

## OVERVIEW

\* **Project Start Date:** 08/01/23

\* **Project End Date:** 02/01/25

### \* **Project Summary**

Provide a brief summary of the conceptualized project. If awarded, this summary may be used publicly by Helios.

The University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning desires to identify key policy issues within Florida's current K-12 math education system that are impacting college access and completion rates as well as the state's workforce development pipeline. Together with key education, philanthropic, and business organizations, including Impact Florida, the Florida Philanthropic Network, and the Florida Chamber Foundation, the UF Lastinger Center will engage in a collective impact approach to K-12 mathematics education advocacy and systems-building in Florida, with a particular focus on Hillsborough, Orange, and Miami-Dade counties.

In partnership with the Helios Education Foundation, the UF Lastinger Center will lead the design, coordination, and execution of the following activities related to mathematics education advocacy and policy development:

- **Coalition Building** - strategic engagement with key stakeholders to generate awareness, interest, and commitment to advancing policy that substantially improves K-12 mathematics education and achievement in Florida
- **Priority Community Stakeholder Convenings** - key education, philanthropic, community, and business leaders in Helios' priority communities will be brought together to engage in productive dialogue around identified needs and potential policy changes to improve K-12 math instruction and achievement
- **Regionally-specific Two-Page Briefs** - series of regionally-specific two-pagers co-authored with Helios on major themes and implications related to K-12 mathematics education in the Tampa Bay, Central Florida, and South Florida areas

## NEED & PURPOSE

### \* **Need for this Project**

Focusing on community indicators and characteristics of the population to be served (such as age, gender, race, disability, needs, risk factors, challenges), share the need for this project.

Research shows that students who develop a strong understanding of mathematics have more opportunities to pursue higher education and a variety of jobs—particularly those in STEM fields.<sup>1</sup> Yet, student achievement in mathematics has stayed disturbingly low for decades,

<sup>1</sup> Vilorio, D. (2016). Education Matters. Career Outlook, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, March.

particularly for students who are Black, Latino, and/or experiencing poverty. COVID-19 has only exacerbated gaps in mathematical opportunities, as evidenced by a 13-point decline in NAEP scores for Black students, widening the difference in outcome data between white and Black students from 25 points in 2020 to 33 points in 2022.<sup>2</sup> Overall, only 26% of eighth grade students in the United States are proficient in mathematics, with an even smaller percentage - 17% - proficient in Florida. Poor preparation in mathematics prohibits these same student populations from accessing and/or advancing in higher education and postsecondary opportunities. When starting college, they are often recommended to take remedial, non-credit bearing math courses, and even when students opt to bypass and take the math gateway course, only 25% successfully pass it on their first attempt<sup>3</sup>. In a 2019 report, 27 Florida colleges named mathematics as the subject area where students had the lowest success rates, and this was particularly true for Black male students<sup>4</sup>.

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.

Preliminary mathematics education policy was passed during the 2023 legislative session, which the UF Lastinger Center sees as a first step toward a more robust and inclusive math education support system in Florida. The “Student Outcomes” bill (HB 7039), extrapolated language from prior bills related to the New Worlds Reading Initiative, a program that was launched in 2021 and is currently administered by the University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning (UF Lastinger Center). The bill mandates 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 reducing 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

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<sup>2</sup> Nation’s Report Card (2022). *NAEP Long-Term Trend Assessment Results: Reading and Mathematics*. <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/ltt/2022/>

<sup>3</sup> Smith, A.. (2019). Mixed Results on Florida Remedial Education Gamble. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/03/29/remedial-education-progress-florida-still-leaves-unanswered-questions>

<sup>4</sup> Florida College System Developmental Education Accountability Reports (2019). Tallahassee, FL: Florida Department of Education, Division of Florida Colleges.

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.

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### **\* Project Purpose**

Define the main purpose, high-level goals, or intent of the proposed project. What will be solved or changed as a result of the work?

The UF Lastinger Center 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 on Florida's postsecondary success and workforce preparedness by policymakers, business leaders, community-based organizations, and educators and leaders at the school, district, and state level
- Identification of important policy opportunities that have the potential to enhance Florida's K-12 math education, such as, but not limited to, the use of data, 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.