

August 2025

## Strengthening Florida's Teacher Workforce: Strategic Staffing to Increase Teacher Satisfaction and Student

Florida's local education foundations have a 40-year history of elevating educators and sparking classroom innovation through grants, professional development and recognition programs. The Consortium of Florida Education Foundations (Consortium) believes education foundations can also support their school district partners in addressing systemic challenges by convening stakeholders and elevating fresh approaches and resources.

Spurred on by the pandemic and the advent of AI, many industries have adopted new workforce strategies over the past five years. Yet school districts have largely retained the "one teacher, one classroom" approach to school staffing while struggling to retain teachers and prepare students for a world where the pace of change will no doubt continue to accelerate.

In August 2024, the Consortium shared a strategic school staffing [landscape scan](#) focused on transforming school staffing to improve student learning and reimagine the role of teachers through a virtual forum. Guided by the Education First landscape scan, the research posed the question: How can we better meet the needs of future students by redesigning critical adult roles and ensuring that those roles are attractive, sustainable, and professionally rewarding? Current pain points were explored and fresh approaches identified from across the country.

The Consortium then provided grant funds and support to six education foundations for them to convene teachers and school district leaders to explore challenges and adopt more strategic school staffing approaches. This issue brief provides summaries of the results of each project through June 2025.



Students visited scientists at the Brevard Zoo to learn about invasive species



### Brevard Schools Foundation Increasing Elementary STEM Engagement Through 'Technology Integrators'

Both teacher and student voices were elevated at two pilot elementary schools with a project focused on integrating STEM across all subject areas and increasing student engagement. Students expressed a desire for more collaborative, tech-integrated, hands-on learning. Teachers shared the need for greater confidence and support for implementing technology tools. The schools embarked on exploring real-world environmental science issues, including coastal erosion and the impact of invasive species, with teachers supported by designated "technology integrator" colleagues in developing related student activities and field trips. The initiative strengthened teacher confidence in using technology and highlighted student engagement as a driver for learning. To scale the initiative district-wide, a minimum of eight additional technology innovators will be needed.

### Broward Education Foundation A Practical Framework for AI Use for Improving Teaching and Learning

As the 6th largest school district in the country, Broward County Schools recognized the need for creating an infrastructure and guardrails for the use of AI in classrooms. A 45-member task force and a 10-member steering committee were formed to develop a high-level framework to ensure ethical integration of AI tools. Feedback from teachers and the reality that 20% of instructional staff have less than four years' experience informed the AI professional development plan and the need for ongoing evaluation. A major outcome of the initiative was districtwide adoption of a single generative AI chatbot. A new school-level "AI Liaison" role was finalized for the 2025-26 school year to provide ongoing support for teachers and ensure the district-wide framework is safely and effectively implemented.

## **Champions for Learning (Collier County) Exploring and Evaluating Education Foundation Role in Teacher Professional Development**

Golden Apple is the education foundation's highly competitive recognition program that identifies best teaching practices, celebrates the profession, and provides continued professional development for teachers in Collier County. Grant funds provided an opportunity to explore the impact of the long-standing program through input from 50 stakeholders. Survey results indicated that 76% of Golden Apple participants reported increased effectiveness, and 83% were more likely to remain in the profession due to the program. Champions for Learning will further strengthen the Golden Apple teacher recognition and networking program as a talent retention strategy and seek new strategic collaboration opportunities with the school district.



## **Jacksonville Public Education Foundation (Duval) Strategic Staffing for Exceptional Student Education**

This initiative addressed the critical shortage of Exceptional Student Education (ESE) students in Duval County Public Schools. With nearly 50% of positions for teachers serving students with autism unfilled at one point, the project focused on educator interviews, design-thinking workshops, and strategic staffing actions. ESE teachers expressed frustration about barriers to professional certification, being unclear on myriad reporting requirements, a lack of standardized training and feeling excluded from broader opportunities to engage with general education teachers. Solutions identified included creating master schedules and support plans for ESE teachers, ideally with district adoption of a new human capital management system. Advocacy to address working conditions, including classroom safety and compensation, were also elevated as well as strengthening grow-your-own initiatives for paraprofessionals to become certified teachers.

## **Indian River Education Fund Reimagining Schools Through Design-Thinking for More Student-Centered Learning**

Through the "DesignED 2025" initiative, the Indian River Education Fund co-created two innovative school models through a design-thinking process that involved teachers and students, emphasizing flexibility, communication and community. The K-8 model focuses on providing a more

connected teacher experience with collaborative planning and shared responsibility for student outcomes among all teachers. A boutique secondary school was designed to offer personalized learning and work-based projects, allowing students to explore various career paths through partnerships with local businesses and community professionals. The collaboration helped shape an ambitious and coherent vision for strategic staffing and school redesign in Indian River County. The district has already incorporated DesignEd 2025 input into their strategic innovation plan and corresponding K-8 expansion plans.

## **Foundation for Leon County Schools Assess and Address the Attrition Rate of Early Career Teachers**

Through surveys and focus groups, this initiative focused on improving retention of early-career teachers (years 3 – 5). While school-based mentors were in place for first-year teachers, results were mixed. Specific areas for improvement were identified: A more systemized approach to teacher mentoring at the district level; mentorships that lasted longer than one year, particularly for new teachers from non-traditional backgrounds; and identification of career pathways for teachers beyond administrator roles. Focused training and financial support for teachers to obtain certifications were also identified as priorities. A next step for the school district is to conduct a cost/benefit analysis of adopting a district-wide versus school-based teacher mentor model.

### **Top Takeaways**

The dynamics and day-to-day distractions of school districts can get in the way of focusing on larger issues including how to create a more sustainable teacher workforce and reimagining the learning experience for students. The school districts involved in these projects welcomed the opportunity to have the time and space to explore challenges, be connected to promising practices and think strategically with their education foundation partners.

While each project varied with the context and pressing teacher workforce issues of each school district, some common themes emerged:

- Elevate teacher and student voices first as critical drivers
- Leverage technology and AI to increase teacher impact
- Adopt system-wide approaches to mentoring and support
- Take a design approach to reimagining school staffing