BILL & MELINDA GATES *foundation*

The University of Florida (UF) Lastinger Center for Learning proposes the development and implementation of a coordinated mathematics education policy and advocacy strategy around a comprehensive, systemic approach to high-quality mathematics education across the state of Florida. Anticipated outcomes include:

- A shared awareness and understanding of the importance of K-12 mathematics literacy for all students and its impact postsecondary success and workforce preparedness by policymakers, business leaders, community-based organizations, and educators and leaders and the school, district, and state level
- Identification of important policy opportunities that have the potential to enhance K-12 math education, such as, but not limited to, the use of data, teacher preparation, professional development, and high quality instructional materials
- Identification of opportunities for stakeholders, such as teachers, parent-teacher associations, district leaders, foundations, and other education-focused community groups to engage in awareness and advocacy-building efforts
- Groundwork laying to pave initial pathways that will lead to a more comprehensive policy agenda that for the 2025 Florida legislative session and beyond
- Establishing strong connection between the importance of investing in K-12 math education to accelerate student achievement and potential impact on Florida's workforce

Math Policy Background

Over the past several years, Florida has focused on building out a comprehensive system of support for students, families, teachers, coaches, and leaders specifically around sound literacy instruction. Preliminary teacher and child outcomes point to the success of establishing a comprehensive and systematic approach to literacy instruction and wraparound supports and has led policymakers and education policy advocates to begin thinking about what such a system would look like to provide every child in the state with access to a high-quality mathematics education.

In the current 2023 legislative session, SB 1424 pulls language from prior bills related to the New Worlds Reading Initiative, a program that was launched in 2021 and is currently administered by the UF Lastinger Center. This bill proposes the creation of an **"identification, intervention, and parental notification structure in mathematics similar to that of reading for students in kindergarten through grade 4 who exhibit a substantial deficiency in mathematics or the characteristics of dyscalculia."** The bill would also require the Florida Department of Education to provide a list of **"state vetted and approved mathematics intervention programs, curricula, and high quality supplemental materials which may be used to address a student's mathematics deficiencies."** This information would be shared with districts, teachers, and parents.

Through this legislation, initial groundwork is being laid for a more comprehensive math education system; however, the primary focus is for students in need of intensive Tier 2 and 3 interventions. In addition, the bill does not address any programs or approaches to recruiting, retaining and improving high quality mathematics educators or any equivalent required and incentivized certification or credential for math teachers to obtain, such as the reading endorsement that is required for thousands of teachers in Florida. Nor is there explicit attention to ensuring that districts utilize high-quality instructional materials to support mathematics education.

As such, the UF Lastinger Center's strategic advocacy priorities for mathematics education in Florida are focused on improving mathematics literacy. In particular, we aim to reduce the number of students who require Tier 2 and 3 interventions by **improving the quality of Tier 1 instruction through high-quality instruction** from well-prepared educators who in turn are supported with high-quality instructional materials, targeted and impactful professional development, meaningful data with which they know how to use to inform and enhance instruction, and by leaders who have cultivated a shared vision of quality math instruction and empower them to implement and scale great teaching practices in their classroom and beyond.

Overview

The UF Lastinger Center proposes the following series of activities to achieve the anticipated outcomes previously articulated:

- ***Statewide Listening Tour*** - statewide data collection and awareness building effort on Florida's current mathematics education landscape through surveys, interviews, and focus groups with key stakeholders, including students, families, teachers, coaches, administrators, district-level leaders, education-focused foundations (e.g. Consortium of Education Foundations), education leader associations (e.g. FASA and FADSS), parent-teacher advocacy and engagement organizations (e.g. Florida PTA), and community-based organizations (e.g. Unidos, Urban Leagues)

- ***Regional Leadership Convenings*** - the Florida Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Florida Philanthropic Network, Impact Florida, and potentially other partners will coordinate and leverage existing networks to identify and invite key education, philanthropic, community, and business leaders to engage in productive dialogue around identified needs and potential policy changes to improve K-12 math instruction and achievement that will directly impact postsecondary success and workforce preparedness

- ***Landscape Analysis and Research Briefs*** - comprehensive report and shorter briefs on major themes and implications derived from the diverse voices and perspectives of the stakeholders engaged through the listening tour will be developed and disseminated using a variety of communications strategies and channels

- ***Mathematics Summit*** **-** culminating event that will bring in stakeholders across industries to learn, discuss, and develop a set of policy recommendations and priorities in advance of the 2025 legislative session

Project activities and outcomes will include:

Listening Tour

The UF Lastinger Center proposes to conduct a "listening tour" to simultaneously build awareness around the critical importance of high-quality K-12 math instruction and its impact on workforce development in Florida and gather critical data and feedback on the current state of mathematics education from a variety of stakeholders across a representative sample of Florida counties. Through these listening stations, we will also have the opportunity to build a shared commitment to advancing K-12 math instruction in Florida by connecting math achievement to postsecondary and workforce preparedness - both priorities of the state. With the support of partners such as Impact Florida, Florida Chamber Foundation, and Florida Philanthropic Network, we will work together to build a coalition of organizations and individuals who are aware and committed to the goal of spreading awareness on the critical importance of mathematics in postsecondary and workforce development success. In addition, our organizations will leverage our respective networks to identify potential participants for the listening tour that are diverse in demographics, geographic location, and roles in order to provide a rich and comprehensive understanding of Florida's current K-12 math landscape and derive meaningful themes and recommendations for consideration.

Having extensive experience in conducting both in person and virtual listening tours, we will leverage our networks throughout the state to connect with students, families, teachers, coaches, administrators, and education and community leaders through "listening stations" consisting of interviews and focus groups. Questions and discussions will focus on mathematics education topics, including but not limited to student achievement; instruction; curriculum; teacher preparation; teacher professional development; coaching; assessment; and family engagement activities. We will engage members of the BMGF team as thought partners to solicit input around the development of the survey and focus group instruments.

To ensure that students' voices are centered in this project, the UF Lastinger Center wants to provide multiple opportunities and modalities for students to provide critical insight and input to the current K-12 mathematics education landscape. Given prior experience in interviewing students during listening tours, the UF Lastinger Center believes that offering students the opportunity to submit ideas and input through their choice of creative and asynchronous means will provide our team with richer and more diverse data sets to analyze. Students will be invited to submit entries for an "Ideathon", providing their ideas about what math learning should look like. Students may send in pictures, videos, written narrative, or other artifact type that best represents their idea. The UF Lastinger Center will make a public relations push to invite submissions from a diverse group of students. Data will be collected and analyzed for major themes or points of interest that may be informative when considering the policies, programs, and structures needed to build and sustain a student-centered, high-impact mathematics system in Florida.