The Institute of Excellence in Early Care and Education at Palm Beach State College has always embraced a collaborative spirit. In fact, collaboration is the underpinning of our mission: to provide the child care workforce of Palm Beach County with a comprehensive approach to career development in order that they have the knowledge and skills needed to create healthy learning environments for young children. Since our inception 20 years ago, our work has been entwined with that of our community partners, including the Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County, whose generosity allows us to do the work that we do, the Early Learning Coalition of Palm Beach County, the Palm Beach County School District, Florida Atlantic University, Palm Beach Atlantic University, and the hundreds of child care centers across the county who attend trainings and credit courses at Palm Beach State College.

Broadening Our Scope
This year, we made the decision to broaden our scope and begin to create partnerships with other community organizations that tangentially impact early childhood education. Our goals are to enhance teacher professional development through broader exposure to community resources and provide an understanding of developmentally appropriate practices to those who are working with young children yet are not expert in the teaching of those birth to five years old. This new avenue of connections has been exciting, and we look forward to the coming year as we enhance these relationships and solidify new partners in a collective effort to ensure that all children have the supports needed as they progress through their education.
**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 the costs associated with credit coursework, noncredit coursework, books, approved trainings, testing fees, and foreign degree translation and evaluation.

*Approved for: $518,881.30*

Achieve is a salary supplement program intended to encourage qualified practitioners to move along their education pathways with identified benchmarks tied to monetary awards.

*Approved for: $628,825.00*

**Enrollment**

Whether an entry-level practitioner or an advanced professional, the IEECE’s community-based approach to training offers alternative pathways in career development.

- **60 HEOs**, which are education courses provided by the IEECE, were offered to **459 practitioners** that enrolled in **806 trainings**.

- Bachelor’s Programs offered at FAU and FIU: **51 practitioners** enrolled in courses.

- College credit and noncredit courses taken at Palm Beach State College: **295 practitioners** approved for classes.

- Community-based trainings are noncredit, professional development opportunities provided through community partnerships: **160 practitioners** approved.

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. Ten students from the inaugural cohort graduated on December 19, 2019. A second cohort of 12 students began classes in January 2020. **14 practitioners** for **48 classes**.
For many underprivileged children, the chance of school success is dependent upon exposure to quality early childhood education. Without teachers equipped to support children’s growth and development, the hope of mitigating poverty is minimized. The Institute is a nationally recognized professional development center providing Palm Beach County teachers with the competencies needed to create healthy learning environments for young children. While concentration is on the academic advancement of these teachers, there also is a critical need to address their personal well-being. The health of teachers is directly linked to their ability to foster the development of healthy children. As such, 2019 marked the beginning of an expansion of the Institute’s work, as its lens widens to support the whole teacher in mind, body and spirit.

Training and Development

The health of teachers is directly linked to their ability to foster the development of healthy children.

Pilot Programs in Action

Through training and coaching, the training department continues to support 15 child care centers using Conscious Discipline® and STEAM as frameworks to guide teachers’ understanding of child development and brain research. As our research expanded this year to meet the needs of the early childhood teacher, positive psychology using mindfulness became a practice the Institute looked to incorporate into its work and actions. Studies indicate that an individual’s happiness can be affected through awareness and intentional practices that foster social and emotional well-being. Most importantly, a teacher’s happiness has a direct link to her teaching success and to child outcomes. Healthy social and emotional development is a teachable skill for children as well as adults.

The Science Behind the Movement

To set the foundation for this shift, research continues into the science of well-being in order to understand the competencies needed to support teacher wellness in everyday life. In 2019, all 29 Institute staff, from trainers to advisors, support staff and management, completed the UC Berkeley course, The Science of Happiness. Staff attended national conferences on brain health, and work groups began to delve deeply into wellness concepts and practices. Wellness trainings moved into the planning stage. Community partnerships were formed to begin the discussion on how to expand and enhance the mission by providing direct exposure and expertise to the arts and sciences through adventures outside of the classroom setting.
STEAM Fest 2019

On November 16, 2019, the Institute, partnered with Palm Beach State College’s professors, clubs and students to host the second annual STEAM Fest, which drew over 800 people to the Lake Worth campus. Learners of all ages were exposed to archeology, physics, biology, marine life, chemistry and robotics through hands-on activities. The College’s science and math clubs offered children opportunities to hold sheep brains, create sun prints, experiment with DNA, explore force and motion, observe electrical currents, watch a 3D printer in action, and so much more! Partners from across the county contributed to the event’s success by providing demonstrations and active learning experiences: The South Florida Science Center and Aquarium, Loggerhead Marinelife Center, Scripps Research Institute, BlueCube Aerospace, Aerojet Rocketdyne, Amateur Radio and Magic LEAP, and Bee Mindful Yoga.

STEAM Fest was made possible through support from the county’s Children’s Services Council and Early Learning Coalition, PNC Bank, and Palm Beach State College clubs and programs.

Arts Integration Collaboration with the Florida Alliance for Arts Education

In fall 2019, through a unique partnership with the Florida Alliance for Arts Education, and made possible through a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts by the Florida Department of State Division of Cultural Affairs, the Institute provided early learning teachers with an in-depth training on new strategies to incorporate performance art into their daily schedules. The course, which was offered at our Belle Glade campus, broadened teachers’ understanding of the importance of the arts to early learning. New techniques in storytelling, puppets, imaginary journey and rhythm instruments were practiced.
The Institute is committed to utilizing research-based practices that lead to improving teacher practice. This year, the career advising department utilized the six phases of the Appreciative Advising Model to guide over 2,000 students to move closer to attaining their professional goals. The model, which was introduced to advisors through offerings at FAU, is the intentional collaborative practice of asking positive open-ended questions that help students optimize their educational experiences and reach their goals and potential.

**Career Advising**

Disarm: Make a positive first impression with the student, build rapport, and create a safe, welcoming space.

Discover: Ask positive open-ended questions that help advisers learn about students’ strengths, skills, and abilities.

Dream: Inquire about students’ hopes and dreams for their futures.

Design: Co-create a plan for making their dreams a reality.

Deliver: The student delivers on the plan created during the Design phase and the adviser is available to encourage and support students.

Don’t Settle: Advisers and students need to set their own internal bars of expectations high.

In 2019, an advising pilot project, which focused on five early childhood education centers, used the model to blend education and wellness to more effectively support teachers’ healthy human development. All five centers had staff who were also engaged in the Institute’s social-emotional trainings influenced by Conscious Discipline® structures. As a result of the success of the pilot in supporting teachers’ needs as they moved along the education pathway, an additional nine centers will be added to the pilot, which are all members of the Riviera Beach Pre-K Collaborative.
This year marked the graduation of the first early childhood cohort whose 10 members earned their bachelor’s degree in Supervision and Management from Palm Beach State College. The cohort program grew out of a community request for intentional coursework that addresses the specific needs of the business of child care. Those already in management positions and those interested in moving into leadership in the field were invited to apply. Books and tuition were financed through SEEK scholarships, a Children’s Services Council funded program.

Our 2019 graduates are just the beginning. A new cluster has already been formed, and all excited to engage in this collaborative learning experience.

The mission of the Institute of Excellence in Early Care and Education is to provide the child care workforce of Palm Beach County with a comprehensive approach to career development in the field of early childhood education.