



**Consortium of Florida Education Foundations
Increasing Instructional Impact
Grant Report
Prepared November 2020**

Your Partnership Inspires Us! Thank You!

The Consortium of Florida Education Foundations has long partnered with the Education Foundation of Sarasota County in support of our work with the Sarasota County Schools. Your Increasing Instructional Impact grant of \$5,000 supported our newly developed Teacher Leadership Center to inspire and promote excellence in classroom instruction. We appreciate your flexibility in allowing us to alter our original plans outlined in our grant proposal due to the interference of the pandemic and the transition that happened in leadership in our district. Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to the teachers and students of the Sarasota County Schools!

Teacher Leadership Center: Innovating Excellence in Sarasota County Instruction

Our new, education innovation center, LaunchPad4U, is home to our recently launched Teacher Leadership Center, supporting excellence in teaching in K-12 education across the county. Just last month, we made the first step in launching our Teacher Leadership Center. We invited 173 of our district teachers who have been recognized by colleagues as teacher leaders in Sarasota County Schools to a special event, the very first of the Teacher Leadership Center. We have invited these teachers to attend Dr. Javar Godfrey's two-session seminar on *The Role of Caring in the Classroom*. Dr. Godfrey will facilitate a conversation with teachers about serving their students, communication that connects, overcoming obstacles, reflecting and resetting, and engagement with one's own needs. We believe that teachers need to care for themselves to continue to give to others. This seminar will offer teachers skills to enhance their abilities to respond to students as they navigate this difficult time. The Education Foundation is surveying teachers to determine the additional support we can provide through our new Teacher Leadership Center. We believe that supporting teachers enhances student success.

Evidence of How Your Relationship with the District Has Changed and Deepened Through This Work

This August, Dr. Brennan Asplen was named the new Superintendent of Schools for Sarasota County Schools after a nationwide search that began in December 2019. As Dr. Asplen acclimates to the district and the constraints upon the students, teachers, and administrators due to the pandemic, we have been able to connect with him through the introduction of our Teacher Leadership Center. Teachers recognize us as leaders and advocates for assisting them with making improvements to classroom instruction. We have been involved with teachers through our EducateSRQ classroom grant program and our Teacher of the Year Program, both of which operate in concert with the district. It is our hope that the Teacher Leadership Center will enhance our relationships with both the new Superintendent of Schools and the over 5,000 teachers in our district by demonstrating our commitment to partner with teachers to provide a platform for them to imagine and implement programs that speak directly to their needs.

Evidence of Actions or Efforts Initiated in the Project That Have or are Expected to Improve Instruction

The Education Foundation of Sarasota County is in Year 2 of a three-year Strategic Plan. For the 2020/2021 school year, we have very specific goals to provide support to teachers in our district. Our goals are to:

- Create and support teacher-led, professional learning communities that strengthen teacher networks, spark innovations, and improve creative collaboration, and
- Listen to, invest in, and empower educators to strengthen effective teaching and learning.

In order to reach these goals, we launched our new Teacher Leadership Center last month, providing teachers a forum to network, innovate, and collaborate in order to inform effective teaching and learning. We have had a great response to our first event, Dr. Javar Godfrey's two-session seminar on *The Role of Caring in the Classroom*, which is scheduled to begin in mid-November. Already, we have more than 20 teachers registered for the seminar, and registrations are still active.

We also surveyed teachers about the type of support that they most need and are actively compiling the survey data which will inform the direction of the Teacher Leadership Center. We hope for this Center to be teacher led and teacher driven. Ultimately, our aim is to empower teachers through collaborations beyond their home schools and to improve support for our teachers translating to better educational outcomes for our students. Our LaunchPad4U innovation site houses this new initiative providing teachers a resource and location to meet and share.

Plan for Sustaining the District and Foundation Partnership in Working Toward Improved Instruction

The Education Foundation is committed to growing and evolving the Teacher Leadership Center as a permanent part of the services we offer to the school district. Support for the

Center is a part of our regular operating budget. We are committed to diversifying our revenue sources and developing strong relationships with each donor to achieve our annual revenue goals. Many of our donors have a particular interest in supporting teachers and this program excites them and garners their support.

We are also committed to working closely with the school district to ensure open communications about the Teacher Leadership Center and how our Center complements the district's professional development for teachers by empowering them to imagine and implement professional growth programming uniquely suited to their needs. We believe the district and teachers are best served when we work in concert to improve student achievement.

Indicate If and How Project Activities Could Not Be Completed or Were Adjusted Due to Current School Closures Related to Student Health and Safety

Our original proposal included a plan to specifically target teachers' skill levels and knowledge and their ability to effectively convey high expectations to their students. This initiative flowed from our Board of Directors' strategic plan to enhance teaching and student outcomes. The original grant proposal included partnering with 2-3 schools to administer a diagnostic tool to gauge the impact of implicit bias and the deleterious effects it has on student achievement. The plan was to utilize the outcomes of the diagnostic to inform the work of the Teacher Leadership Center. Unfortunately, we faced complications in completing this aim. First, our district was in transition during the 2019/2020 school year. In November 2019, an interim Superintendent was appointed by the school board while a national search began to hire a new Superintendent of Schools. In August 2020, Dr. Asplen joined the district as our new Superintendent of Schools. The district and the schools, understandably, did not want to embark on general instructional audit during this time of transition.

This concept was further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our schools closed to in-person instruction in mid-March and reopened using a hybrid learning approach (with a choice of virtual, remote learning, in-person, or concurrent teaching) in August. Under these conditions, performing a diagnostic will not prove useful since the overall learning situation is so strained and abnormal for both teachers and students. Additionally, it will be difficult to measure the effects of implicit bias on student learning at this time since the data from an audit performed now will be skewed due to students' learning losses resulting from the conditions of the pandemic. However, we know that teachers are craving a forum to share and grow within their professions, so we moved forward with introducing the Teacher Leadership Center even while we had to defer our plan to perform a general instructional audit. Once conditions settle to our new normal, we will revisit the concept of performing the audit to even more precisely pinpoint the areas where we can assist teachers in innovation and improvement.

Appendix

The following emails were sent to teachers to invite them to participate in the first seminar of the Teacher Leadership Center.

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)



"Self-care is so important. When you take time to replenish your spirit, it allows you to serve others from the overflow. You cannot serve from an empty vessel."

Eleanor Brown

Dear Teacher Leader,

You have been recognized by colleagues as a teacher leader in Sarasota County Schools. On behalf of the Education Foundation of Sarasota County, we'd like to share information about an upcoming seminar that we are offering in our newly formed Teacher Leadership Center (TLC) that is invitational only.



Our vision for the TLC is that it will be an environment in which teachers are leading and learning together as part of a collaborative group that addresses student and community needs. For more information on the TLC, read [Es Swihart's Aug. 11, 2020 article in the Sarasota Herald](#). Ms. Swihart teaches at Riverview High School, is the 2018-19 Sarasota County Teacher of the Year and serves on the Education Foundation's Board of Directors.

Our first offering features Dr. Javar Godfrey on the topic of *The Role of Caring in the Classroom*. The seminar will take place in two sessions, each for 2½ hours. Dr. Godfrey will facilitate a conversation with teachers about serving their students, communication that connects, overcoming obstacles, reflecting and resetting, and engagement on one's

own needs. We believe, as Dr. Godfrey does, that teachers need to care for themselves to continue to give to others. The skills you learn will enhance your ability to respond to your students as they navigate this difficult time.



Most thought leaders in education are committed to the four C's of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication as the necessary skills for success in the 21st century. At the Education Foundation of Sarasota County, we believe there is a fifth C: *caring*. The importance of care is immense, particularly now as teachers are being asked to do more than ever, and both teachers and students are living through unprecedented times filled with unknowns.

In keeping with the philosophy of the Teacher Leadership Center, this seminar is voluntary, an opportunity for teacher leaders to share their expertise and to grow with one another as professionals. We hope you will join other teacher leaders in participating in this opportunity.

It is also important that the TLC offerings are designed around your needs so we would like to know if you are interested in this workshop and what time is best for you to attend. Please let us know your level of interest and the time frame that works best for you by completing this 1-minute survey.

Complete the survey

All responses will be tabulated by October 15 and invitations to the workshops will follow. We look forward to developing this new Teacher Leadership Center with you!

With Gratitude,

Handwritten signature of Jennifer Vigne in blue ink.

Jennifer Vigne
President & CEO

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)



The Role of Caring in the Classroom

November 18 & December 1

RSVP Required

Dear Teacher Leader,

Thank you for your interest in attending our first offering in our newly formed Teacher Leadership Center (TLC), *The Role of Caring in the Classroom*. We have two exciting seminars planned, and as a participant, you will have an opportunity to share your expertise, as well as learn from other teacher leaders in the district and our facilitator, Dr. Javar Godfrey.

Based on survey responses, this first workshop will be offered in a 2-part series, scheduled Wednesday, November 18 and Tuesday, December 1, from 4:30-6:30 pm. We will plan to offer various times, including Saturdays, for future workshops.

By attending this 2-part series workshop, you will receive a \$25 Panera gift card after you complete your registration. Registration is required, so please RSVP below.

You truly are our pioneers and could play a large part in shaping the Teacher Leadership Center. Our goal is to bring teachers together in an environment in which you can voluntarily explore your interests, share your expertise with one another, and take time for yourselves. We need teacher leaders like you to guide us in this process.

We look forward to partnering with you.

Please RSVP Here

With Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Vigne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Jennifer Vigne
President & CEO