Research shows that the years between birth and age five are a critical learning period for children. The quality of an early childhood education program for young children depends largely on the education and training of its teachers.

For the past 20 years, Palm Beach State College’s Institute of Excellence in Early Care and Education (IEECE), in partnership with the Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County, has operated to create a qualified, well-trained child care workforce in Palm Beach County. Professional development services in the form of training, advising and financial supports are available through the IEECE to all early childhood teachers whose workplaces receive state or federal subsidies.

Quality education and trainings serve as the foundation for best practices in early childhood education. The IEECE offers effective and comprehensive learning opportunities to home, center and school-based providers to positively impact children and families through quality learning environments.

This past year, emphasis in training was placed on social-emotional learning, STEAM, parent resources, teaching English to second language learners, and early literacy. Advising shifted to a more interactive approach, and financial supports continued to make continuous improvement a reality for many of our students.
Financial Supports

The IEECE offers a variety of financial supports to assist Palm Beach County’s early childhood workforce in reaching their professional development goals.

**SEEK**

SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS ARE AVAILABLE TO HELP PAY COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH CREDIT COURSEWORK, NON-CREDIT COURSEWORK, BOOKS, APPROVED TRAININGS, TESTING FEES, AND FOREIGN DEGREE TRANSLATION AND EVALUATION.

1,046 applicants approved for $585,693

**ACHIEVE**

IS A SALARY SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM INTENDED TO ENCOURAGE QUALIFIED PRACTITIONERS TO MOVE ALONG THEIR EDUCATION PATHWAYS WITH IDENTIFIED BENCHMARKS TIED TO MONETARY AWARDS.

324 applicants approved for $685,950

**Services**

100% of requests were fulfilled

IEECE career advisors assist practitioners in setting and attaining educational goals, identifying and accessing financial resources, and assisting with career planning. Through the appreciative advising model, advisors place primary attention on students’ individual goals. A holistic approach supports students’ success. All of the IEECE advisors are certified in implementing this model.

The IEECE fosters the academic success and personal growth of its practitioners through the Education Success Center. The center offers an accessible, collaborative learning environment that provides face-to-face and online tutoring in all academic areas, ESOL, test-taking skills, and computer skills.

"I was assigned a tutor from the IEECE for my English class. I never felt so comfortable during tutoring. My tutor took the time to read my essays, and, together, we explored different ways to put my thoughts into my essays... We would call or email each other throughout the week. I am happy to note I passed my course." – Jeannette G.
Whether an entry-level practitioner or an advanced professional, the IEECE’s community-based approach to training offers alternative pathways in career development.

**Enrollment**

- **50 HEOs**, which are continuing education courses provided by the IEECE, were offered to **486 practitioners** that enrolled in **816 trainings**, totaling **$51,995**.

- **BACHELOR’S PROGRAM** offered at FAU and FIU: **45 practitioners** enrolled in courses, totaling **$130,520**.

- **COLLEGE CREDIT AND NON-CREDIT COURSES** taken at PBSC or other accredited institutions:
  - **362 practitioners** approved for classes, totaling **$239,447**.
  - **144 practitioners** approved, totaling **$18,240**.
  - **13 practitioners** awarded **$20,885**.

- **Community-based Trainings** are non-credit, professional development opportunities provided through community partnerships.

- In **Spring 2016**, the IEECE partnered with PBSC’s Bachelor of Applied Science Department to infuse early childhood education curriculum into courses in the General Supervision and Management degree program. The first cohort supports 13 students. The second cohort will follow in Fall 2019.
IEECE staff design and teach competency-based, outcomes-driven trainings that focus on the knowledge and skills development needed to nurture young children’s cognitive, social and emotional growth. Trainings are offered at convenient times and locations through various delivery methods, including online. This past year, the IEECE implemented new programs and expanded those already in place.

The IEECE’s STEAM Preschool team mixes art with STEM learning, emphasizing creativity, innovation, playful learning, investigation, discovery, fun and thinking. The STEAM Preschool website serves as a resource for educators and parents, offering articles, learning experiences, activities and other resources to help extend the learning process.

On Sept. 22, 2018, Palm Beach State College hosted its first STEAM Fest that was jointly conceptualized and organized by IEECE staff and PBSC’s Lake Worth Science department, and supported by community partners. Approximately 800 residents of South Florida attended the event.

Beginning in 2018 and continuing in 2019, STEAM Labs were launched in public schools and private sites in Palm Beach and Broward counties thanks to funding from PNC Grow Up Great, the Mayor’s Office of West Palm Beach, and the Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County.
Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) supports child development in all domains to help children to learn self-regulation skills by interacting with peers and adults who care for them. Influenced by the work of Dr. Becky Bailey, the social-emotional trainings and supports at the IEECE focus on making connections and practicing mindfulness.

The IEECE designed an innovative three-year training-to-coaching pilot program using components of the Conscious Discipline® framework. This program, implemented at seven preschools, has resulted in significant improvement in teacher-child interactions and SEL skills. Six training modules were developed to support teacher practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pilot Sites</th>
<th># of children served</th>
<th># of staff in the site</th>
<th># of CD staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kiddie Haven Preschool</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingswood Academy-Greenacres</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity Early Childhood Education and Family Center</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm Beach Preschool</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm Beach State College’s Center for Early Learning</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Appleseed</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treehouse Learning Center</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two Communities of Practice are held monthly to support administrators and teachers in their implementation of SEL skills. The following sites have been actively involved in the process:

- The Appleseed
- Kiddie Haven
- Kingswood Academy-Greenacres
- Opportunity
- Palm Beach Preschool
- Treehouse Early Learning Center

All About Kids
Ephesus Christian Child Care Center
Lutheran Services Florida
Planet Kids
Tenet Good Samaritan, Inc.
Wee Care Child Development Center

A Community of Practice is a group of people who share a concern or passion. It’s a professional forum that provides a stimulating learning environment through collaboration, communication and support.
The Institute meets the needs of Palm Beach County’s diverse workforce through specialized English language and literacy trainings, bilingual training, test-taking skills, and communities of practice for on-going conversation.

Each year, a new cohort attends the Institute’s ESOL program, which is managed by staff that hold national TESOL certifications. To date, 200 students have participated, and 50 percent of those can now enter the College’s credit course pathway. As teachers improve their English competency, outcomes for children are improved.

The Institute is about continuous improvement. In the coming year, we look forward to enhancing our training to a coaching model, incorporating a happiness culture into our training design, and increasing our efforts in parent education. We believe education matters to future success, and we are working to make that belief contagious.