

COVID-19 Florida Research to Capture District Responses

The University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning aims to partner with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to support its plans to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the responses and approaches taken by birth-12 grade educational systems across Florida in response to COVID-19. We understand the Gates Foundation's focus is on K-12, especially responses and impacts at the secondary level. To this end, the UF Lastinger Center is willing to augment resources provided by the Gates Foundation to conduct a comprehensive, birth-12 grade analysis of the COVID-19 response within Florida's education system.

Within the K-12 system, school districts have deployed various plans to support their staff, teachers, students and families in the face of indefinite school closures. The UF Lastinger Center desires to gather this information, and identify themes around systems, supports, and best practices in districts who have enacted a prompt response successfully, resulting in relatively limited disruption to student learning. We are also interested in the preconditions and preparedness that may have contributed to success.

In early childhood, the situation is nuanced because most early childhood programs operate as small businesses. These programs have closed in response to COVID-19, and owners, directors, and teachers are forced to navigate myriad unknowns, causing a significant level of instability in the field. There is large uncertainty as to whether many of these programs will be able to reopen once stay-at-home orders are lifted, due to fiscal and workforce instabilities. The UF Lastinger Center is interested in understanding the realities these stakeholders are facing now, what plans and actions they are taking to mitigate risks and/or provide support to staff and families, as well as what supports would be most helpful to them to stave off a large-scale closure of programs, which would be a significant workforce issue for the state if parents are ready to return to work but unable to find childcare. The UF Lastinger Center will utilize numerous approaches to collect information necessary to extrapolate high-level themes that can be used to inform future planning and policy efforts at the local, state, and national levels.