

Jim Moran Foundation Early Learning Florida

In partnership with the Jim Moran Foundation, the University of Florida Lastinger Center has built Early Learning Florida, a statewide professional learning system that is transforming our early childhood workforce and having an incredible impact on the way young children learn and develop. In less than four years, we have developed over 400 hours of content in English and Spanish for practitioners and directors; delivered over 400,000 hours of professional development to over 30,000 practitioners in every county in Florida; and developed rich partnerships with the Office of Early Learning, every early learning coalition, the major provider associations, and other diverse stakeholders throughout the state. A rigorous evaluation by Yale University shows that after taking Early Learning Florida courses there are dramatic improvements in adult-child interactions and program quality, with the improvements growing annually. The most recent evaluation even shows improvements in child outcomes, meaning children with teachers who participated in Early Learning Florida courses over two years measured stronger skills in all major domains of child development than their peers.

Galvanized by these results, the UF Lastinger Center has designed a comprehensive teaching and learning platform to make Early Learning Florida resources available to all early childhood educators in the state to help them improve their practice caring for and educating young children and advance their careers. Through an innovative integration of state-of-the-art technology; research-based, proven job-embedded professional development experiences; and individualized expert support, Early Learning Florida has the potential to have an unprecedented impact on the early learning workforce and make a real, lasting difference in our communities by helping all children reach their full potential.

Our goal is for Early Learning Florida to become the go-to source for all things related to early childhood professional development, serving as a one-stop hub for practitioners, directors, coaches, facilitators, instructors, and trainers. Educators will have access to an array of resources and supports that provide a personalized professional learning experience, including:

- Competency-based Courses - online, instructor-led and asynchronous courses in English and Spanish on a wide diversity of topics for infant, toddler and preschool practitioners, directors, and other early childhood professionals
- Director Courses and Supports - targeted courses and resources to help directors support teachers in ways that lead to improved child outcomes
- Career Planning and Pathways – tools to help practitioners and directors articulate from professional development courses to college credit and offer targeted support to earn credentials, specializations, and degrees
- Teaching Resources - high-quality curated collections of resources, pictures or videos of best practice, and other tools in one convenient location and searchable by topic
- Workshops - specialized professional development experiences that focus on critical areas of early childhood education, customized to meet local needs
- Coaching and Trainer Certification Programs – blended certification programs that rigorously build professionals’ skills as coaches or facilitators
- Professional Networks - Virtual networks that connect early childhood professionals to their peers and to personalized resources

The Lastinger Center is obsessively focused on building out and implementing this state-of-the-art professional development system as quickly as possible. We are now in our next phase of platform and content development. To this end, the Lastinger Center is seeking continued support from the Jim Moran Foundation to provide much-needed funding to build out system-critical elements to more fully meet the needs of early childhood teachers, directors, coaches, and trainers in Florida, and particularly Broward, Duval and Palm Beach Counties.

Specifically, the UF Lastinger Center plans to catalyze system development and delivery to thousands of early childhood professionals across Florida, helping to transform the workforce and better prepare young children in our state. The critical system features that would be built include: (1) build 160 hours of asynchronous courses to enable a fully asynchronous CDA, (2) develop 100 hours of content and accompanying resources in Spanish to enable professionals to complete a CDA in Spanish, and (3) create a system for career advancement and course articulation so practitioners can plan toward a credential or degree and strategically complete experiences to advance their careers through credentials or degrees. These system elements will directly support practitioners in their daily work with children, building their knowledge, skills and confidence so they can better support the learning and development of young children.