges. We will be sold on their manicured image as workplace-ready, savvy knowledge workers. They'll have few troubles landing a salaried job.

Educational reform in metro Atlanta is infused with class privilege and social advantage, although few will admit to elitism. Under the banner of choice, a variety of boutique charters cream off-the-top achievers

through niche markets that attract aspiring parents hoping to remove their children from the stigma of those public schools.

Select diploma programs further segregate suburban from urban students by positioning wealthier districts for early college credit through Advanced Placement and the International Baccalaureate, among other leading college-prep offerings. Even vocational education has a higher-status track of employer-linked career academies.

Educational leaders have strayed far from their historic role in shaping ethical citizens who thereby serve the public trust, ensuring democratic practice in the affairs of state. Corporate and civic leaders use the schools to inculcate free-market values of individuality over community, privatized self-interests over the collective good.

Free-market capitalists do not acknowledge class-based injustice for fear of empowering those who suffer from that injustice.

That is why power brokers deeply resent unions in particular and the rank and file who engender what is considered dangerous familylike interest over mutual cares and related concerns. Yet the working class is not invisible and certainly not fading into the sunset anytime soon.

Corporate deindustrialization and outsourcing practices have devastated our communities and deprived thousands of Americans of a livable wage. Juggling a number of low-paying jobs, the working poor are just too busy and tired to attend school-related functions and academic events.

Capitalist chieftains could redirect their largesse toward humanizing the workplace instead and implement a work-leave policy that unites parents with children and teachers. That would arouse genuine hopefulness among our underserved youth — more so than the false promises of study for pay.

Richard D. Lakes is an associate professor in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at Georgia State University.

JON KRAUSE / NewsArt

Media Alert



For Immediate Release

May 9, 2008

For More Information Contact Susan Hale, Communications 404-763-6830 or
hales1@fultonschools.org

Student celebration ceremony to be held May 13 for pioneering “Learn & Earn” program

What: The “Learn & Earn” pilot initiative, which launched in two Fulton County schools in January 2008, is testing the hypothesis that paying students to attend and participate in after-school math and science tutorial sessions will improve their academic performance.

The 15-week study is the brainchild of former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, championed by Fulton County Commissioner Robb Pitts and privately funded by Charles Loudermilk, founder, chairman and CEO of Aaron Rents Inc., through the Learning Makes a Difference Foundation Inc.

Why: To celebrate the eighth- and 11th- grade students who participated in the study and honor their achievements. Results so far are encouraging:

- Teachers report all students have improved performances in math and science.
- A student who initially sat with book closed, uninterested or involved, is now actively engaged in learning math.
- Another student said, “I was failing.” Key word here is “was.” He’s now passing – and confidently believes he can succeed and is excited about learning.
- “The program has turned my child around,” one parent commented recently.

Who: Commissioner Pitts, Jackie Cushman (president of Learning Makes a Difference Foundation), Bear Creek Middle School and Creekside High School students, parents, teachers and Fulton County school administrators will be present.

James Emshoff, Ph.D., the study’s principal investigator from EMSTAR Research Inc., will briefly discuss preliminary student/teacher focus group results and what type of data findings to expect once the research study is completed. Note: Official results from the pilot are NOT yet available. Anticipated release date is June 2008.

Where: Creekside High School (Media Center) 7405 Herndon Road, Fairburn

When: Tuesday, May 13, 2008 at 5 p.m.



SUNDAY, MAY 11, 2008

NEWS

Pay for an A?

Program inspired by Newt Gingrich pays Fulton County kids to study



Former U.S. House speaker Newt Gingrich addresses the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in 2005, months before voicing the idea for a learn-to-earn program.

NICHOLAS KAMM/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

By Manashi Mukherjee

If you had been paid to get good grades in math and science, would you have studied harder? Forty Atlanta-area students can answer that question with certitude. A program that pays kids to improve their skills in math and science is being tested in Fulton County.

The 15-week pilot, called “Learn and Earn” started in January and ends this week with a commencement ceremony on May 13. Bear Creek Middle School and Creekside High School principals each chose 20 students from the 8th and 11th grades based on test scores, grades, attendance and income level.

Students are paid \$8 per hour for attending four after-school tutoring sessions per week, so they can earn up to \$32 each week. At the end of the program, students can earn a bonus by passing tests and bringing their grades up to a B.

“The facts are that [current methods of teaching] math and science are not working, and we need to figure out what will work to get kids up to speed,” says Jackie Cushman, president of the Learning Makes a Difference Foundation. The LMD Foundation, a research-based group launched by Cushman and her sister, Kathy Gingrich Lubbers, in 2007, focuses on educational-improvement programs. They created the Learn and Earn program, arranged for private funding and are responsible for running it.

Cushman credits her politician father, former Georgia Congressman and Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, for inspiring the idea of Learn and Earn; Gingrich foreshadowed the foundation's creation when he delivered the commencement address at Harvard University in 2005. But this is not the first program of its kind. South Dakota recently established a similar program that will pay kids to take online courses for improved scores on advanced placement tests. Other programs have offered non-monetary incentives for increased performance such as iPods or travel opportunities.

Will it work?

Dr. Karen Donaldson, professor and education department chair at Spelman College, notes that similar educational programs date back at least to the mid-80s. She says that these programs offer “creative intelligence, but an entrepreneurial value system needs to be added into the “curriculum” a way of giving the earning power some meaning” in order for such a program to work in the long run. Students should be taught what to do with that money, or perhaps the cash should be offered as a stipend, she says.

The program could be very successful for at-risk students, Donaldson says, by helping them to focus on studying, but there are other life skills that should be analyzed: It must be clearly expressed to the students that this money is not just a handout, and students could be taught economic skills in addition to math and science.

The Learn and Earn pilot is entirely funded by a donation from Charles Loudermilk, founder, chairman and CEO of Aaron Rents Inc., but Donaldson wonders how future programs would be sustained. Would taxpayers bear the burden?

And that raises yet another question: Teaching, Donaldson points out, is already an underpaid profession. “How can we think about paying students when teachers barely make a living?”

“Education is a privilege,” she says. “We want [the students] to be competitive and democratic citizens of the world. When we begin to pay our children to go to school, what happens to their outlook?”

It's too soon to tell. Cushman stresses “the Learn and Earn program is just a test” a way to find out how a rewards-based program might work, and determine the pros and cons. A third party company, EMSTAR Research Group, will provide the data and analysis of this particular program. Study results are estimated to be available in June.

The LMD team specifically wants to see how this type of program might improve math and science scores within a certain socioeconomic group. They chose a monetary reward because of its simplicity and ease of implementation.

“There are a lot of people that are concerned with the message that this program sends. But the point is that the system is broken and we need to fix it,” says Cushman. “If it gets people to think about how we can fix it, then we’ve done our job.”

Cushman tells the story of two children she met during the after-school sessions. One child said to her, “Jackie, I was failing.”

“To me the most important thing in that sentence is the word ‘was’,” Cushman says. “He was excited that he was learning.”

Another child told her proudly, “This money is going to my family.”

The most important thing to realize, Cushman says, is that the program is providing the students one-on-one time with their teachers. More than the cash incentive, this could be a big reason for their success.

“In our society, we talk about school systems and structure, but we forget that for kids, they are impacted by the individual learning process. They are affected by their teachers,” she says. “They don’t care about the school system. Each person they meet can have an impact on their lives, and we forget that one person can make a huge difference.”



May 13, 2008 – Graduation Speech

Let me first of all congratulate all the young student, people that are here who have been apart of this learn and earn experiment. You are now part of history, because you got involved in something to see if we can help young people learn and I hope you will let us know and I hope your parents will let us know what you think of this program. I am very proud of my daughter Jackie Cushman who has helped lead this project, she first heard about it at Harvard University when I mentioned it one day, she immediately was intrigued with the idea because it fit her idea that if you do something right there ought to be some kind of reward.

I would also like to thank Charlie Loudermilk a great business man, a real leader, part of the community. Someone whose foundation helped financed this, without Charlie's help we still wouldn't be off the ground. And I have to thank Rob Pitts, because his leadership in the community and talking with the key leaders in getting permission to do it was really really important. But you know, all those people are outside of what actually happened. And thanks why I also want to thank the Fulton county school board, Dr. Greg Fields, I want to thank the principals, Michael Robinson, and Darren Franklin, and Stanley King because you all did something that was very very important in agreeing to take on the extra work and the extra burden of doing this.

And I want to thank the teachers who were willing to work a little bit extra, willing to do something new and very different, and so David Mackie, Drevyeel Cunningham, Lashaunda Latham and Latrelle McFarlane and I want to say to each of you. You, the

parents, and the students, you are at the heart of this experiment and I want to let you know that we are looking forward to hearing from you, whether this was the right kind of things to do, whether it is a building block to the future, whether it helps young people learn. So let me say to all of you, you are celebrating today a great experiment, an effort to find out if we can help a lot more young people learn a lot more, so they can have a lot better future.

I look forward to hearing from Jackie and from the instructors about how t his is going and I look very forward to meeting with you in the future. Thank you and have a great summer.

Newt Gingrich



News Release

For Immediate Release
May 14, 2008

For More Information Contact
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404-763-6830 or shales1@fultonschools.org

“Learn & Earn” students celebrate achievements

Close to 40 eighth- and 11th-grade Fulton County students from Bear Creek Middle School and Creekside High School recently took part in a celebration ceremony to honor their achievements as participants in the “Learn & Earn” pilot initiative.



The 15-week study, which began in January, tests the hypothesis that paying students to attend and participate in after-school math and science tutorial sessions will improve their academic performance.

Results so far are encouraging. Learn & Earn teachers report all students have improved performances in math and science, and preliminary student/teacher focus group findings show improved student attitudes and elevated self-confidence levels. A comprehensive statistical report by EMSTAR Research Inc. will be completed this summer.

“The program has turned my child around,” one proud parent recently reported.

On hand during the ceremony were Fulton County Commissioner Robb Pitts, who championed the program since first hearing the idea from former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, and Jackie Cushman, president of the Learning Makes a Difference Foundation Inc. (LMD Foundation). The initiative was privately funded – using no tax dollars – by Charles Loudermilk, chairman and CEO of Aaron Rents Inc, through the LMD Foundation.

“This study has certainly sparked a needed conversation about how to best motivate students to learn,” said Cushman. “The LMD Foundation is encouraged by the enormous interest. Will it work? The truth is, right now, we don’t know. Let’s wait for the statistical report.

“However, if the Learn & Earn program continues to stimulate a dialogue on how best to engage and motivate students, while improving participants’ performance, then it will be a success,” Cushman added. “What we know already is these students are now taking ownership of their studies and forming an appreciation for learning.”

Photos from the ceremony are attached.

Cutlines: Alexis Yarger, a junior at Creekside High School, is congratulated by Fulton County Commissioner Robb Pitts and Jackie Cushman, president of the Learning Makes a Difference Foundation Inc. Other photos: Students from Bear Creek Middle School and Creekside High School celebrate their success in the Learn & Earn program.

About the Fulton County School System. The Fulton County School System is the fourth largest school system in Georgia. More than 86,000 students attend 93 schools in the cities of Alpharetta, College Park, East Point, Fairburn, Hapeville, Mountain Park, Palmetto, Roswell, Sandy Springs and Union City. The district also serves students in unincorporated Fulton County.





May 15th, 2008 8:16 PM Eastern

Should Students Get Paid to Study?

by Jonathan Serrie



We ask that question in tonight's Fox Report w/ Shepard Smith.

Here in the Atlanta area, Fulton County school officials are experimenting with a pilot project that targets students struggling with math or science.

The "Learn & Earn" program is paying 40 public school students in the Atlanta suburb of Fairburn \$8 an hour to attend remedial classes.

The privately funded project is being financed by Charles Loudermilk, the founder and CEO of Atlanta-based Aaron Rents, Inc., through the Learning Makes a Difference Foundation.

The non-profit group's president, Jackie Cushman, says "Learn & Earn" is the brainchild of her father, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who became concerned after a 2001 congressional commission (Hart-Rudman) identified deficiencies in math and science education as a threat to national security.



Geraldo At Large

May 18, 2008



[Geraldo]

Mr. Speaker welcome. I don't know if you saw Saturday Night Live, but John McCain made a great joke about wanting the Democrats to continue their intramural squabbling when it comes to the November election of beyond it if possible. Do you agree with Senator McCain that the fighting going on between Hillary and Obama is helpful for the Republicans?

[Newt Gingrich]

Well I think its helpful for Senator McCain. The ideal McCain model would be for Senator Clinton to have her last big rally on the 7th the night before the election. I don't think that will happen. But I can appreciate Saturday Night Live that might just be a wish that comes out in the open.

[Geraldo]

Also joining us this afternoon is Jackie Cushman the daughter of the speaker, who has a very innovative program called learning makes a difference, it's a foundation in which children are paid to attend tutorial afterschool classes, and their grades are also compensated for the grades they get. Some argue to, Jackie as you know welcome, this is paying for something that is in some way dishonorable, I love the idea it seems very pragmatic to me, nothing else seems to be working. Tell me the basic underpinning or basic defense of the idea.

[Jackie Cushman]

Well the idea is to take students who are challenged in math and science and to provide them with an incentive to go to an after school tutorial session to learn and then earn money. I would love it if every student in America wanted to learn, race to school and wanted to learn. Unfortunately that is not happening.

[Geraldo]

Where are you getting the money to pay the kids?

[Jackie Cushman]

The money is coming from for this program is coming from Charlie Lattermilk who is the founder of Aaron's rents. He is a business man here in Atlanta, very successful business. He is very philanthropic, believes in education, believes in children, and thinks that it is worth a shot at seeing. If we can send children to learn.

[Geraldo]

And how do you rebut the argument that it is too mercenary that they should want to?

[Jackie Cushman]

It would be great if they did want to but let's face it, parents have been sending their own children for years. Some parents pay ten dollars for a day some parents offer a car after graduation. Not all parents have the monetary resources to give incentives to their children. So this is a different way to tackle the same problem.

[Geraldo]

Do you miss your dad in public life?

[Jackie Cushman]

Oh no, my dad has had a great time, very very busy. He is doing lots of fun things and I think he has really enjoyed this program. You can ask him. This is an idea that he had, so we have taken his idea, we are implementing it and empowering it, and it will be really fun to see the final results. I can tell you so far all of these students in this program have improved in math and science.

[Geraldo]

You know Mr. Speaker I love it, it's idealistic and also pragmatic and why not give it a shot.

[Newt Gingrich]

I am very proud of Jackie. As you can imagine when your own daughter takes a leadership roll in a foundation like this, it makes you feel really good about what she is doing for Atlanta and for children. We first developed this idea years ago, and we paid children two dollars a book for every book they read. And surprise, surprise a lot of very poor children who lived in public housing were very willing to do a lot more reading than they ever thought they would. And I think Jackie has helped them take a step in the right direction towards going to college, rather than jail or prison.

[Geraldo]

I think it is a great idea, what did you give to Jackie when she got a good grade.

[Newt Gingrich]

All I can tell you is she did very well over the years and as she got older she negotiated more and more. It got to be quite expensive after a while.

[Geraldo]

Terrific. I wish you the best. Mr. Speaker did you want to say a word to Ted Kennedy?

[Newt Gingrich]

Listen I think Ted knows that all of us, whether we are his opponents politically or his strong supporters politically. We know how much he means to this country, he is in our prayers, we hope he gets well, we hope he comes back into the battle as soon as possible. And a lot of people all across America are thinking of him this evening.

[Geraldo]

Learning makes a difference, Jackie Gingrich Cushman and Mr. Speaker thank you.



FOX & FRIENDS

Paid to Study? Program Offers \$8 an Hour

May 19, 2008

All right welcome back. A controversial new program in Fulton county Georgia is paying some underperforming kids eight bucks and hour to study. Organizers say the kids grades are improving, but critics say paying kids to study sends the wrong message. Jackie Gingrich Cushman is one of the founders of Learn and Earn which is privately funded and Dr. Peter Spyvick is the director for the center of applied motivation. So Jackie, outline this program and how are you planning on addressing those who are working hard in school.

[Jackie]

Well thanks for having me on today. This program is a pilot program and what we are doing is paying students who are under performing in math and science to attend after school tutorial sessions. Two hours, twice a week.

So eight dollars and hour?

So as you have to pay a tutor, you are actually paying the kids, giving them a little incentive as well. Dr. Spyvike why do you have a problem with this?

[Dr. Spyvick]

Well the problem is its well intended, but it really doesn't cover self motivation and internal motivation. Many times these young people by being paid don't learn to develop fulfillment from a days hard work, doing their best etc. So what you have icing put on a cake but you don't have the cake. I call it a cultural diabetes, you need insulin, you look towards getting paid, rather than getting the fulfillment of a good days work.

And what about it Jackie are you giving these kids the wrong message that we will pay you to work hard where other kids are just motivated from within.

[Jackie]

Well I think it is interesting. From what we have seen is that really it is a two prong process. The money gets them in the door so it does incent them externally but once they are there the interaction with the teachers really moves them to learn. For

instance what we have seen is a child who would not participate, after a few sessions they open their books, they look, they learn, and now they are interested in solving math problems.

And Jackie I understand this idea came from your father Newt Gingrich, right?

[Jackie]

That is correct. This idea I first heard this idea in 2005 from my dad. And he has lots of ideas as you know. But it has been really fun taking an idea and actually implementing it and seeing that all of these students, every single one in the program have improved their scores in math and science.

Well Dr. Spyvick that sounds pretty good.

[Dr. Spyvick]

It does sound good and in the immediate, these programs do work. Again the external can have an effect a transient affect. IT would be interesting to see some data two three years down the road, to see the impact because you really have to get someone who wants to have the activity, rather than paying them because than they become very externally driven down and in the long term that just doesn't carry you.

And one of the qualifications as I understand is that they kids have to be economically disadvantaged.

[Jackie]

That is not one of the qualifications we actually selected based on their current scores, so it was C- or lower in math and science. And we are going to post all the results on our website LMDFoundation.org so you are welcome to come and look at the results, but I can tell you I have had at least two middle schoolers come to me personally and said they had saved this money for their college fund, so they are already thinking for the long term.

Alright we are going to have to leave it there for now, Jackie Gingrich Cushman, once again what is your website Jackie?

[Jackie]

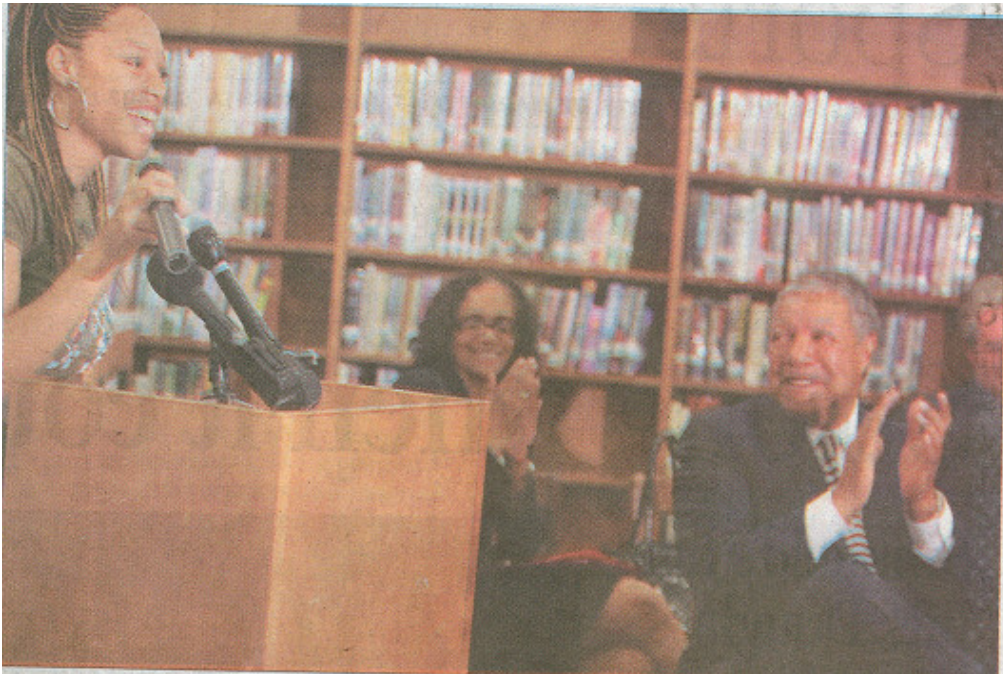
LMDFoundation.org

And thank you Dr. Peter Spyvick, we thank you sir for your opinion as well.

FULTON COUNTY: Chance to earn makes a difference in their learning

Pilot program celebrated: Mom of one student says her son became excited by his success, not just the \$8 an hour pay.

By [Michelle E. Shaw](#)
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
Published on: 05/22/08



The money was nice, but it wasn't what kept Jailyn Brown in a pilot program that paid students \$8 an hour to study.

The 14-year-old eighth-grader was among a small group of Fulton County students who took part in "Learn & Earn," a privately funded after-school tutoring program with monetary rewards.

"It was his success that really got him excited," said his mom, Alanna Taylor. "He got more benefit from his good grades than the money."

Last week, more than 35 students celebrated the end of the 15-week pilot program. Parents and program supporters gathered to congratulate the students.

Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich sent a video by his daughter, Jackie Cushman, president of the Learning Makes a Difference Foundation board of directors.



He told students they are now "part of history," and that the teachers, students and parents were the "heart of this experiment."

Each student's official results won't be released until June or July, but Taylor said she has seen marked improvement in her son and his grades.

"There were concerns about him moving to the ninth grade in the beginning," she said. "But not anymore."

Jailyn said he was once failing math and science, but now is passing both classes. "I've even got A's and B's in science," he said.

The program, which began in January, was conducted at Bear Creek Middle and neighboring Creekside High. Twenty students from each school were in the trial group. Students barely making academic standards, or those performing below the mark in math and science, were picked for the first run. Program administrators estimated three students dropped out of the program.

The initiative was funded by Charles Loudermilk, chairman and chief executive officer of Aaron Rents, through the Learning Makes a Difference Foundation, a local nonprofit designed to improve education. Loudermilk, who did not attend the celebration, committed the entire budget of \$60,000.

Cushman didn't say whether the program would survive past its pilot stage.

"Let's just see what the results are and go from there," she told the parents.

At the rate of \$8 an hour or \$32 a week, Jailyn and the other students had the chance to earn \$480 by the end of the school year. The amount they actually earned was tied to their attendance and participation.

Taylor said Jailyn put a lot of his money in a savings account.

"We also used this opportunity to teach budgeting and how to spend money," she said. "And in the end, he didn't do it for the money. He did it for himself."