

# South Florida Sun-Sentinel

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BROWARD METRO EDITION

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## BROWARD 'Growing' our own teachers

BY BOB PARKS

Four young Broward County women are on their way to becoming teachers of tomorrow, returning to serve an urgent need in their own communities with enthusiasm and commitment.

Reflecting a national trend, Broward County has a growing demand for teachers. We average 2,500 new hires each year due to student growth, Florida's class-size reduction mandate, attrition and the introduction of new programs.

The state of Florida produces approximately 6,000 education graduates a year, but only half pursue employment in education. "Grow-your-own" programs are one of the creative methods districts invoke to meet the demand.

One local answer to this challenge began with the Broward County Educational Consortium's creation of a national model for preservice training and inservice support at some of Broward County's high schools. Initially funded through various grants, the Broward Academy for Teaching Excellence at Nova Center evolved into the Urban Academies.

The Urban Academies are nationally recognized as a model program for raising achievement of urban students; encouraging and supporting high school students interested in teaching as a career; and increasing the number of qualified teachers available for Broward County public schools

A key component of the initiative is the Urban Teacher Academy Program, located at four Broward high schools: Deerfield Beach, Flanagan, Stranahan, and Nova high schools. The UTAP prepares high school students for careers in urban education.

Successful program graduates receive a tuition-paid scholarship at one of the School Board's higher education partners, including Broward Community College, Florida Atlantic University, Barry University and Nova Southeastern University. Students who receive BTF scholarships agree to return to Broward County and work in an Urban Academy school when they have completed their college program.

This year, the Urban Academies provided scholarships to the first four program graduates.

All from Stranahan High School, these four young women did not originally see college as a realistic option, even with family members' support. None knew how to navigate the process for applying for college scholarships or program admission.

The goal for the BTF fund is to create an endowment that would remain for perpetuity; interest from that endowment would be used to fund UTAP scholarships.

With the community's support, we will continue to meet the needs of our growing student population.

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*Broward School Board member Bob Parks helped start the Urban Teacher Academy Program.*

### **DONATIONS AND INFO**

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All donations to the Broward Teacher Fellowship should be made payable to the Broward Teacher Fellowship, care of the Broward Education Foundation, 600 SE Third Ave., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301. Further information is on the Web at [www.fau.edu/tlc](http://www.fau.edu/tlc).