



CHILDREN'S TRUST REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

April 07, 2025 at 4:00 PM

CTAC, 4010 NW 25th Place, Gainesville, FL 32606

Call to Order

Roll Call

Agenda Review, Revision, and Approval

Approval of the agenda also approves all of the items on the consent agenda.

Consent Agenda

1. [Board Attendance YTD](#)
2. [3.10.2025 Regular Board Meeting Minutes](#)
3. [3.10.2025 Board Meeting Evaluation - Survey Results](#)
4. [FY 2025 Budget Report \(February\)](#)
5. [FY 2025 Checks and Expenditures Report \(February\)](#)
6. [FY 2025 Programmatic Award and Expenditures Report \(February\)](#)
7. [BOCC Interlocal agreement](#)
8. [March Sponsorship Applications](#)

General Public Comments

Chair's Report

Executive Director's Report

9. [Executive Director's Report](#)

Committee Updates

Presentations

10. [BDO Engagement - Internal Controls and Fiscal Infrastructure Assessment](#)

Old Business

11. [Comprehensive Literacy Needs Assessment Report and Recommendation Overview \(Mia Jones\)](#)
12. [Recommendation for Award – Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP 2025-01](#)

New Business

General Public Comments

Board Member Comments

For Your Information

Items in this section are for informational purposes only and do not require any action by the Trust.

13. [Business Leadership Institute for Early Learning V'Locity Masterclass and Accreditation Academy Spring 2024 Overview \(Mia Jones\)](#)

14. [Gun Violence Initiative Update](#)

Next Meeting Dates

Joint Meeting with the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners - Monday, April 21, 2025 @ 3:00 pm

Alachua County Administration Building, Grace Knight Conference Room, 2nd Floor

Regular Board Meeting - Monday, May 12, 2025 @ 4:00 pm

Children's Trust of Alachua County, 4010 NW 25th Place, Gainesville, FL 32606

Adjournment

Virtual Meeting Information

View or listen to the meeting: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpYNq_GkjCo9FQo3qR5-SOw

Public Comments: Submit online at

<http://www.childrenstrustofalachuacounty.us/commentcard>.

Guidelines for Public Comments

Public comments can be made in person at Children's Trust Board Meetings. We will no longer take comments by Zoom or by phone. If you would like to submit a written comment or a written transcript of your public comment before or after the meeting, these will be provided to Board Members prior to the next Board Meeting.

Any member of the public wishing to be heard either under the agenda section "General Public Comments" or on a specific agenda item shall approach the podium at the appropriate time.

Members of the public recognized by the Chair will have three (3) minutes to speak on a single subject matter. If an individual seeks to be heard on more than one agenda item, the Chair shall determine the amount of time allotted to the speaker. However, such time shall not exceed ten (10) minutes without the approval of the Board or Committee. The Clerk of the Trust is the official timekeeper.

Public members may not share or transfer all or part of their allotted time to any other person or agenda item, except as permitted by this Policy. To the extent a speaker has previously addressed a Board or Committee on the same subject, the Board Chair may limit repeat comments at the Board meeting by the same speaker.

File Attachments for Item:

1. Board Attendance YTD

2025 Board Member Attendance

Item 1.

Regular Meetings	2/10/2025	3/10/2025	4/7/2025	5/12/2025	6/9/2025	8/11/2025	9/8/2025	10/13/2025	11/10/2025	12/8/2025	
Cornell	P	P									
Twombly	P	P									
Labarta	P	P									
Certain	P	P									
Chance	P	P									
Hardt	P	P									
Patton	P	P									
Pinkoson	P	P									
Wilson Bullard	P	P									
Special Meetings											
Cornell			V = Virtual Attendance								
Twombly			P = Physical Attendance								
Labarta											
Certain											
Chance											
Hardt											
Patton											
Pinkoson											
Wilson Bullard											

File Attachments for Item:

2. 3.10.2025 Regular Board Meeting Minutes



CHILDREN'S TRUST REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

March 10, 2025 at 4:00 PM

CTAC, 4010 NW 25th Place, Gainesville, FL 32606

Call to Order – Chair Cornell called the meeting to order at 3:59 pm.

Roll Call

Board Members Present: Ken Cornell - Chair, Cheryl Twombly - Vice Chair, Dr. Maggie Labarta - Treasurer, Tina Certain - Member, Mary Chance – Member, Dr. Nancy Hardt – Member, Dr. Kamela Patton – Member, Lee Pinkoson – Member, Hon. Susanne Wilson Bullard – Member.

Quorum was established.

Agenda Review, Revision, and Approval of Regular and Consent Agenda – Member Pinkoson moved for approval; seconded by Member Certain. Passed by unanimous voice vote.

Consent Agenda

1. Board Attendance YTD
2. BDO Engagement
3. 2.10.2025 Regular Board Meeting Minutes
4. 2.10.2025 Board Meeting Evaluation - Survey Results
5. FY 2025 Budget Report (January)
6. FY 2025 Checks and Expenditures Report (January)
7. FY 2025 Programmatic Awards and Expenditures Report (February)
8. February Sponsorship Applications

General Public Comments

Chair's Report

Chair Cornell requested that a motion be made to authorize the actions taken by the Chief Operating Officer in the absence of the Executive Director and direct the Executive Director to develop and present a policy establishing the COO's authority to sign on behalf of the ED. Member Certain moved for approval. It was seconded by Member Labarta. In discussion, Member Certain questioned that nothing formal was already in place, as she thought there was. No public comment. Passed by unanimous voice vote.

Executive Director's Report

9. 3.10.2025 ED Report

COO Kristy Goldwire announced the 1st cohort of Flourish Alachua doulas graduated this past Saturday. A maternal Child health presentation will be provided to the board in the coming months. A second cohort will begin soon.

10. Swampbots Recognition

Students from the Frogmen Robotics team presented a demonstration displaying their robots' functionality and provided insights into typical competition experiences.

Presentations

11. Community Foundation of North Central Florida - Center for Nonprofit Excellence and My Sidewalk presentation from Dr. Theresa Beachy, Organizational Strategist. Member Labarta moved the presentation be accepted for informational purposes; Member Pinkoson seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

12. Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) -Family Resource Center/ Community Resource Navigator / Help Me Grow presentation from Stacy Merritt and Chyna Miller. Dr. Hardt requested a follow-up report on a future agenda. Member Certain questioned how to ensure CTAC funds are serving children under 18 years of age. Member Labarta moved the presentation be accepted for informational purposes; seconded by Member Chance. Public Comment: Bishop Christopher Stokes rose on behalf of the Willie Mae Stokes Community Center to thank Partnership for their invaluable support to their program. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Old Business

13. TeensWork Alachua - Fall Civic Leadership Program presentation from Shardae Goodloe and TWA student participants – Isona Wolfe, Jaden Perry, Sariya Harrison, and Tanisa Jones. Member Certain moved the presentation be accepted for informational purposes; Judge Wilson Bullard seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

New Business

General Public Comments

Sherry Kitchens from the Child Advocacy Center shared challenges they are experiencing with contractor recruitment and retention. She is excited about hosting training sessions for CTAC providers.

Board Member Comments

Member Certain recommended the building's electric wiring be checked due to the power outage. Dr. Patton commented the SBAC was glad to help with the book recommendations. Vice Chair Twombly shared it was nice to hear from children during the meeting. Member Chance loved Tab 6 and suggested checking with other CSC's and consider listing funded organizations under priorities on the website for accountability. Dr. Labarta requested a follow-up to the community needs listing. Member Pinkoson gave kudos to the makers of the agenda and the presenters for not overloading the agenda.

For Your Information

Items in this section are for informational purposes only and do not require any action by the Trust.

14. Save the Date: CTAC Open House, March 29, 2025 - 11:00 am - 3:00 pm

15. Comprehensive Literacy Plan and Assessment February 2025 Update

Next Meeting Dates

16. Regular Board Meeting - Monday, April 7, 2025 @ 4:00 pm

Children's Trust of Alachua County, 4010 NW 25th Place, Gainesville, FL 32606

Joint Meeting with the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners - Monday, April 21, 2025 @ 3:00 pm

Alachua County Administration Building, Grace Knight Conference Room, 2nd Floor

Adjournment

Chair Cornell adjourned the meeting at 5:36 pm



**CHILDREN'S TRUST
OF ALACHUA COUNTY**

CHILDREN'S TRUST REGULAR BOARD MEETING

March 10, 2025, at 4:00 PM

Children's Trust of Alachua County, Large Conference Room, 4010 NW 25th Place, Gainesville, FL 32606

Attendance List

Name	Organization	Email address	Contact number
Josiah Curley	Twice Fall leadership	josiahcurley002@gmail.com	352-221-9103
Kimberly Farris	Swampshot Robotics Entire team (C)	kimberly@swampshots.org	386-852-9000
Theresa Beaulieu	CNE	theresa@cneec.org	352 318 7764
April McCray	Swampshots	april-jayne@yahoo.com	(352) 318-1524
Natalie Southard	Swampshots	natufoto@hotmail.com	(386) 266-9420
Tanisha Jones	Twice Fall leadership	tanishajones98@gmail.com	352-339-2310
Bishop Chris STOKES	WMSCC	BishopSTOKES2@gmail.com	352 246-2533
Martina Meredith	Goodwill	mmeredith@goodwillna.org	912-674-4464
Anisa ISARC	Teens Work Alachua	aisaac@goodwillna.org	904-454-4473
Shade Goodie	TWA	sgoodie@goodwillna.org	904-658-7526
Melissa Janney	TWA	mjaney@goodwillna.org	904) 606-3526



CHILDREN'S TRUST
OF ALACHUA COUNTY

CHILDREN'S TRUST REGULAR BOARD MEETING

March 10, 2025, at 4:00 PM

Children's Trust of Alachua County, Large Conference Room, 4010 NW 25th Place, Gainesville, FL 32606

Attendance List

Name	Organization	Email address	Contact number
Kyle Farris	Swampbots	Kyle@Swampbots.org	386 503 9088
Jaden Perry	TWA	Jaden@JadenPerry.com	267-258-6404
CHRISTI ARPIN	GIRLS PLACE		
Sherry Kitchens	CAC	sherry@cac gainesville.org	352-494- 3839
Pat Lee	TFAN	tfanservice@gmail.com	352.455.8331



CHILDREN'S TRUST
OF ALACHUA COUNTY

CHILDREN'S TRUST REGULAR BOARD MEETING

March 10, 2025, at 4:00 PM

Children's Trust of Alachua County, Large Conference Room, 4010 NW 25th Place, Gainesville, FL 32606

Attendance List

Name	Organization	Email address	Contact number
Isona Wolfe	TeensWork	Isonawolfe67@gmail.com	1786-525-0188
Michelle Sheriff	Michen Sheriff	msherties@alchursheriff.org	352-367-4128
Stacy Merritt	PSF		
Chyna Miller	PSF		
Izzy Brazzel	Gainesville Circus	izz@ Gainesville Circus.com	352-316-0682

Keturah Bailey Acevedo

From: Keturah Bailey Acevedo
Sent: Wednesday, March 5, 2025 8:42 AM
To: Keturah Bailey Acevedo
Subject: FW: Form submission from: Virtual Comment Card



Keturah Bailey Acevedo

Executive Assistant & Clerk of the Trust
 Office: (352) 374-1830
 Direct: (352) 374-1823
 4010 NW 25th Place
 Gainesville, FL 32606
ChildrensTrustOfAlachuaCounty.us



From: Children's Trust of Alachua County Florida <childrenstrust-fl@municodeweb.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 4, 2025 7:53 AM
To: Ashley Morgan-Daniel <amd@childrenstrustofalachuacounty.us>
Subject: Form submission from: Virtual Comment Card

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Submitted on Tuesday, March 4, 2025 - 7:52am

Submitted by anonymous user: [174.228.179.116](#)

Submitted values are:

Name Pastor Adam Joy
 Email deeperpurposeecc@yahoo.com
 Phone 3524749040
 Address 19930 N Us Hwy 441 High Springs, FL 32643
 Representing Deeper Purpose Community Church, Inc
 Meeting Date Mon, 03/10/2025
 Comments

Good Afternoon to the CTAC Board Chair, Board Members, CTAC Staff & everyone, in their respective places. I had planned to speak in person, but had a prior engagement this same date & time, that had already been moved twice. In the current RFP for Summer Camp Services, it states that students are required to attend at least 3 days per week. Which is a 2 day increase from last year & previous years.

Our organization agrees that the children should be required to attend more. We want them to be there. We need them to be there. However, we have just one request. We have done summer camps annually for years & there's always several or more students who get sick & miss 3 to 4 days of camp due to illness.

With the new requirement of them having to attend 3 days a week, if a child is out sick & isn't present all 3 days, we- all providers will lose that funding for the child(ren) for that week & that hurts us. Especially since we have to do our best to budget things, including adequate staff. A child being sick is something beyond their control, beyond their parents control & certainly beyond our control.

We are humbly asking for the board to hear us, please understand where we are coming from, help us & to ask & direct staff to either allow us to be able to get credit & reimbursement for a child that didn't meet the attendance requirements, as long as a doctor's note is supplied, excusing the student & or adjust the language in the RFP to allow the same, so that providers don't lose funding due to a child being out sick.

We could easily upload the doctor's note, if needed, to show that the child truly was out sick. The board has the authority to do this, & we are asking if you'd please consider & act, to help make this doable. Thank you.

The results of this submission may be viewed at:

<https://www.childrenstrustofalachuacounty.us/node/5728/submission/1118>



CHILDREN'S TRUST
OF ALACHUA COUNTY

CHILDREN'S TRUST OF ALACHUA COUNTY

OATH OF OFFICE

STATE OF FLORIDA
COUNTY OF ALACHUA

I, Susanne Wilson Bullard, do solemnly swear that I will support, protect, and defend the Constitution and Government of the United States and of the State of Florida; that I am duly qualified to hold office under the Constitution of the state; and that I will well and faithfully perform the duties of a Board member of the Children's Trust of Alachua County on which I am now about to enter. So help me God.

(Signed)

Susanne Wilson Bullard

Submitted and sworn to before me this 10th day of February 2025.

(Signed)

Ken Cornell

Ken Cornell, Chairman of the Board

Name and Title of person authorized by law to take oath.

Accomplishments
2024
Report



Headquarters

5950 NW 1st Place, Suite 300
Gainesville, FL 32607

352.244.1500

www.pfsf.org/resourcecenters



PARTNERSHIP FOR
**STRONG
FAMILIES**
*Family
Resource Centers*

ACCOMPLISHMENTS REPORT

2024



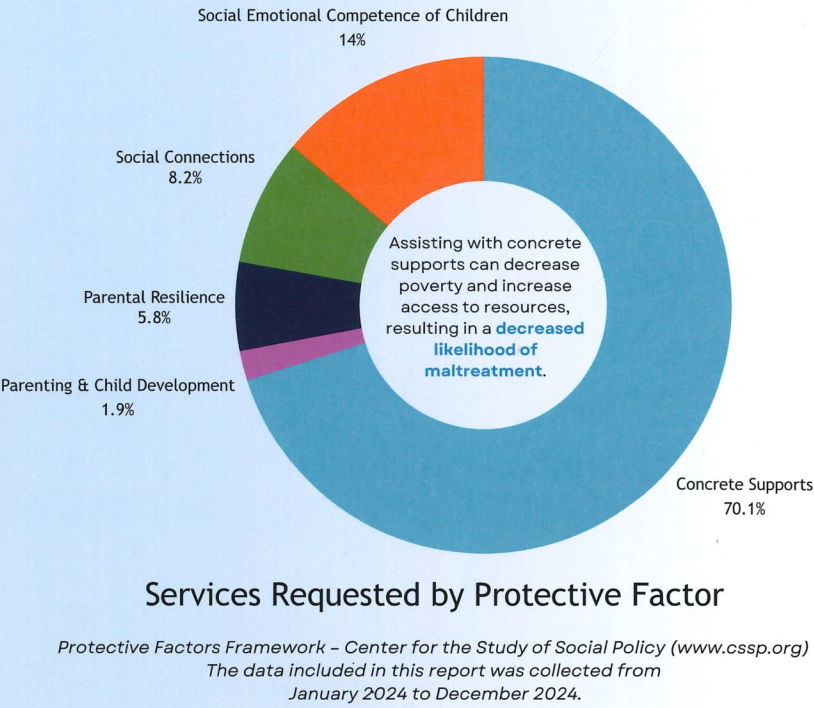
Item 2.

IMPACT STATEMENT

With sixteen years of experience operating a network of Family Resource Centers (FRC), Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) has become a leader in the provision of primary and secondary prevention services. Relying upon the support of community partners, without whom this work would not be possible, our FRCs provide easily accessible and safe places for families and community members to seek support prior to the need for formal child welfare involvement. It is our goal to strengthen families so they may keep their children safe and thriving at home.

2024 YEAR IN NUMBERS

42,000+	SERVICES REQUESTED
33,600+	PATRON VISITS
9,700+	HOURS VOLUNTEERED
100+	COMMUNITY PARTNERS
\$246,601	CASH/IN-KIND DONATIONS
\$1,947,019	GRANTS AWARDED



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Thank you to our community grantors and donors who make this work possible. Here are a few of our major funders:

Alachua County CAPP	Children’s Bureau
Children’s Trust of Alachua County	LSF Health Systems
Meridian Health Care	Northside Church of Christ
Queen of Peace Catholic Community	Southwest Advocacy Group (SWAG)
State Farm Agent John Kasak	Suncoast Credit Union
Tri-County Community Resources, Inc.	United Way of North Central Florida
United Way of Suwannee Valley	Walmart



CHILDREN’S TRUST
OF ALACHUA COUNTY

Our Alachua County Family Resource Centers are funded in partnership with the Children's Trust of Alachua County.



Item 2.

SATISFACTION & OUTCOMES



We received 380 responses from **Patrons** to our Satisfaction Survey.

- 98% said they were pleased with the services received at the Resource Centers.
- 98% said they would recommend the Resource Centers to others.
- 98% said they would return to the Resource Center for additional services.



Every time I come to pick up food, they are such a pleasure. And they are kind and caring. They make what could be embarrassing instead be a source of joy and hope.

They are doing an amazing job. They are absolutely the very very best. They treat all with such concern and care.



We received 65 responses from **Partners** to our Partner Network Survey.

- 95% were satisfied with the FRC Network's overall performance.
- 92% were satisfied with our team's ability to resolve problems quickly and efficiently.
- 97% were satisfied with the team's level of professionalism.

We have worked with a lot of families who only have positive things to say about the resource center staff and services.



Kudos to a well-run organization with great leadership, locally and regionally.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Item 2.

FAMILY FUN DAY & HURRICANE EXPO

With support from Sunshine Health, TCCRC hosted their first Family Fun Day & Hurricane Expo in May. The event reached more than 300 tri-county residents, and more than 50 partner agencies provided free resources. Attendees created their own hurricane kits and accessed information about hurricane preparedness and recovery.

OPIOID AWARENESS EVENT

NSFRC hosted an Opioid Awareness Event in November. Relevant community partners tabled to provide resources and information at the event. There were also presentations by Project Opioid and Florida Poison Control, along with a panel discussion that included subject matter experts. The event was well attended with more than 75 individuals in attendance.

RE-ENTRY CONFERENCE & JOB FAIR

In April, LP hosted their Annual Re-Entry Conference, helping local residents with challenging backgrounds find employment, with an average of 48 participants each day. Partners included the Alachua County Library District, Florida Department of Corrections, and Gainesville Housing Authority. In May, the Annual Re-Entry Job and Resource Fair at Library Headquarters attracted 110 job seekers and featured over 17 partners, including seven "second chance" employers.

STOP GUN VIOLENCE EVENT FOR TEENS

In September, SWAG FRC hosted a Stop Gun Violence event for teens in partnership with Strong MINDed Mentoring and the SW Advocacy Group. The workshop, attended by more than 25 teens, covered decision-making, self-awareness, and character building. This is the first in a series of workshops geared towards teens, with topics the teens helped to identify, including career choices, entrepreneurship, and overcoming barriers to higher education and employment.

EXPANDING OUR REACH

Through our partnership with the Children's Trust of Alachua County, our FRC Model has been expanded to additional communities throughout Alachua County through both our Community Resource Navigation Program and our FRC Consulting Program.

SUCCESS STORIES

LIBRARY PARTNERSHIP RESOURCE CENTER GAINESVILLE, FL (NORTHEAST)

A patron visited LP a year after attending the 2023 Re-Entry Conference and reported finding employment and successfully regaining partial custody of her children. Over the past year, she had also utilized the Resource Center for food and clothing resources. She stated the information she gained during the conference and additional supports received from the Resource Center will help her find long-term success!

NORTHSTAR FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER LAKE CITY, FL

A couple who had visited in the past recently became full-time caregivers for three of their grandchildren. They reached out to NSFRC for available resources and received guidance and support for themselves and the children. The children are now enrolled in NSFRC's Homework Help Program and received clothing and school supplies. The grandparents are extremely grateful for the additional support and the children are adapting well at home and school!

SWAG FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER GAINESVILLE, FL (SOUTHWEST)

A family secured safe, stable housing, and remained together after an extended period of being unhoused. Over several months, they visited to receive concrete supports, along with guidance navigating local resources such as pregnancy supports, a homeless prevention program, and a youth shelter. The father successfully maintained employment, saving money for rent, and the family also welcomed a new baby into their lives. Staff observed the father's confidence grow as he met goals set for himself and his family!

TRI-COUNTY COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER CHIEFLAND, FL

An unhoused mother with a newborn in the NICU was struggling to find stability for her family. She was assisted with first month's rent in an income-based apartment, utilities, and essentials such as diapers and a safe sleep option for the baby. She also received financial support with a background screening, helping her to pursue a career as a Medical Assistant and providing hope for her future!

COMMUNITY RESOURCE NAVIGATION (CRN) PROGRAM

Our CRN Program worked with a mother who had recently regained custody of her children. While the mother had been able to secure housing, she did not have bedroom furniture for the children. Through local partnerships, the family received mattresses, bunk beds, dressers, and bedding. Additionally, a local church delivered and assembled everything for the family. The mother was extremely happy to have safe places for her children to sleep and thrive!



Federal Grant Impact

In 2019, PSF received a 5-year federal grant from the Children's Bureau to evaluate and refine our network of Resource Centers and e

Item 2.

The grant included evaluation, implementation, and dissemination activities, with the following goals and objectives:

Evaluate FRC Model- Collect child safety and family well- being measures from our patrons, via surveys and secondary data as part of the outcome evaluation, as well as process evaluation activities which assess day-to-day operations.

Program Refinement- Utilize data collected from evaluation activities to refine our Resource Center Model, services, and programs.

Network Expansion- Expand to Lake City with the opening of the NorthStar Family Resource Center

What We Accomplished:

Evaluation- We enrolled 245 patrons into our study. These patrons completed survey instruments to measure child safety and family well- being, many also participated in focus groups. A highlight of our Process Evaluation was the Strengthening Families Self- Assessment Tool for Community Based Programs, which was administered to a team of staff, partners, and patrons. This process has helped us to identify the extent to which our Resource Center activities are aligned with each protective factor.

Expansion- With the help of our established Resource Center Advisory Council, we opened the NorthStar Family Resource Center in Lake City.

Refinement- Our evaluation team worked diligently to improve our data collection methods, and we also utilized the data collected to better refine our services and programming.

Dissemination- We have published 4 presentations and 98 reports, infographics, and summaries throughout the project, covering service utilization, provider agreements, protective factors, focus group analysis, and more. Check out our website at <https://www.pfsf.org/resourcecenters/evaluationandexpansion/>.

What We are Learning:

Patrons enrolled in our study had (on average) a higher need than other patrons.

After one year of receiving services, 81.2% of caregivers reported their child(ren)'s difficulties to be "A bit better or much better".

During the evaluation period, over 2/3 of enrolled patrons increased their capacity in at least one or more Protective Factors.

Retrospective analyses, Strengthening Families Self-Assessment process, and Patron Feedback Groups (qualitative data) indicate a positive impact and benefits of FRCs on individual patrons and families (using Protective Factors framework).

This suggests that FRCs provide initial benefits and desired supports and services that help coping and adaptive skills for individuals, families, and the communities served.



The contents of this project are partially funded by the Children's Bureau, under the 5 year grant #90CA1868, ending 9/30/24. The contents of this project do not necessarily represent the official views of the Children's Bureau.

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER CONSULTING PROGRAM

*Empowering Communities,
Strengthening Families*

The FRC Consulting Program was designed to assist public groups and organizations who are interested in developing or enhancing a Family Resource Center within their own municipality. With the support of the Children's Trust of Alachua County, Partnership for Strong Families (PSF) has provided training, coaching, and consultation to two organizations in 2024, assisting with start-up and capacity building.

[This program] has been an asset to our development. The progress we have made is in part due to training and guidance provided by the consulting team.



PARTNERSHIP FOR
STRONG
FAMILIES

Partnership for Strong Families



CHILDREN'S TRUST
OF ALACHUA COUNTY

A Trusted Partnership

Partnership for Strong Families' FRC Consulting Program is proudly funded by the **Children's Trust of Alachua County**.

Website: www.pfsf.org

Coming Soon!

APRIL 2025



Helping to connect families with community resources and services to support the healthy development and well-being of their children ages 0-8.



LOCATIONS:



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



A Trusted Partnership

To Learn More Visit: www.helpmegrowfl.org or Email: hmgalachua@pfsf.org



Help Me Grow® Florida is a **FREE** resource that helps connect children, families, and caregivers to the services they need.

Is your child:

- ☐ A Florida resident?
- ☐ Between the ages of birth through eight?



If so, Help Me Grow® Florida can help your child have the best possible start in life by:



Answering any questions or concerns about your child's development.



Guiding you through our free developmental and behavioral screenings.



Providing parenting tips, activities, and other useful information.



Following-up to ensure your child receives the right services.



**You are there for your children,
we are there for you!**

www.helpmegrowfl.org
email: hmgalachua@pfsf.org



A Trusted Partnership

Content provided by the Children's Forum and the State of Florida, Division of Early Learning.

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS

How Can Our Family Resource Centers Support You and Your Family?



Free services and supports are available to all families and community members.

**Services vary by location.*

- Diapers & Infant Care Products
- Parent/Caregiver Supports
- Homework Help
- Social Service Referrals
- Resume & Application Assistance
- Job Board & Employability Training
- Computer & Internet Access
- Faxing & Notary Services
- Financial Literacy Programs
- Clothing Closets
- Food Distribution
- Emergency Food Pantries
- Enrichment Programs for Children



No referrals needed. Walk-ins welcome!

For more information and our monthly calendar visit:
www.pfsf.org/resourcecenters/


**LIBRARY PARTNERSHIP
RESOURCE CENTER**
912 N.E. 16th Avenue
Gainesville, Florida 32601
352-334-0161


SWAG
FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER
807 SW 64th Terrace
Gainesville, FL 32607
352-505-6823



Partnership for Strong Families Evolution of our Family Resource Center Model

Resource Centers



As the lead community-based care agency responsible for providing child welfare services in 13 North Central Florida counties, Partnership for Strong Families' (PSF) mission is to enhance the community's ability to protect and nurture children by building, maintaining and constantly improving a network of family support services.



The **Library Partnership Resource Center**, established in **2009** through a collaboration with PSF, DCF, Casey Family Programs, and the Alachua County Library District, provides accessible, stigma-free resources to families in high-need areas.



The **SWAG Family Resource Center**, opened in **2012** through a partnership with PSF, SWAG, and Alachua County, provides vital resources to the 32607 and 32608 zip codes, historically high-need areas.



The **Cone Park Library Resource Center** opened full-time in **2014**, expanding access to vital resources in the 32641 zip code through a strong partnership between PSF and the Alachua County Library District. For nearly a decade, it provided critical support to families before closing in August 2023 due to rising costs of care.



In **2015**, PSF partnered with **Tri-County Community Resources** to expand services to Dixie, Gilchrist, and Levy Counties. With community input and a building donation from Chieftan, the Tri-County Community Resource Center opened, providing vital support to local families.



The **Northstar Family Resource Center** opened on **2021** in Lake City, offering free services like academic enrichment, food assistance, employment help, and more. Supported by a five-year grant from The Children's Bureau, this expansion strengthens our community impact.



Community Resource Navigation



The Community Resource Navigation (CRN) Program delivers essential family support services, such as concrete supports, employability skills, community referrals, and special events, to families residing throughout Alachua County, with a focus on reaching those in rural communities.

For more information on our co-located sites, visit our website at www.psf.org/resourcecenters



FRC Consulting

The FRC Consulting Program helps organizations develop or enhance Family Resource Centers in their communities. With support from the Children's Trust of Alachua County, PSF has achieved the following:

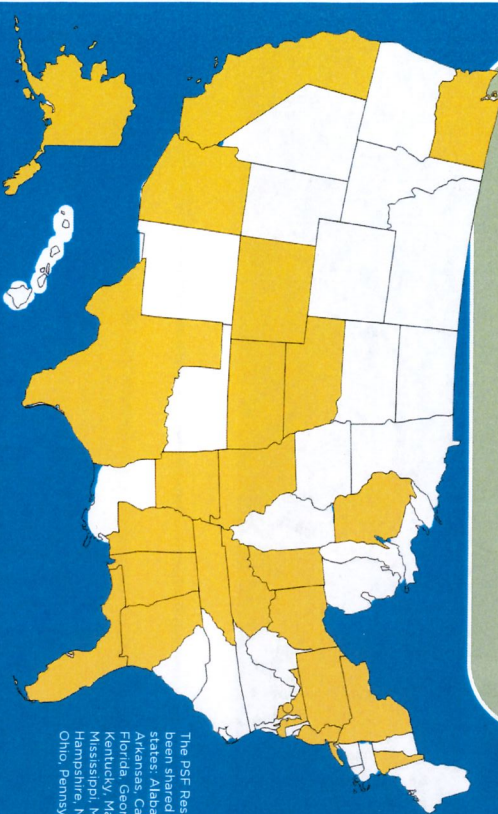
- ▶ **2 Newly Opened Family Resource Centers:** Serving East Gainesville & Micanopy
- ▶ **29 Consulting Meetings:** Hiring, Community Needs Assessment, Service Array, Collaborations, Data Collection, Sustainability, Customer Service, and More
- ▶ **3 Formal Trainings:** PSF Family Resource Center Model, Bringing the Protective Factors to Life in Your Work, Standards of Quality for Family Resource Centers



Expanding our Family Resource Center Model

Beyond our Community

PSF has shared our Resource Center Model on a local, state and national level. Our experiences and success are helping pave the way for communities looking to replicate a similar initiative in their areas.



The PSF Resource Center Model has been shared in the following 22 states: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin.

Impact to Date *



369,000+

VISITS TO THE RESOURCE CENTERS



417,000+

SERVICES PROVIDED



\$1,585,000+

CASH/IN-KIND DONATIONS RECEIVED



\$5,736,000+

GRANT AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

*Data through calendar year 2024.

Protective Factors



Concrete Supports in Time of Need

Access to supports and services that reduce stress and help make families stronger.

Example: Clothing, Food, Hygiene Products, Housing Assistance



Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development

The ability to exercise effective parenting strategies to guide and know what to expect as children develop in multiple domains (physical, cognitive, language, and social and emotional).

Example: Parenting Resources, Parenting Supports, Referrals



Parental Resilience

The ability to recover from difficult life experiences, and often to be strengthened by and even transformed by those experiences.

Example: Employability Skills, Financial Literacy Programs, Mental Health Referrals



Social Connections

The ability and opportunity to develop positive relationships that lessen stress and isolation and help to build a supportive network.

Example: Community Events, Advisory Councils, Special Interest Activities



Social & Emotional Competence of Children

Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions and establish and maintain relationships.

Example: Academic Support, After School and Summer Programs, Family Activities

Staff and volunteers at the Resource Centers utilize the protective factors framework, a proven model for child abuse prevention that focuses on reducing the likelihood of child abuse and neglect by increasing the presence of five protective factors in families.

Community Resource Navigation Program

Scope of Services

The Community Resource Navigation Program is an expansion of Partnership for Strong Families' (PSF) Family Resource Center (FRC) Model. Leveraging community partnerships, the Community Resource Navigator (CRN) will use shared space, within communities that have had historically limited access to resources, to meet in-person with families and individuals and provide a variety of family support services.

All services provided by the CRN are tied to one of five protective factors, which when present in families are known to reduce the risk of abuse or neglect.

The CRN will help families and individuals to meet their immediate needs (e.g., food, clothing, housing), identify strengths and potential areas for improvement (e.g., financial stability, employment, education, mental health), set obtainable goals, and connect with existing community resources.

Additionally, the CRN will help patrons to navigate existing systems and overcome common barriers to service attainment and on-going self-sufficiency. The CRN will also conduct community outreach, host special events, and regularly assess and adjust to community needs.

Examples of Services

- Emergency Food and Clothing
- Job Searches
- Resume Assistance
- Limited Financial Assistance for Emergency Needs
- Connections with other Social Service Agencies
- Addressing needs such as mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, homelessness, childcare, and more...



Co-Located Sites

Willie Mae Stokes Community Resource Center
356 NW 6th Ave, Micanopy, FL 32667

High Springs Branch Library
23779 US-27, High Springs, FL 32643

Alachua Branch Library
14913 NW 140th St, Alachua, FL 32615

Hawthorne Area Resource Center
21923 SE 67th Pl, Hawthorne, FL 32640

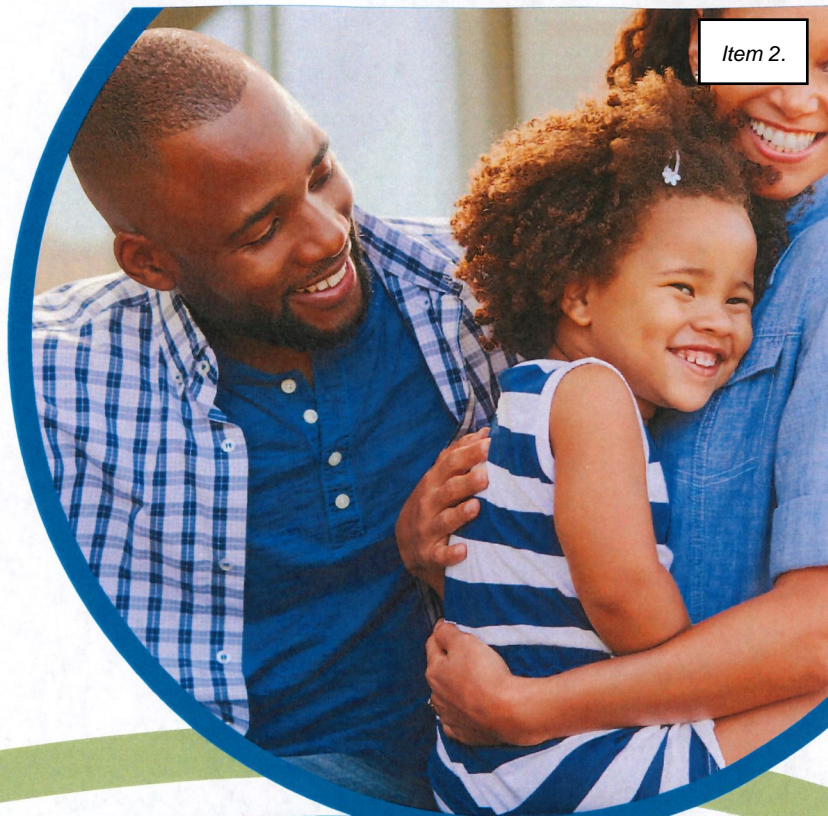
Porters Community Center
522 SW 3rd St, Gainesville, FL, 32601

Waldo City Square
14450 NE 148th Ave, Waldo, FL 32694





A Trusted Partnership

Community Resource Navigation Schedule



The Community Resource Navigation Program is an expansion of Partnership for Strong Families' Family Resource Center Network. The Community Resource Navigator (CRN) is available to assist families and individuals with identifying and connecting with local resources, also helping overcome barriers to receiving these services. Our CRNs can help find resources for you and your family. Please see the times and days below that they are available at our Co-Located Sites.

Ariana Young Community Resource Navigator

 (352) 363-0097
 ariana.young@pfsf.org

Mondays, 10:30 am - 2:30 pm / Thursdays, 11:00 am - 4 pm

Alachua Branch Library
14913 NW 140th St, Alachua, FL 32615

Wednesdays, 10:30 am - 2:00 pm

Newberry Branch Library
110 South Seaboard Drive Newberry, FL 32669

Tuesdays, 10:30 am - 2:30 pm

High Springs Branch Library
23779 US-27, High Springs, FL 32643

**Schedule and locations are subject to change.*

Marlee Coonradt Community Resource Navigator

 (352) 318-9423
 marlee.coonradt@pfsf.org

Mondays, 8:00 am - 3:00 pm

Waldo City Square
14450 NE 148th Ave, Waldo, FL 32694

Tuesdays, 9:00 am - 1:00 pm

Porters Community Center
522 SW 3rd St, Gainesville, FL, 32601

**Wednesdays, 9:30 am - 2:00 pm /
Thursdays, 9:30 am - 2:00 pm**

Hawthorne Area Resource Center
21923 SE 67th Pl, Hawthorne, FL 32640

Scan QR code with phone camera to sign up! Item 2.

Sign Up



ADVANCED HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Training provided by the
Child Advocacy Center
Sherry Kitchens, Ed.S., LMFT

For CTAC Providers Only



CHILDREN'S TRUST
OF ALACHUA COUNTY



April 4, 2025
9am to 12pm



Children's Trust of Alachua County
Training Room
4010 NW 25th Place
Gainesville, FL 32606



Together, breaking the cycle of child abuse

Please register for this training if you
have already had initial training in
human trafficking or Human
Trafficking 101

File Attachments for Item:

3. 3.10.2025 Board Meeting Evaluation - Survey Results



Summary of Board Meeting Evaluation Surveys

Per Board Policy 1.15, each meeting Board members will have the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of meetings and provide suggestions on how to improve and make the best use of Board meetings. The following is a summary of the input Board members provided for review by the Board, CTAC staff, and members of the public regarding the most recent Board meeting.

<u>Date of Meeting:</u>	March 10th, 2025
<u>Completion Rate:</u>	100% of Board members completed (9 of 9)¹

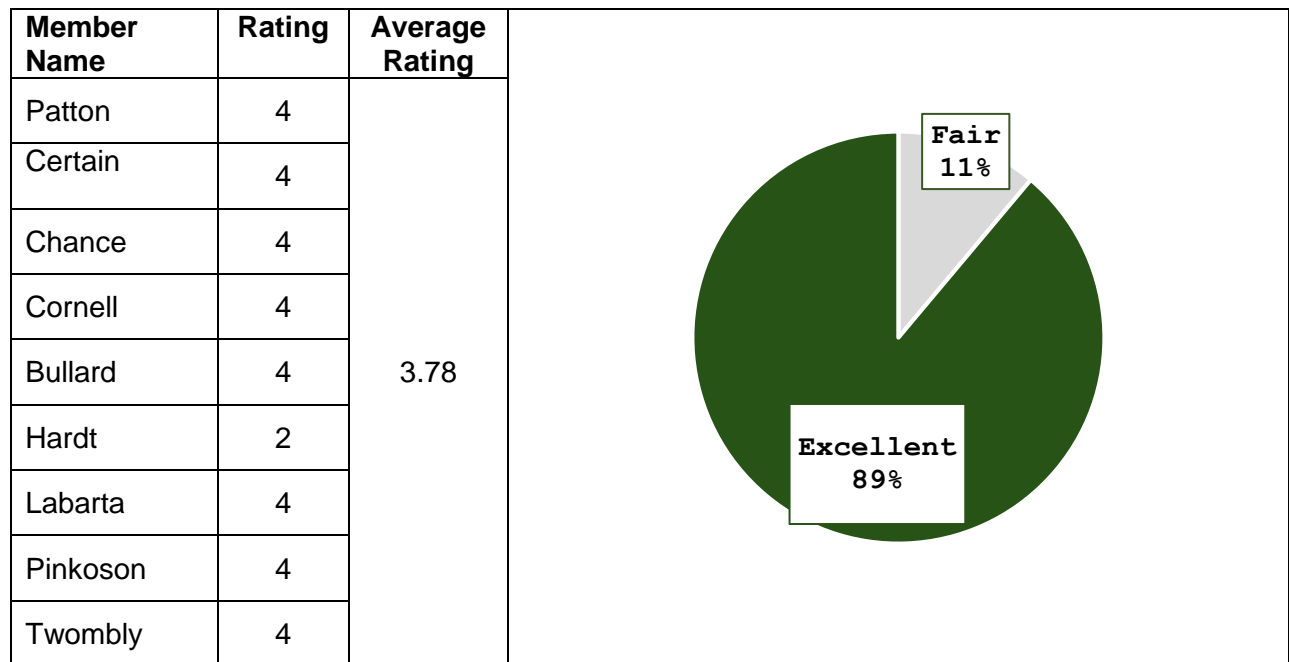
Evaluation of Meeting Components

Board members rate the effectiveness and efficiency of four meeting components from 1 to 4. A rating of 1 = “*poor*”, 2 = “*fair*”, 3 = “*good*”, and 4 = “*excellent*.” Board members provided “excellent” and “fair” ratings for Materials Provided and “excellent” ratings for Meeting Facilitation, CTAC Staff, and Presentations. The Board meeting included presentations from the Community Foundation of North Central Florida, Partnership for Strong Families, and TeensWork Alachua.

Meeting Component				
Date of Meeting	Materials Provided	Meeting Facilitation	CTAC Staff	Presentations
March 10, 2025	3.78 ↑	4.00 ↑	4.00 ↑	4.00 ↑
Average Rating (Cumulative to Date)	3.76	3.84	3.87	3.79

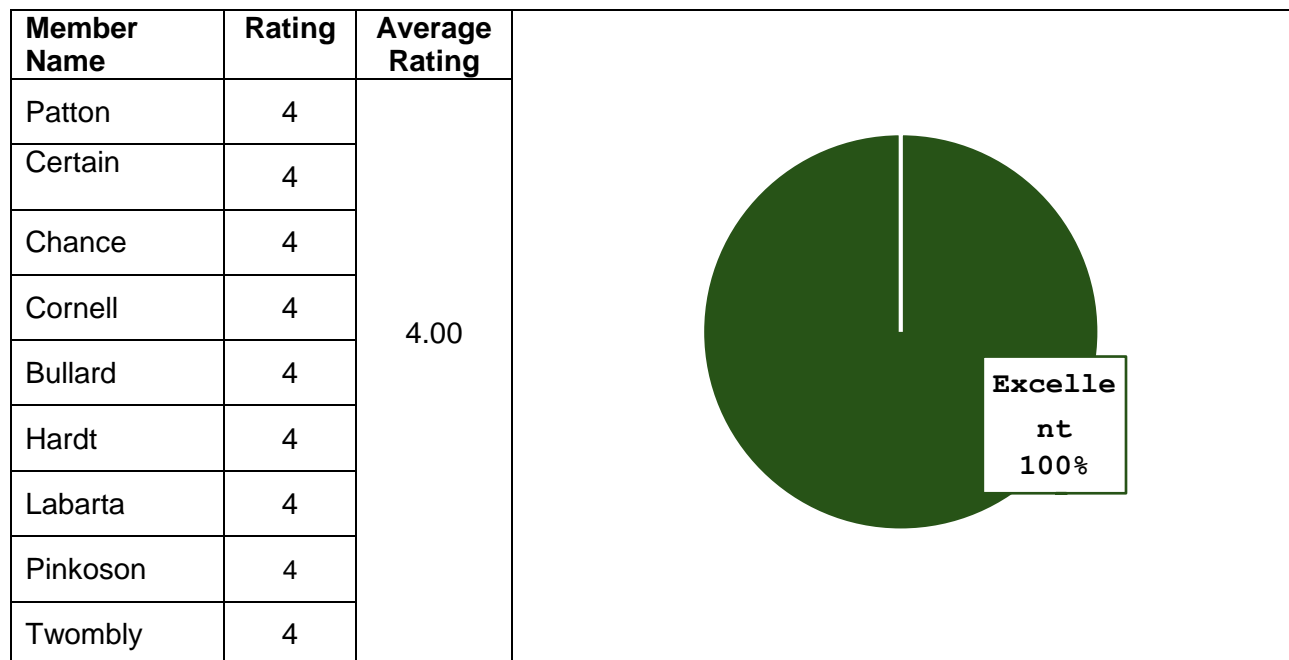
Materials Provided: The Board packet was received in a timely fashion and provided the information needed to prepare for the meeting.

¹ Nine Board members attended in-person on 03/10/2025 and all Board members completed a survey.

**Comments:**

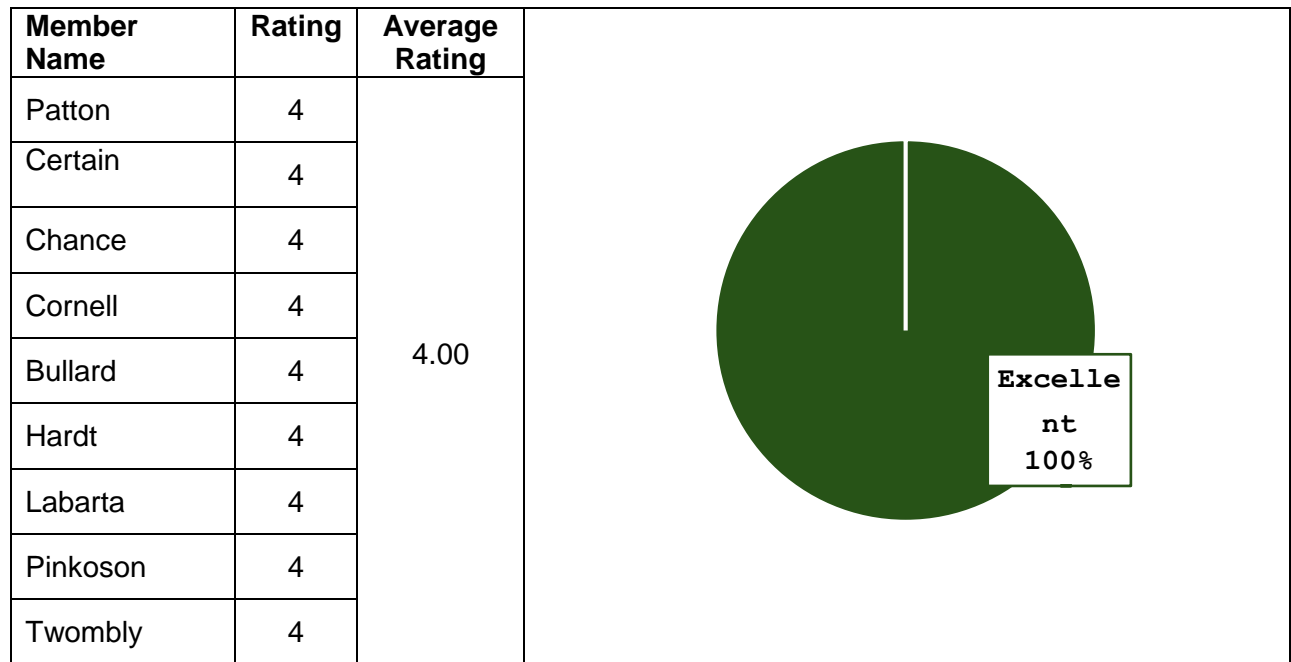
- Sorry, my packet came late (Hardt)

Meeting Facilitation: The Chair ensured Board members and members of the public who wanted to speak had the opportunity to be heard.



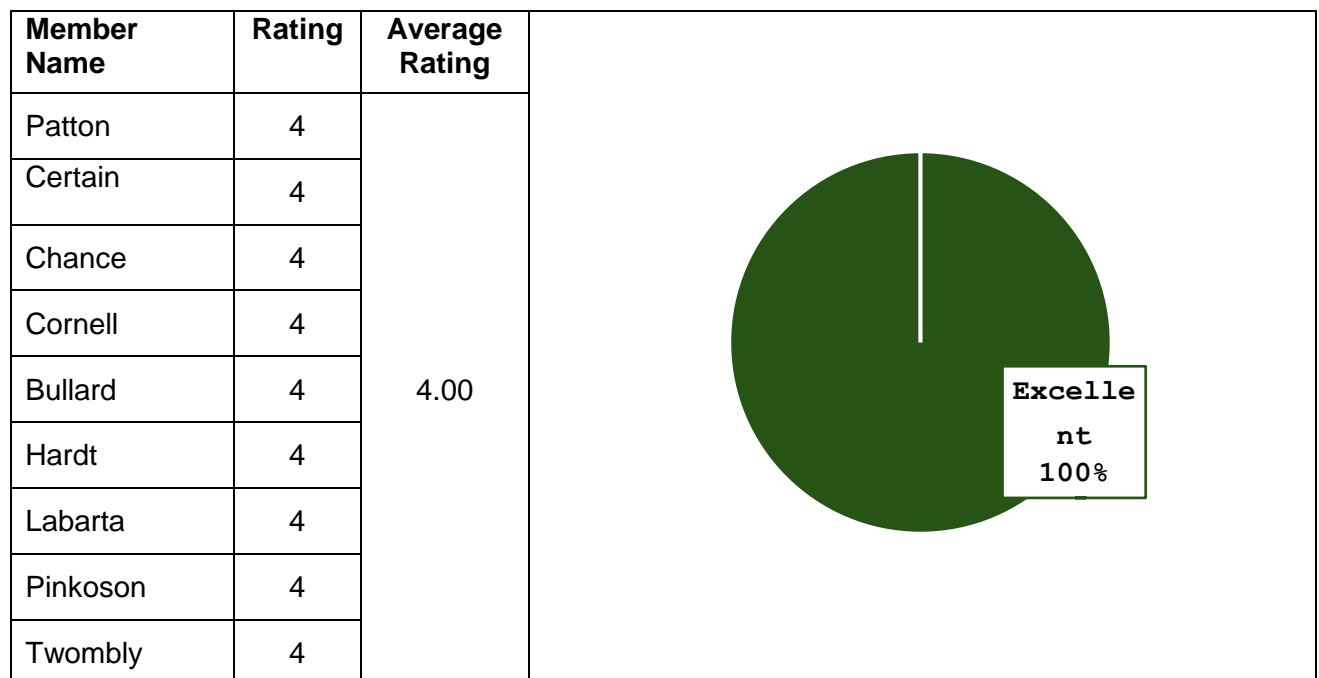
Comments: none

CTAC Staff: CTAC staff were knowledgeable on their agenda items and prepared to address questions or provide a plan for follow-up.

**Comments:**

- Please add the presenters' name to the agenda. Thank you! (Cornell)

Presentations: Presentations were helpful in providing information on programs and policies to guide decision-making and allow for input and transparency.

**Comments:**

- The presentations were high quality! (Patton)
- Since we have (read) slides, no need for presenters to read every slide. (Certain)
- Loved having the students and providers present! (Chance)

-
- See above (Cornell)
 - Love all the data! (Labarta)
 - Great, as always, hearing from the youth participating in our funded programs! (Twombly)
-

Finally, Board members can provide general comments on the meeting overall as well as topics they'd like to see addressed on future agendas. These comments are listed below.

General Comments:

- Great to have kids here. (Hardt)
- It was great to be able to enjoy the presentations in a non-rushed atmosphere, because it was not a jammed packed agenda. (Pinkoson)

Items, Presentations, or other Information for future Board agendas:

- Suggest listing providers funded on website by priority area along with info on RFP cycles. (Chance)

File Attachments for Item:

4. FY 2025 Budget Report (February)

**Item:**

FY 2025 Budget Report (February)

Requested Action:

The Trust is asked to receive the January Budget Report

Background

Board Policy 3.50 requires that “the CTAC will perform quarterly reviews to determine if the budgetary plan is being followed and if budgetary expectations are being achieved. Any problems discovered in this process will be corrected at the appropriate level of budgetary control.”

Attachments

Income Statement
Balance Sheet

Programmatic Impact:

NA

Fiscal Impact:

NA

Recommendation:

Please receive this report as presented. No further discussion or board action is necessary.

CHILDREN'S TRUST OF ALACHUA COUNTY
BALANCE SHEET
GOVERNMENTAL FUNDS
FY 2025 Transactions Through February 28, 2025

	General <u>Fund</u> 001	Special Revenue <u>Fund</u> 101	Collaborative Task Force <u>Fund</u> 102	Capital Projects <u>Fund</u> 301	Payroll <u>Fund</u> 801	Capital Assets <u>Fund</u> 900	General Long Term Debt <u>Fund</u> 950	Total Governmental <u>Funds</u>
Assets								
Cash & Cash Equivalents	17,327,008.33	419,109.93	72,500.00	1,274,639.25	15,049.35	-	-	19,108,306.86
Prepaid Items	-	-	-	-	-	-	715,480.00	715,480.00
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	62,405.42	62,405.42
Land	-	-	-	-	-	476,780.00	-	476,780.00
Building	-	-	-	50,000.00	-	1,460,986.75	-	1,510,986.75
Building Renovation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Accumulated Depreciation	-	-	-	-	-	(53,142.52)	-	(53,142.52)
Total Assets	17,327,008.33	419,109.93	72,500.00	1,324,639.25	15,049.35	1,884,624.23	777,885.42	21,820,816.51
Liabilities								
Accounts Payable	55,969.41	(11,729.64)	-	-	-	-	-	44,239.77
Accrued Wages Payable	30,485.47	-	-	-	15,049.50	-	-	45,534.97
Contracts Payable	540.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	540.00
Due to Other Governments / Other Funds	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,297,088.70	1,297,088.70
Total Liabilities	86,994.88	(11,729.64)	-	-	15,049.50	-	1,297,088.70	1,387,403.44
Equity								
Fund Equity	17,240,013.45	430,839.57	72,500.00	1,324,639.25	-	1,884,624.23	(519,203.28)	20,433,413.22
Total Equity	17,240,013.45	430,839.57	72,500.00	1,324,639.25	-	1,884,624.23	(519,203.28)	20,433,413.22
Total Liabilities and Equity	17,327,008.33	419,109.93	72,500.00	1,324,639.25	15,049.50	1,884,624.23	777,885.42	21,820,816.66

CHILDREN'S TRUST OF ALACHUA COUNTY
STATEMENT OF REVENUES, EXPENDITURES AND CHANGES IN FUND BALANCES
GOVERNMENTAL FUNDS
FY 2025 Transactions Through February, 2025

	All Funds FY 24-25 Budget A	General Fund 001 B	Special Revenue Fund 101 C	Collaborative Task Force Fund 102 D	Capital Projects Fund 301 E	Capital Assets Fund 900	FY 2025 YTD Actuals All Funds F = B+C+D+E
Revenues							
Ad Valorem Taxes	10,029,054.00	9,087,409.09	-	-	-	-	9,087,409.09
Miscellaneous Revenue	-	362,899.80	-	-	-	-	362,899.80
Grants and Awards	305,000.00	-	360,000.00	-	-	-	360,000.00
Interest	425,000.00	182,828.56	1,116.94	-	22,369.95	-	206,315.45
Rent	62,496.00	26,040.00	-	-	-	-	26,040.00
Use of Fund Balance	6,384,884.00	-	-	-	-	-	-
Intergovernmental Revenue	175,000.00	-	-	62,500.00	-	-	62,500.00
Capital Transfer In	250,000.00	-	-	-	250,000.00	-	250,000.00
Capital Non Operating Begin Balance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Revenues	17,631,434.00	9,659,177.45	361,116.94	62,500.00	272,369.95	-	10,355,164.34
Expenditures							
Personnel Services	2,060,257.00	722,962.47	-	-	-	-	722,962.47
Operating	1,665,956.00	576,684.41	-	-	-	-	576,684.41
Grant & Aid (Programs)	12,027,891.00	1,121,533.96	-	-	-	-	1,121,533.96
Grants & Awards (Special Revenue Fund)	305,000.00	-	74,106.25	-	-	-	74,106.25
Task Forces	175,000.00	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Expense	200,000.00	-	-	-	97,425.84	-	97,425.84
Depreciation Expense	50,000.00	-	-	-	-	17,167.40	17,167.40
Sub-Total Expenditures	16,484,104.00	2,421,180.84	74,106.25	-	97,425.84	17,167.40	2,609,880.33
							2,859,880.33
Other Financing Sources (Uses)							
Transfers Out	312,500.00	250,000.00	-	-	-	-	250,000.00
Appropriated Reserve	834,830.00	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Transfers	1,147,330.00	250,000.00	-	-	-	-	250,000.00
Total Expenditures	17,631,434.00	2,671,180.84	74,106.25	-	97,425.84	17,167.40	2,859,880.33
Net Income (Expense)	-	6,987,996.61	287,010.69	62,500.00	174,944.11	(17,167.40)	7,495,284.01

File Attachments for Item:

5. FY 2025 Checks and Expenditures Report (February)

**Item:**

FY 2025 Checks and Expenditures Report (February)

Requested Action:

The Trust is asked to receive the report.

Background

Resolution 2020-2 requires that “All checks for expenditures or contracts which have not been expressly approved by the Trust shall be reported to the Trust on a monthly basis. The report may be under the consent agenda subject to being removed for further discussion.”

Attachments

FY 2025 Checks and Expenditures Report (February)

Programmatic Impact:

NA

Fiscal Impact:

NA

Recommendation:

Please receive this report as presented. No further discussion or board action is necessary.

Children's Trust of Ala Cty LIVE
Bank Account Activity Report
 Reconciled & Un-Reconciled
 From Date: 02/01/2025 - To Date: 03/28/2025

Bank	Bank Account									
.										
Bank of America	Concentration Account									
Deposits:	Date	Type	Deposit Information			Description	Department	Amount		
.										
	02/06/2025	Collection				Check	0700 - Clerk Finance and Accounting	5,208.00		
	02/26/2025	Collection				Other	0700 - Clerk Finance and Accounting	242,305.74		
	02/26/2025	Collection				Check	0700 - Clerk Finance and Accounting	62,500.00		
	03/04/2025	Collection				Check	0700 - Clerk Finance and Accounting	5,208.00		
	03/24/2025	Collection				Check	0700 - Clerk Finance and Accounting	10,000.00		
									<u>\$325,221.74</u>	
Checks:	Status	Check Number	Payment Date	Reconciled	Source	Payee Name		Amount		
.										
	No Transactions Exist									
EFTs:	Status	EFT Number	Payment Date	Reconciled	Source	Payee Name		Amount		
.										
	Reconciled	74	02/04/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	MISSION SQUARE RETIREMENT		648.68		
	Reconciled	75	02/14/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	MISSION SQUARE RETIREMENT		796.75		
									<u>\$1,445.43</u>	
Returned Checks:	Date	Payer	Check Number			Amount				
.										
	No Transactions Exist									
Wire Transfers:	Type	Date	Vendor	Description		Internal Account		Amount		
.										
	Wire Transfer Out	02/03/2025		02.03.2025 transfer to 0940		ZBA Accounts Payable		(140.85)		
	Wire Transfer Out	02/04/2025		02.04.2025 transfer to 0940		ZBA Accounts Payable		(582.38)		
	Wire Transfer Out	02/05/2025		02.05.2025 transfer to 0940		ZBA Accounts Payable		(256,941.02)		
	Wire Transfer Out	02/06/2025		02.06.2025 transfer to 0940		ZBA Accounts Payable		(41.97)		
	Wire Transfer Out	02/07/2025		02.07.2025 transfer to 0940		ZBA Accounts Payable		(21,783.54)		
	Wire Transfer Out	02/10/2025		02.10.2025 transfer to 0940		ZBA Accounts Payable		(1,920.00)		
	Wire Transfer Out	02/11/2025		02.11.2025 transfer to 0940		ZBA Accounts Payable		(637.00)		
	Wire Transfer Out	02/12/2025		02.12.2025 transfer to 0940		ZBA Accounts Payable		(124,540.00)		
	Wire Transfer Out	02/13/2025		02.13.2025 transfer to 0940		ZBA Accounts Payable		(16,492.31)		
	Wire Transfer Out	02/14/2025		02.14.2025 transfer to 0940		ZBA Accounts Payable		(5,140.00)		
	Wire Transfer Out	02/18/2025		02.18.2025 transfer to 0940		ZBA Accounts Payable		(1,030.00)		
	Wire Transfer Out	02/19/2025		02.19.2025 transfer to 0940		ZBA Accounts Payable		(326.69)		
	Wire Transfer Out	02/20/2025		02.20.2025 transfer to 0940		ZBA Accounts Payable		(2,420.00)		

Wire Transfer Out	02/21/2025	02.21.2025 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(11	Item 5.
Wire Transfer Out	02/24/2025	02.24.2025 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(75.00)	
Wire Transfer Out	02/25/2025	02.25.2025 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(102,302.21)	
Wire Transfer Out	02/26/2025	02.26.2025 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(51,646.22)	
Wire Transfer Out	02/27/2025	02.27.2025 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(35,477.15)	
Wire Transfer Out	02/28/2025	02.28.2025 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(49,930.92)	
Wire Transfer Out	03/03/2025	03.03.25 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(1,035.00)	
Wire Transfer Out	03/04/2025	03.04.25 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(213.53)	
Wire Transfer Out	03/05/2025	03.05.25 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(5,500.00)	
Wire Transfer Out	03/06/2025	03.06.25 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(14,900.25)	
Wire Transfer Out	03/10/2025	03.10.25 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(187,499.81)	
Wire Transfer Out	03/11/2025	03.11.25 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(64,145.40)	
Wire Transfer Out	03/12/2025	03.12.25 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(86,897.31)	
Wire Transfer Out	03/13/2025	03.13.25 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(41,916.48)	
Wire Transfer Out	03/14/2025	03.14.25 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(1,347.48)	
Wire Transfer Out	03/17/2025	03.17.25 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(4,000.00)	
Wire Transfer Out	03/18/2025	03.18.25 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(46,289.89)	
Wire Transfer Out	03/20/2025	03.20.25 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(41,105.00)	
Wire Transfer Out	03/21/2025	03.21.25 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(31,087.76)	
Wire Transfer Out	03/24/2025	03.24.25 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(12,715.63)	
Wire Transfer Out	03/25/2025	03.25.25 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(22,734.35)	
Wire Transfer Out	03/26/2025	03.26.25 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(57,662.81)	
Wire Transfer Out	03/27/2025	03.27.25 transfer to 0940	ZBA Accounts Payable	(38,822.00)	
				(\$1,340,737.96)	

Adjustments:	Type	Date	Description	Amount
No Transactions Exist				

Deposits:	Date	Type	Deposit Information		Description	Department	Amount
No Transactions Exist							
Checks:	Status	Check Number	Payment Date	Reconciled	Source	Payee Name	Amount
	Reconciled	12243	02/03/2025	02/17/2025	Accounts Payable	Tyson, Demetrica	41.97
	Reconciled	12244	02/10/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Alachua County Tax Collector	8,499.67
	Reconciled	12245	02/10/2025	02/17/2025	Accounts Payable	Community Foundation of North Central Florida	15,000.00
	Reconciled	12246	02/10/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Education Foundation of Alachua County	1,000.00
	Reconciled	12247	02/10/2025	12/31/2024	Accounts Payable	Frankel Media Group LLC, Ryan Frankel	2,220.00
	Reconciled	12248	02/10/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Gainesville for All Inc.	11,638.00
	Reconciled	12249	02/10/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	GAINESVILLE REGIONAL UTILITIES	700.00
	Reconciled	12250	02/10/2025	02/17/2025	Accounts Payable	Gillen Broadcasting Company DBA WYKS WAJD KISS1053	1,440.00
	Reconciled	12251	02/10/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Health Equity Inc	75.00
	Reconciled	12252	02/10/2025	12/31/2024	Accounts Payable	James, Belita	30.00
	Reconciled	12253	02/10/2025	02/17/2025	Accounts Payable	James Moore & Co P. L.	3,000.00
	Reconciled	12254	02/10/2025	02/17/2025	Accounts Payable	Lawn Enforcement Agency Inc.	1,309.00
	Reconciled	12255	02/10/2025	02/17/2025	Accounts Payable	Sutherland, Jordan	256.00
	Reconciled	12256	02/10/2025	02/17/2025	Accounts Payable	Tyson, Demetrica	281.94
	Reconciled	12257	02/10/2025	02/17/2025	Accounts Payable	Volcy, Naomi	264.00
	Reconciled	12258	02/10/2025	02/17/2025	Accounts Payable	Waste Pro of Florida Inc. DBA Waste Pro - 104	183.31
	Reconciled	12259	02/10/2025	12/31/2024	Accounts Payable	Writers Alliance of Gainesville	1,000.00
	Reconciled	12260	02/10/2025	12/31/2024	Accounts Payable	Patrick, Chelsea	200.00
	Open	12261	02/21/2025		Accounts Payable	Brookside Partners, ltd	500.00
	Open	12265	02/21/2025		Accounts Payable	Hawthorne Quarterback Club Inc	1,000.00
	Open	12269	02/27/2025		Accounts Payable	Hawthorne Youth Sports, Inc	1,200.00
	Open	12270	02/27/2025		Accounts Payable	Pleasant Street Civil Rights & Cultural Center	3,384.37
	Open	12271	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	BDO USA, P.C.	36,485.75
	Open	12272	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	Business Interiors Inc.	4,018.28
	Open	12273	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	Frankel Media Group LLC, Ryan Frankel	2,220.00
	Open	12274	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	James Moore & Co P. L.	3,000.00
	Open	12275	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	Language Line Services Inc.	76.25
	Open	12276	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	Lawn Enforcement Agency Inc.	2,637.00
	Open	12277	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	Dance Alive National Ballet DBA Dance Alive	5,086.48
	Open	12278	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	ALACHUA COUNTY BOCC	21,853.67
	Open	12279	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	ALACHUA COUNTY BOCC	481.09
	Open	12280	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	Goldwire, Kristy	357.48
	Open	12281	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	BBI Construction Management Inc.	39,531.16
	Open	12283	03/07/2025		Accounts Payable	Community Foundation of North Central Florida	36,830.00
	Reconciled	12284	03/07/2025	03/16/2025	Accounts Payable	GAINESVILLE REGIONAL UTILITIES	1,352.85
	Open	12285	03/07/2025		Accounts Payable	Howard Industries Inc d.b.a. Howard Technologies	990.00
	Open	12286	03/07/2025		Accounts Payable	Information Management Solutions LLC	45.00
	Open	12287	03/07/2025		Accounts Payable	Rotary District 6970 Youth Exchange	6,000.00
	Open	12288	03/14/2025		Accounts Payable	Business Leaders Institute for Early Learning	13,273.50
	Open	12292	03/14/2025		Accounts Payable	Howard Industries Inc d.b.a. Howard Technologies	10,911.00
	Open	12295	03/21/2025		Accounts Payable	BDO USA, P.C.	9,781.00
	Open	12296	03/21/2025		Accounts Payable	Community Foundation of North Central Florida	11.00
	Open	12297	03/21/2025		Accounts Payable	GAINESVILLE REGIONAL UTILITIES	1,201.65
	Open	12298	03/21/2025		Accounts Payable	Gaston's Tree Service LLC	4,200.00
	Open	12299	03/21/2025		Accounts Payable	Health Equity Inc	75.00
	Open	12300	03/21/2025		Accounts Payable	North Florida Council Boy Scouts of America 087	2,500.00

Open	12301	03/21/2025	Accounts Payable	University of Florida	1	Item 5.
Open	12303	03/25/2025	Accounts Payable	Community Foundation of North Central Florida	28	
Open	12304	03/25/2025	Accounts Payable	Fun 4 Gator Kids	375.00	
Open	12305	03/25/2025	Accounts Payable	GAINESVILLE REGIONAL UTILITIES	700.00	
Open	12306	03/25/2025	Accounts Payable	Waste Pro of Florida Inc. DBA Waste Pro - 104	182.87	
Open	12307	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Angelic Blessings Academy, LLC	1,500.00	
Open	12308	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Bhaktivedanta Academy of North America, INC	1,500.00	
Open	12309	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Business Leaders Institute for Early Learning	15,389.94	
Open	12310	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Clayton DBA Felisha Clayton Family Home Day Care, Felisha	1,500.00	
Open	12311	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Clubhouse Apparel LLC	1,537.50	
Open	12312	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Education Foundation of Alachua County	46.67	
Open	12313	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Grace to Overcome, Inc	12,000.00	
Open	12314	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Hawthorne Area Chamber of Commerce	245.00	
Open	12315	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	High Class Educated Role Models Academy, Shawndria	1,500.00	
Open	12316	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Lawn Enforcement Agency Inc.	1,755.80	
Open	12317	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Little Warriors Day School LLC	1,500.00	
Open	12318	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Moore DBA Laila Brandon Company, Geretha T	5,000.00	
Open	12319	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	My School, LLC	1,500.00	
Open	12320	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Passage Ministries, Inc DBA Oak Tree Academy	1,500.00	
Open	12321	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Passage Ministries, Inc DBA Oak Tree Academy	1,500.00	
Open	12322	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Shorter, Lakishia	1,500.00	
Open	12323	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Waters, DBA Waters F.C.C.H, Shanada L	1,500.00	
Open	12324	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Welch, Katrina	80.71	
Open	12325	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Wyche DBA Gods Arc of Little Angels, Latoya	1,500.00	
Open	12326	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Community Foundation of North Central Florida	11.00	
Open	12327	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Gainesville for All Inc.	12,339.50	
						\$351,635.41

EFTs:

Status	EFT Number	Payment Date	Reconciled	Source	Payee Name	Amount
Reconciled	1276	02/03/2025	02/05/2025	Accounts Payable	A&A Doula Consulting	4,099.75
Reconciled	1277	02/03/2025	02/05/2025	Accounts Payable	Brittany K. Fadiora dba BEAM Birth Network LLC	5,000.00
Reconciled	1278	02/03/2025	02/05/2025	Accounts Payable	Gainesville Bridge Inc. dba PEAK Literacy	9,884.80
Reconciled	1279	02/03/2025	02/05/2025	Accounts Payable	Genesis Family Enrichment Center	1,500.00
Reconciled	1280	02/03/2025	02/05/2025	Accounts Payable	Goodwill Industries of North Florida	125,800.40
Reconciled	1281	02/03/2025	02/05/2025	Accounts Payable	KIDS COUNT IN ALACHUA COUNTY, INC.	15,632.83
Reconciled	1289	02/03/2025	02/21/2025	Accounts Payable	Health Equity Inc	104.38
Reconciled	1301	02/05/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Florida Retirement System	29,198.69
Open	1354	02/10/2025		Accounts Payable	Health Equity Inc	91.06
Reconciled	1291	02/10/2025	02/21/2025	Accounts Payable	CFX OFFICE TECHNOLOGY	126.83
Reconciled	1292	02/10/2025	02/21/2025	Accounts Payable	GAINESVILLE AREA COMMUNITY TENNIS ASSOCIATION	35,882.25
Reconciled	1293	02/10/2025	02/21/2025	Accounts Payable	IGB Education Corp	2,756.30
Reconciled	1294	02/10/2025	02/21/2025	Accounts Payable	Music & Art Program for Youth Inc.	10,255.20
Reconciled	1295	02/10/2025	02/21/2025	Accounts Payable	North Florida Building Maintenance DBA Citywide	3,236.00
Reconciled	1296	02/10/2025	02/21/2025	Accounts Payable	PACE CENTER FOR GIRLS INC	10,167.12
Reconciled	1297	02/10/2025	02/21/2025	Accounts Payable	Webauthor.com LLC	2,000.00
Reconciled	1299	02/14/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	AlphaStaff Inc.	59,860.30
Open	1355	02/18/2025		Accounts Payable	Health Equity Inc	326
Reconciled	1302	02/21/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Allegra Gainesville	2,855

Reconciled	1303	02/21/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Brittany K. Fadiora dba BEAM Birth Network LLC	5	Item 5.
Reconciled	1304	02/21/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	CE's Underground Kitchen	15,464.17	
Reconciled	1305	02/21/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Charlene Coles DBA All Well Health Services LLC	1,162.28	
Reconciled	1306	02/21/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Deeper Purpose Community Church Inc	8,736.83	
Reconciled	1307	02/21/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Gainesville Circus Center Inc	12,542.74	
Reconciled	1308	02/21/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Genesis Family Enrichment Center	1,500.00	
Reconciled	1309	02/21/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Greater Duval Neighborhood Association	750.00	
Reconciled	1310	02/21/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	HEALTHY START OF NORTH CENTRAL FL	20,081.76	
Reconciled	1311	02/21/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Karisma Welcome DBA Infinite Dream Builders Corp.	2,544.97	
Reconciled	1312	02/21/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	North Central Florida YMCA	12,500.00	
Open	1356	02/24/2025		Accounts Payable	Health Equity Inc	373.38	
Open	1352	02/25/2025		Accounts Payable	BANK OF AMERICA	10,290.76	
Reconciled	1314	02/27/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF TAMPA BAY, INC.	5,502.83	
Reconciled	1315	02/27/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF NE FL, INC	9,743.50	
Reconciled	1316	02/27/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Child Advocacy Center Inc.	9,550.00	
Reconciled	1317	02/27/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	GAINESVILLE AREA COMMUNITY TENNIS ASSOCIATION	35,560.54	
Reconciled	1318	02/27/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Genesis Family Enrichment Center	1,500.00	
Reconciled	1319	02/27/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	IGB Education Corp	6,362.19	
Reconciled	1320	02/27/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Made for More Foundation Inc.	3,151.86	
Reconciled	1321	02/27/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Motiv8U of North Central Florida Inc	11,550.00	
Reconciled	1322	02/27/2025	02/28/2025	Accounts Payable	University of Florida Board of Trustees	3,840.00	
Open	1353	02/28/2025		Accounts Payable	AlphaStaff Inc.	50,293.37	
Open	1357	03/03/2025		Accounts Payable	Health Equity Inc	748.53	
Open	1323	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	A&A Doula Consulting	4,099.75	
Open	1324	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF NE FL, INC	3,037.69	
Open	1325	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	CE's Underground Kitchen	14,534.49	
Open	1326	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	CFX OFFICE TECHNOLOGY	167.93	
Open	1327	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	CULTURAL ARTS COALITION INC.	1,595.00	
Open	1328	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF ALACHUA COUNTY, INC.	89,725.33	
Open	1329	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	Eric Lopez DBA DJ Elo Global	2,202.50	
Open	1330	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	Gainesville Bridge Inc. dba PEAK Literacy	9,884.81	
Open	1331	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	Genesis Family Enrichment Center	1,200.00	
Open	1332	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	GIRLS PLACE, INC.	9,640.64	
Open	1333	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	IGB Education Corp	8,150.88	
Open	1334	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	Karisma Welcome DBA Infinite Dream Builders Corp.	3,668.13	
Open	1335	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	KIDS COUNT IN ALACHUA COUNTY, INC.	19,665.41	
Open	1336	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	OFFICE DEPOT BUSINESS	542.01	
Open	1337	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	Shands Teaching Hospital and Clinics, Inc.	8,771.02	
Open	1338	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	Webauthor.com LLC	2,000.00	
Open	1340	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	AFLAC	514.40	
Open	1341	03/06/2025		Accounts Payable	Target Copy of Gainesville, Inc. DBA Renaissance	91.69	
Open	1342	03/07/2025		Accounts Payable	Florida Retirement System	20,900.25	
Open	1358	03/10/2025		Accounts Payable	Health Equity Inc	59.48	
Open	1343	03/14/2025		Accounts Payable	A&A Doula Consulting	4,099.75	
Open	1344	03/14/2025		Accounts Payable	Allegra Gainesville	1,308.87	
Open	1345	03/14/2025		Accounts Payable	Brittany K. Fadiora dba BEAM Birth Network LLC	5,000.00	
Open	1346	03/14/2025		Accounts Payable	Charlene Coles DBA All Well Health Services LLC	1,617.35	
Open	1347	03/14/2025		Accounts Payable	CULTURAL ARTS COALITION INC.	5,582.50	
Open	1348	03/14/2025		Accounts Payable	Deeper Purpose Community Church Inc	9,137.58	
Open	1349	03/14/2025		Accounts Payable	IGB Education Corp	5,123	44

Open	1350	03/14/2025	Accounts Payable	North Central Florida YMCA	12	Item 5.
Open	1359	03/21/2025	Accounts Payable	Allegra Gainesville	1	
Open	1360	03/21/2025	Accounts Payable	Express Services Inc.	2,392.50	
Open	1361	03/21/2025	Accounts Payable	GIRLS PLACE, INC.	14,842.41	
Open	1362	03/21/2025	Accounts Payable	Main Street Daily News Gainesville, LLC	1,450.00	
Open	1363	03/21/2025	Accounts Payable	MARC Radio Gainesville LLC	150.00	
Open	1364	03/21/2025	Accounts Payable	OFFICE DEPOT BUSINESS	250.16	
Open	1365	03/25/2025	Accounts Payable	Crafty Gemini Youth Development	6,000.00	
Open	1366	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Allegra Gainesville	426.75	
Open	1367	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Child Advocacy Center Inc.	4,850.00	
Open	1368	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Express Services Inc.	1,200.00	
Open	1369	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Gainesville Bridge Inc. dba PEAK Literacy	9,884.80	
Open	1370	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Gainesville Circus Center Inc	12,907.38	
Open	1371	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Gator Junior Golf Inc.	267.86	
Open	1372	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Goodwill Industries of North Florida	8,984.82	
Open	1373	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	HEALTHY START OF NORTH CENTRAL FL	48,131.91	
Open	1374	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	Made for More Foundation Inc.	5,066.07	
Open	1375	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	North Florida Building Maintenance DBA Citywide	7,651.25	
Open	1376	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	OFFICE DEPOT BUSINESS	585.88	
Open	1377	03/28/2025	Accounts Payable	University of Florida Board of Trustees	2,720.00	
					\$921,823.50	

Returned Checks: Date Payer Check Number Amount

No Transactions Exist

Wire Transfers:	Type	Date	Vendor	Description	Internal Account	Amount
	Wire Transfer In	02/03/2025		02.03.2025 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	140.85
	Wire Transfer In	02/04/2025		02.04.2025 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	582.38
	Wire Transfer In	02/05/2025		02.05.2025 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	256,941.02
	Wire Transfer In	02/06/2025		02.06.2025 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	41.97
	Wire Transfer In	02/07/2025		02.07.2025 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	21,783.54
	Wire Transfer In	02/10/2025		02.10.2025 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	1,920.00
	Wire Transfer In	02/11/2025		02.11.2025 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	637.00
	Wire Transfer In	02/12/2025		02.12.2025 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	124,540.00
	Wire Transfer In	02/13/2025		02.13.2025 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	16,492.31
	Wire Transfer In	02/14/2025		02.14.2025 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	5,140.00
	Wire Transfer In	02/18/2025		02.18.2025 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	1,030.00
	Wire Transfer In	02/19/2025		02.19.2025 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	326.69
	Wire Transfer In	02/20/2025		02.20.2025 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	2,420.00
	Wire Transfer In	02/21/2025		02.21.2025 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	11,438.00
	Wire Transfer In	02/24/2025		02.24.2025 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	75.00
	Wire Transfer In	02/25/2025		02.25.2025 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	102,302.21
	Wire Transfer In	02/26/2025		02.26.2025 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	51,646.22
	Wire Transfer In	02/27/2025		02.27.2025 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	35,477.15
	Wire Transfer In	02/28/2025		02.28.2025 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	49,930.92
	Wire Transfer In	03/03/2025		03.03.25 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	1,035.00
	Wire Transfer In	03/04/2025		03.04.25 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	213

				myReports		
Wire Transfer In	03/05/2025	03.05.25 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	5	<div>Item 5.</div>	
Wire Transfer In	03/06/2025	03.06.25 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	14,900.25		
Wire Transfer In	03/10/2025	03.10.25 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	187,499.81		
Wire Transfer In	03/11/2025	03.11.25 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	64,145.40		
Wire Transfer In	03/12/2025	03.12.25 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	86,897.31		
Wire Transfer In	03/13/2025	03.13.25 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	41,916.48		
Wire Transfer In	03/14/2025	03.14.25 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	1,347.48		
Wire Transfer In	03/17/2025	03.17.25 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	4,000.00		
Wire Transfer In	03/18/2025	03.18.25 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	46,289.89		
Wire Transfer In	03/20/2025	03.20.25 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	41,105.00		
Wire Transfer In	03/21/2025	03.21.25 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	31,087.76		
Wire Transfer In	03/24/2025	03.24.25 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	12,715.63		
Wire Transfer In	03/25/2025	03.25.25 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	22,734.35		
Wire Transfer In	03/26/2025	03.26.25 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	57,662.81		
Wire Transfer In	03/27/2025	03.27.25 transfer to 0940	Concentration Account	38,822.00		
						\$1,340,737.96

Adjustments:	Type	Date	Description	Amount
No Transactions Exist				

File Attachments for Item:

6. FY 2025 Programmatic Award and Expenditures Report (February)

**Item:**

FY 2025 Programmatic Award and Expenditures Report (February)

Requested Action:

The Trust is asked to receive the report.

Background

Upon request of Board Members, Provide monthly report of Programmatic funding by Goal. The report should include initial awarded amount and YTD expenses. The report may be under the consent agenda subject to being removed for further discussion.”

Attachments

FY 2024 Programmatic Awards and Expenditures Report (February)

Programmatic Impact:

NA

Fiscal Impact:

NA

Recommendation:

Please receive this report as presented. No further discussion or board action is necessary.

FY 2025 Programmatic Awards & Expenditures Report
February 28, 2025

GOALS / PROGRAM	AGENCIES	BUDGETED FUNDING	COMMITTED FUNDING	EXPENSED	REMAINING BUDGET	% Expensed
GOAL 1: ALL CHILDREN AND YOUTH ARE HEALTHY AND HAVE NUTURING CAREGIVERS AND RELATIONSHIPS 001.15.1500.569.83.10						
FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS CONSULTANT	Partnership for Strong Families	\$177,023.00	\$177,023.00		\$177,023.00	0.00%
FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS/COMMUNITY NAVIGATORS	Partnership for Strong Families	\$863,477.00	\$863,477.00		\$863,477.00	0.00%
FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS/COMMUNITY NAVIGATORS	Willie Mae Stokes Community Center	\$157,500.00	\$157,500.00	\$38,659.99	\$118,840.01	24.55%
FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS/COMMUNITY NAVIGATORS	Pleasant Street Civil Rights & Cultural Center	\$157,500.00	\$157,500.00	\$41,105.44	\$116,394.56	26.10%
Maternal Child Health	Healthy Start of North Central Florida, Inc.	\$471,883.00	\$471,883.00	\$20,081.76	\$451,801.24	0.00%
Maternal Child Health	UF - ACCESS Clinic	\$85,659.84			\$0.00	0.00%
Maternal Child Health	A&A Doula Consulting	\$49,197.00	\$49,197.00	\$16,399.00	\$32,798.00	33.33%
Maternal Child Health	Britany Fadiora dba BEAM Birth Network LLC	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$40,000.00	33.33%
Partners in Adolescent Lifestyle Support (PALS) THRIVE	UF Shand's Health	\$114,442.00	\$114,441.95	\$25,686.21	\$88,755.74	22.44%
REACH COMMUNITY COUNSELING SERVICES FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS	PACE Center for Girls Inc.	\$114,442.00	\$114,442.00	\$12,033.50	\$102,408.50	10.51%
Reducing Trauma to Abused Children Therapy Program	Child Advocacy Center	\$75,000.00	\$75,000.00	\$29,350.00	\$45,650.00	39.13%
SAVING SMILES	UF College of Dentistry	\$344,921.00	\$344,921.00	\$0.00	\$344,921.00	0.00%
WELLNESS COORINATOR @ HOWARD BISHOP MS	Children's Home Society of Florida	\$253,242.97	\$252,627.29	\$0.00	\$252,627.29	0.00%
Youth Health	RFP	\$600,000.00			\$0.00	0.00%
Unallocated		\$193,074.19			\$193,074.19	
TOTAL GOAL 1 General Fund		\$3,524,287.81	\$2,838,012.24	\$203,315.90	\$2,827,770.53	7.16%
Budget Check		\$ 3,717,362.00				
GOAL 1 Special Revenue Fund 101.15.1500.569.82.70 Agreements						
Pritzker Doula Mini Grant		\$7,365.61	\$7,365.61	\$600.00	\$6,765.61	8.15%
TOTAL GOAL 1 Special Revenue Funding Agreements		\$7,365.61	\$7,365.61	\$600.00	\$6,765.61	8.15%
GOAL 2: ALL CHILDREN CAN LEARN WHAT THEY NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL 001.15.1500.569.83.20						
SUMMER:						
SUMMER BRIDGE FOR HEAD START	Episcopal Children Services	\$229,258.00			\$0.00	0.00%
SUMMER PROGRAMMING	Freedom School	\$150,000.00	\$160,000.00		\$160,000.00	0.00%
TOTAL GOAL 2 Summer Programs Other		\$379,258.00	\$160,000.00	\$0.00	\$160,000.00	0.00%
SUMMER RFP:						
TOTAL GOAL 2 Summer RFP		\$2,000,000.00				

FY 2025 Programmatic Awards & Expenditures Report
February 28, 2025

GOALS / PROGRAM	AGENCIES	BUDGETED FUNDING	COMMITTED FUNDING	EXPENSED	REMAINING BUDGET	% Expensed
ENRICHMENT:						
ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMING (2025-2026)	All Well Health Services	\$4,403.46	\$4,403.46	\$1,300.28	\$3,103.18	29.53%
ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMING (2025-2026)	CE's Underground Kitchen	\$129,065.00	\$129,065.00	\$48,170.11	\$80,894.89	37.32%
ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMING (2025-2026)	Crafty Gemini Youth Developement	\$75,000.00	\$75,000.00	\$0.00	\$75,000.00	0.00%
ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMING (2025-2026)	Cultural Arts Coalition	\$33,498.00	\$33,498.00	\$6,380.00	\$27,118.00	19.05%
ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMING (2025-2026)	DJ Elo Global LLC	\$36,810.00	\$36,810.00	\$7,000.00	\$29,810.00	19.02%
ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMING (2025-2026)	Dream On Purpose	\$17,672.00	\$17,672.00	\$0.00	\$17,672.00	0.00%
ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMING (2025-2026)	Gator Junior Golf	\$18,750.00	\$18,750.00	\$0.00	\$18,750.00	0.00%
ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMING (2025-2026)	Grace to Overcome Inc.	\$48,555.80	\$48,555.80	\$0.00	\$48,555.80	0.00%
ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMING (2025-2026)	IGB Education Group	\$24,452.76	\$24,452.76	\$6,113.16	\$18,339.60	25.00%
ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMING (2025-2026)	Infinite Dream Builders Corp	\$14,264.85	\$14,264.85	\$6,111.18	\$8,153.67	42.84%
ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMING (2025-2026)	Lee's Preschool Center	\$88,022.50	\$88,022.50	\$9,265.50	\$78,757.00	10.53%
ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMING (2025-2026)	Motiv8U of North Central Florida Inc.	\$157,500.00	\$157,500.00	\$46,550.00	\$110,950.00	29.56%
ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMING (2025-2026)	Music & Arts Program for Youth Inc.	\$60,355.72	\$60,355.72	\$20,630.40	\$39,725.32	34.18%
ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMING (2025-2026)	Santa Fe College	\$91,302.20	\$91,209.20	\$0.00	\$91,209.20	0.00%
ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMING (2025-2026)	Swampbots Robotics	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$0.00	100.00%
ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMING (2025-2026)	University of Florida Natural History Museum	\$56,158.50	\$56,158.50	\$5,760.00	\$50,398.50	10.26%
ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMING (2025-2026)	University of Florida Upward Bound	\$39,825.00	\$39,825.00	\$0.00	\$39,825.00	0.00%
TOTAL GOAL 2 Enrichment		\$915,635.79	\$915,542.79	\$177,280.63	\$738,262.16	19.36%
AFTERSCHOOL:						
AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING (RFP 2021-06)	Boys and Girls Club of Alachua County*	\$194,676.00	\$194,676.00	\$22,296.50	\$172,379.50	11.45%
AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING (RFP 2021-06)	Deeper Purpose Community Church, Inc.*	\$120,713.00	\$120,713.00	\$38,404.18	\$82,308.82	31.81%
AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING (RFP 2021-06)	Gainesville Area Tennis Association (Aces in Motion)*	\$272,563.00	\$272,563.00	\$148,915.47	\$123,647.53	54.64%
AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING (RFP 2021-06)	Gainesville Circus Center*	\$148,698.00	\$148,698.00	\$62,321.00	\$86,377.00	41.91%
AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING (RFP 2021-06)	Girls Place, Inc.*	\$134,330.00	\$134,330.00	\$0.00	\$134,330.00	0.00%
AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING (RFP 2021-06)	Kids Count in Alachua County, Inc.*	\$197,524.00	\$197,524.00	\$15,632.83	\$181,891.17	7.91%
AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING (RFP 2021-06)	Willie Mae Stokes Community Center, Inc.	\$164,382.00	\$164,381.91	\$41,043.68	\$123,338.23	24.97%
TOTAL GOAL 2 After School		\$1,232,886.00	\$1,232,885.91	\$328,613.66	\$904,272.25	26.65%

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GOALS / PROGRAM	AGENCIES	BUDGETED FUNDING	COMMITTED FUNDING	EXPENSED	REMAINING BUDGET	% Expensed
GOAL 2 OTHER:						
DOLLY PARTON IMAGINATION LIBRARY	Gainesville Thrives	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$45,000.00	25.00%
THE BRIDGE COMMUNITY CENTER LITERACY PROGRAM OCT-MAR	PEAK Literacy was Vineyard	\$115,500.00	\$115,500.00	\$37,812.34	\$77,687.66	32.74%
NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT	Gainesville For All Inc.	\$125,000.00	\$125,000.00	\$11,638.00	\$113,362.00	9.31%
Childcare Tuition Assistance	Early Learning Coalition	\$358,920.70	\$358,901.31	\$0.00	\$358,901.31	0.00%
Junior Achievement - 3DE Program	Junior Achievement	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	\$0.00	\$100,000.00	0.00%
UF Lastinger Center Needs Assessment	UF Lastinger Center	\$175,000.00	\$43,750.00	\$0.00	\$43,750.00	0.00%
Rotary Student Fee		\$200.00	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$0.00	100.00%
TOTAL GOAL 2 Other		\$934,420.70	\$803,151.31	\$64,650.34	\$738,700.97	8.05%
GOAL 2 TEENS:						
TEENSWORK ALACHUA YOUTH PAYROLL	GOODWILL INDUSTRIES OF NORTH FLORIDA	\$945,000.00	\$944,999.41	\$125,800.40	\$819,199.01	13.31%
TOTAL GOAL 2 Teens		\$945,000.00	\$944,999.41	\$125,800.40	\$819,199.01	13.31%
Unallocated		\$73,143.51	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$73,143.51	
TOTAL GOAL 2 General Fund		\$6,407,200.49	\$4,056,579.42	\$696,345.03	\$3,101,469.88	17.17%
TOTAL GOAL 2 Special Revenue Funds 101.15.569.83.91-94 Agreements						
Accreditation Academy / Master Class Series	Business Leadership Institute	\$294,025.00	\$294,025.00	\$73,506.25	\$220,518.75	25.00%
Accreditation Academy / Master Class Series	Accreditation program supplies	\$975.00	\$975.00	\$0.00	\$975.00	0.00%
Participant Stipend	Multiple	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
Business Stipend	Multiple	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00	\$0.00	\$30,000.00	0.00%
Goal Seal Incentive	Multiple	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
TOTAL GOAL 2 Special Revenue Funding Agreements		\$325,000.00	\$325,000.00	\$73,506.25	\$251,493.75	22.62%
GOAL 3: ALL CHILDREN LIVE IN A SAFE COMMUNITY 001.15.1500.569.83.30						
AMI Kids	AMI Kids	\$153,824.41	\$173,045.40	\$0.00	\$173,045.40	0.00%
MENTORING & CHARACTER BUILDING	Big Brothers Big Sisters	\$78,750.00	\$78,750.00	\$8,079.16	\$70,670.84	10.26%
MENTORING & CHARACTER BUILDING	Community Impact	\$43,002.00	\$43,001.56	\$10,750.39	\$32,251.17	25.00%
MENTORING & CHARACTER BUILDING	IGB Education Group	\$67,725.00	\$67,725.00	\$26,049.74	\$41,675.26	38.46%
MENTORING & CHARACTER BUILDING	Made for More Foundation Inc.	\$66,685.00	\$66,685.00	\$3,151.86	\$63,533.14	4.73%
MENTORING & CHARACTER BUILDING	The Education Foundation of Alachua County	\$78,750.00	\$78,157.93	\$19,407.70	\$58,750.23	24.83%
Teen Center and Youth Engagement	North Central Florida YMCA	\$150,000.00	\$150,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$100,000.00	33.33%
Gun Violence		\$500,000.00			\$0.00	100.00%
TOTAL GOAL 3		\$1,138,736.41	\$657,364.89	\$117,438.85	\$681,374.63	17.87%

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GOALS / PROGRAM	AGENCIES	BUDGETED FUNDING	COMMITTED FUNDING	EXPENSED	REMAINING BUDGET	% Expensed
SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING 001.15.1500.569.83.40						
TOTAL SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
Capacity Building and Mini Grants: 001.15.1500.569.83.50						
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY BUILDING COLLABORATIVE:						
CENTER FOR NON-PROFIT EXCELLENCE	Community Foundation	\$123,500.00	\$100,000.00	\$36,830.00	\$63,170.00	36.83%
My Side-walk	Community Foundation	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$0.00	100.00%
Learning Management System (LMS WebAuthor)	WebAuthor	\$12,500.00	\$12,500.00	\$0.00	\$12,500.00	0.00%
Trauma Informed Training	Child Advocacy Center	\$1,000.00	\$700.00	\$0.00	\$700.00	0.00%
Language Line	Interpreter Services	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$241.93	\$9,758.07	2.42%
Florida Afterschool Network Membership	Children Forum	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00	0.00%
Restorative Practices Training x2	River Phoenix Center for Peace Building	\$11,000.00	\$11,000.00	\$0.00	\$11,000.00	100.00%
Youth Conflict and Resolution Program	River Phoenix Center for Peace Building	\$9,200.00	\$9,200.00	\$0.00	\$9,200.00	0.00%
Trauma Informed Training	Genesis Family Enrichment Center	\$7,500.00	\$7,500.00	\$4,500.00	\$3,000.00	60.00%
Unallocated		\$45,300.00			\$45,300.00	
MINI GRANTS:						
MINI GRANTS	Dance Alive		\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$0.00	
TOTAL MINI GRANTS		\$150,000.00			\$135,000.00	
TOTAL CAPACITY BUILDING & MINIGRANTS		\$344,700.00	\$185,900.00	\$71,571.93	\$294,628.07	38.50%

FY 2025 Programmatic Awards & Expenditures Report
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GOALS / PROGRAM	AGENCIES	BUDGETED FUNDING	COMMITTED FUNDING	EXPENSED	REMAINING BUDGET	% Expensed
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT 001.15.1500.569.83.60						
SPONSORSHIPS	American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (vNov)		\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00		
	Archer Cultural Progressive Organization		\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00		
	Balance 180 (vJan)		\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00		
	Brookside Partners - Youth Empowerment Day 25		\$500.00	\$500.00		
	Children Beyond Our Borders - Tiny Hero's Event		\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00		
	City of Waldo - Fall Festival		\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00		
	Delta Sigma Zeta Chapter - Orange you empowered		\$1,800.00	\$1,800.00		
	Early Learning Coalition - Storybook Village		\$500.00	\$500.00		
	Education Equalizers Foundation - FAESA workshop		\$1,800.00	\$1,800.00		
	Free Canaan UMC - Family Fun Day		\$500.00	\$500.00		
	Gainesville Circus Center - Sensory Circus Event		\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00		
	Hawthorne Quarterback Club - Empowerment Day		\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00		
	Hawthorne Youth Sports - HYS Community Build		\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00		
	RWF/ Just between friends - Safe Kids Day		\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00		
	Trinity's Day Spa - Kidpreneur Popup		\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00		
	United Way -ALICE (vNov)		\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00		
	Wishful Thinking - Renascence Beautilon		\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00		
	Writer Alliance - Sunshine State Book Festival		\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00		
TOTAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT		\$60,000.00	\$24,000.00	\$24,000.00	\$36,000.00	40.00%
EMERGENT NEEDS FUNDS 001.15.1500.569.83.70						
EMERGENT NEEDS FUNDS	Little Sprouts LLC		\$10,937.98	\$10,937.98	\$0.00	100.00%
EMERGENT NEEDS FUNDS	Xavier House Unlimited		\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00		
TOTAL EMERGENT NEEDS		\$100,000.00	\$30,937.98	\$30,937.98	\$69,062.02	30.94%
FY24-25 PROGRAM FUNDING GENERAL FUND TOTAL__		<u>\$12,027,891.00</u>	<u>\$7,792,794.53</u>	<u>\$1,143,609.69</u>	<u>\$7,010,305.13</u>	<u>9.51%</u>
Appropriated Budget/Balance per ledger						
FY24-25 PROGRAM FUNDING SPECIAL REVENUE FUND TOTAL__		<u>\$332,365.61</u>	<u>\$332,365.61</u>	<u>\$74,106.25</u>	<u>\$258,259.36</u>	
FY24-25 PROGRAM FUNDING ALL FUNDS		\$12,360,256.61	\$8,125,160.14	\$1,217,715.94	\$7,268,564.49	

File Attachments for Item:

7. BOCC Interlocal agreement

**Item:**

Interlocal Agreement Between the Children's Trust of Alachua County and the Board of County Commissioners of Alachua County, Florida.

Requested Action:

The Trust is asked to approve the agreement and authorize the Chair to execute the agreement.

Background:

CTAC Board Policy Chapter 6.60,B,4 allows the CTAC to purchase services from other governmental units without a competitive solicitation. There are no changes to the contract, only a request to extend. CTAC Attorney, Bob Swain is drafting the extension for Board review.

Attachments:

1. FY25 Interlocal Agreement Between the Children's Trust of Alachua County and the Board of County Commissioners of Alachua County, Florida

Programmatic Impact:

None

Fiscal Impact:

\$74500.00 plus additional fees as incurred (from multiple accounts).

Recommendation:

Staff Recommends approval

**THIRD EXTENSION OF THIRD INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN
THE CHILDREN'S TRUST OF ALACHUA COUNTY AND THE BOARD OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS OF ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA**

THIS EXTENSION OF THE THIRD INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT is made and entered into this 1st day of October AD. 2024, by and between the Children's Trust of Alachua County, hereinafter referred to as "CTAC"; and Alachua County, a charter county and political subdivision of the State of Florida, by and through its Board of County Commissioners, hereinafter referred to as "County." Collectively, CTAC, and the County are hereinafter referred to as the "Parties."

WITNESSETH:

WHEREAS, §125.901, Florida Statutes, authorizes the County to create an independent special district to provide children's services for all children, from 0 to 18 years of age, subject to the approval of the majority of qualified electors voting in a general election; and

WHEREAS, the County has determined that it would serve the public interest to establish said independent special district within Alachua County; and

WHEREAS, the County passed Ordinance 18-08 on February 27, 2018, creating Chapter 26 of the Alachua County Code, titled 'Children's Services Independent Special District' with an effective date of December 1, 2018, subject to approval of a majority of the qualified electors of Alachua County voting in a November 6, 2018, referendum; and

WHEREAS, on November 6, 2018, a majority of qualified electors of Alachua County passed the general election ballot question titled Children's Trust of Alachua County- Authority to Levy One-Half Mill Ad Valorem Taxes; and

WHEREAS, Section 26.03 of Alachua County Code, defines the Children's Trust of Alachua County's powers and duties, including the power to enter into agreements with government agencies to provide for administrative services; and

WHEREAS, the County, and CTAC are authorized by §163.01, Florida Statutes, to enter into interlocal agreements to cooperatively and efficiently use their powers to provide public services that will advance the general health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the County; and

WHEREAS, the County and CTAC entered into a Third Interlocal Agreement, which was recorded in the Official Records of Alachua County Book 4939/Page 425 on October 11, 2021, which provided the ability for the Parties thereto to extend the term for additional one-year periods under the same terms and conditions.

WHEREAS, by this Third Extension the parties wish to extend the term of the Third Interlocal Agreement on the same terms for Fiscal Year 2024-25.

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the premises set forth above and the mutual promises, covenants, duties and benefits set forth herein, and other valuable consideration, the receipt and sufficiency of are hereby conclusively acknowledged, the Parties do agree that the Third Interlocal Agreement between the Parties shall be amended as follows:

1. **Extension of Term**

After execution of this Agreement by the Parties, the Third Interlocal Agreement shall commence on upon recording, and becomes effective upon filing as provided in paragraph 21, below, and continue through September 30, 2025, unless earlier terminated as provided herein. Extensions shall be as provided in the Third Interlocal Agreement recorded at Book 4939 and Page 425 in the Official Records of Alachua County.

2. **Attachments.**

Upon the effective date of this Agreement, the Parties agree that Attachment B and Attachment C attached to this Third Extension Agreement shall replace those attached to the Third Interlocal Agreement, and shall be considered incorporated therein.

3. **Remainder of Agreement.**

The remainder of the terms and conditions shall be as set forth in the Third Interlocal Agreement as modified by Attachments B and C and with the exception that the Parties, by mutual written agreement, may vary the financial terms by written agreement without amending this Interlocal.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties have caused this Interlocal Agreement to be approved by their respective Governing Boards and to be executed and delivered on the day and year first above written.

ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA

CTAC

By: _____

By: _____

Name: Charles "Chuck" Chestnut

Name: Ken Cornell

Title: Chair

Title: Chair

Date: _____

Date: _____

APPROVED AS TO FORM

ATTEST:

Alachua County Attorney's Office

Treasurer of the Trust

ATTEST:

APPROVED AS TO FORM

CLERK: _____

(COUNTY SEAL)

Counsel to the Trust

ATTACHMENT B: Duties of County

1.1. Risk Management

1.1.1. For purposes of participation in applicable benefits programs.

1.2. Information Technical Services consisting of 1) help desk support, 2) technical consultation 3) hardware standardization 4) data storage 5) computer imaging, 6) phone service, 7) text message archiving, and 8) antivirus protection and network security

1.3. Legal

1.4. Financial Software Hosting Services

1.4.1. New World Technical Support

ATTACHMENT C
PARTICIPATION IN COUNTY BENEFITS PLAN

1. The purpose of this agreement is to allow the employees of CTAC to participate in certain employee benefits offered to employees of the County and other participating government employees pursuant to Alachua County Code Sec. 28.02(b)(2). Those specific benefits which are offered through the health insurance program including dental, vision, and life insurance coverage. From time-to-time additional products may be made available to employees covered through the self-insurance plan and CTAC will have the option of having their employees participate to the extent the plan design and the Internal Revenue Code allows.

2. This agreement shall be in effect until terminated. Either party may terminate the agreement by delivering written notice as set forth below at least 6 months before the end of a fiscal year which runs from October 1 through September 30. Should CTAC end its participation in this agreement, it shall be responsible for payment to all benefit vendors through the end of the fiscal year of notice. In the event that at the time of termination any of CTAC's employees/former employees be participating in an extension of benefits through COBRA, CTAC will be responsible for any fees owed beyond the premium collected.

3. The premiums payable per employee shall be fixed from year to year by the Board of County Commissioners upon recommendation of the Alachua County Self Insurance Review Committee. CTAC shall participate in the program at the same per employee cost as the other participants.

Payment shall be made monthly in advance in the full amount of the premium for the employees covered under the plan in the amount provided by Alachua County Risk Management. Payment shall be by check and made out to the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners and delivered to:

J.K. Jess Irby, Esquire
 Clerk of the Circuit Court
 12 SE 1st Street
 Gainesville, Florida 32602
 Attn: Finance and Accounting

4. The employee health program is administered through the Alachua County Office of Risk Management and any questions should be directed to that office.

5. Except as otherwise provided herein any notice, shall be provided by U.S. mail to

Alachua County
 12 SE 1st Street
 Gainesville, Florida 32602
 Attn: Risk Management

And

J.K. Jess Irby, Esquire
 Clerk of the Circuit Court
 12 SE 1st Street
 Gainesville, Florida 32602
 Attn: Finance and Accounting

As to CTAC

Children's Trust of Alachua County
 4010 NW 25 Place
 Gainesville, FL 32606

6. This Agreement may be amended by mutual written agreement executed by the Parties.

7. This Agreement shall be governed in accordance with the laws of the State of Florida.

8. This Agreement shall take effect once it has been executed by both Parties and recorded as required by law.

9. To the extent that any employees of CTAC participated in the Alachua County Employee Benefits plan on 9/30/20 and continues to participate during their term of employment with CTAC beginning 10/1/20, their coverage under the plan shall continue uninterrupted.

File Attachments for Item:

8. March Sponsorship Applications



CHILDREN'S TRUST
OF ALACHUA COUNTY

Item 8.

Manhood Youth Development Foundation, Inc.

Request Date:	2/19/2025
Requesting Organization :	Manhood Youth Development Foundation, Inc.
Contact Name:	Charlie Ray Jackson
Event Name:	SY 2024 and 2025 STEM Spring Break "Road Trip" to NASA, Patrick Air Force Base, Mayport Naval Base, Fort Mose National Park
Event Date:	March 17 - 20th
Event Summary:	STEM Spring Break "Road Trip". The purpose of this trip is to expose the young men to the many career opportunities provided through learning the benefits provided by the use of STEM programs. Patrick Air Force Base, Kennedy Space Center, Bethune Cookman University, Fort Mose National Park in St. Augustine Florida, Mayport Naval base in Jacksonville, Florida
Number of Attendees:	30
Expenses Summary:	<u>Asking CTAC to fund:</u> NASA Entrance Fees for 30 participants (\$2,670.00) Transportation - 3 Vans (\$1500.00) Fuel (\$400.00) Meals (\$7,000.00) Lodging (\$8,400.00) <u>Estimated Total : \$19,970.00</u>
Requested Amount:	\$19,970.00
Notes/Comments:	2024 Sponsorship Fund applicant - received \$2,500.00 last time.
Approved Amount:	\$2,500
Authorized By:	



CHILDREN'S TRUST
OF ALACHUA COUNTY

Item 8.

Atkins Warren Chapter of NOBLE

Request Date:	3/13/2025
Requesting Organization:	Atkins Warren Chapter of NOBLE
Contact Name:	Alena Lawson Bennett
Event Name:	Community Easter Egg Hunt
Event Date:	4/19/2025
Event Summary:	Easter Egg Hunt for underprivileged kids in East Gainesville. There will be plastic and real eggs hidden for the different age groups, which will include prize eggs; games, such as tug o war, various law enforcement agencies and other vendors that provide wrap-a-round services, food, Easter Bunny and speakers to address safety and other pertinent topics.
Number of Attendees:	150
Expenses Summary:	<u>CTAC funds cover:</u> Food -\$600.00 Advertisement & Printing - \$200.00
Requested Amount:	\$800.00
Notes/Comments:	Annual event. Last received Sponsorship Funds on 03/15/2024.
Approved Amount:	\$800.00
Authorized By:	



CHILDREN'S TRUST
OF ALACHUA COUNTY

Item 8.

UF Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD)

Request Date:	3/7/2025
Requesting Organization:	UF Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD)
Contact Name:	Gregory Valcante
Event Name:	Stomp the Swamp for Autism 2025
Event Date:	3/29/2025
Event Summary:	Walk/run to raise acceptance and awareness of autism and related disabilities. Proceeds help to provide child safety materials and information, employment training for young adults, and social skills for children and teens with autism and related disabilities.
Number of Attendees:	250
Expenses Summary:	CTAC funds will help defray costs associated with the event including stadium rental, t-shirts and food for participants as well as contribute to UF CARD activities not covered in our budget (i.e., communication aids for children, social groups for children, teens and adults, and employment training for young adults).
Requested Amount:	\$1,000.00
Notes/Comments:	First time applying for Sponsorship Funds
Approved Amount:	1000.00
Authorized By:	



CHILDREN'S TRUST
OF ALACHUA COUNTY

Item 8.

UF Foundation obo Alachua County Child Abuse Prevention Taskforce

Request Date:	3/13/2025
Requesting Organization :	UF Foundation obo Alachua County Child Abuse Prevention Taskforce
Contact Name:	Cathy Winfrey
Event Name:	Celebrate the Child
Event Date:	4/5/2025
Event Summary:	Free and family-friendly celebration to learn how child abuse can be prevented. The event will offer free food, fun, games and activities for children, along with educational material for parents on how to keep our children safe.
Number of Attendees:	100
Expenses Summary:	CTAC funds will cover: \$125 for Fun 4 Gator Kids ad (runs for one week) \$350 for bags to distribute at the event \$68 to City of Gainesville for Westside Park rental fee \$200 for DJ
Requested Amount:	\$743.00
Notes/Comments:	Last received Sponsorship Funds on 4/1/2023
Approved Amount:	\$743.00
Authorized By:	<i>Kathy Bohane</i>



CHILDREN'S TRUST
OF ALACHUA COUNTY

Item 8.

The Historic Camelliaettes Club of Gainesville, Inc.

Request Date:	3/6/2025
Requesting Organization :	The Historic Camelliaettes Club of Gainesville, Inc
Contact Name:	Gloria L. Jackson
Event Name:	Mr. Wonderful
Event Date:	Sat, 04/12/2025
Event Summary:	This is an enrichment program for young boys. This program is designed to provide these boys with opportunities to explore activities that will foster intellectual and personal growth.
Number of Attendees:	100
Expenses Summary:	Requesting CTAC funds to cover: Location - \$1,000.00 Activities - \$500.00 Incentives - \$500.00
Requested Amount:	\$ 2,000.00
Notes/Comments:	First time applying for Sponsorship.
Approved Amount:	\$ 2,000.00
Authorized By:	

File Attachments for Item:

9. Executive Director's Report



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

April 1, 2025 - May 1, 2025

SUMMARY
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Children's Trust Parenting Playbook & Program Guide2. Children's Open House

MEETINGS AND EVENTS FOR PLANNING, COORDINATION, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT		
DATE	MEETING / EVENT	SUMMARY
March 3, 2025	Gainesville Thrives - Dolly Parton Imagination Library - Performance & Expenditure Review	Contract Manager (M. De Zutter), Evaluator (B. Wagner), and Finance team members met with program staff to discuss and review year-to-date progress.
March 3, 2025	IGB Education - Mentoring - Performance & Expenditure Review	Contract Manager (M. De Zutter), Evaluator (B. Wagner), and Finance team members met with program staff to discuss and review year-to-date progress.
March 3, 2025	Pleasant Street Civil Rights & Cultural Arts Center - Family Resource Center - Performance & Expenditure Review	Contract Manager (B. James), Evaluator (B. Wagner), and Finance team members met with program staff to discuss and review year-to-date progress.
March 5, 2025	Girls Place - Afterschool - Performance & Expenditure Review	Contract Manager (M. De Zutter), Evaluator (B. Wagner), and Finance team members met with program staff to discuss and review year-to-date progress.
March 6, 2025	Healthy Start - NewboRN Home Visiting - Performance Review	Contract Manager (M. Jones) and Evaluator (B. Wagner) met with program staff to discuss and review year-to-date progress.
March 6, 2025	Amplified Student Voice Coalition - Scope and Budget Review	CTAC staff team met with program staff to discuss program scope, performance measures, data reporting, and budget for the Amplified program.
March 6, 2025	Big Brothers, Big Sisters - Mentoring Data and SAMIS training	B. Wagner met with program staff to facilitate training on performance measures, data collection, and entering/reviewing data in SAMIS.

March 6, 2025	Alachua County Campaign for Grade Level Reading	M. Jones is an advisory member and attended.
March 7, 2025	Healthy Communities Quarterly Meeting	Attended by M. Jones and K. Goldwire
March 8, 2025	Flourish Alachua Postpartum Doula Graduation Ceremony	Hosted and attended by M. Jones
March 10, 2025	IGB Education - Mentoring Data and SAMIS training	B. Wagner met with program staff to facilitate training on performance measures, data collection, and entering/reviewing data in SAMIS.
March 11, 2025	Kids Count - Afterschool - Performance & Expenditure Review	Contract Manager (M. De Zutter), Evaluator (B. Wagner), and Finance team members met with program staff to discuss and review year-to-date progress.
March 11, 2025	Mt. Pleasant Church	Chief Operating Officer (K. Goldwire) discussed Trust funding options with members of Mt. Pleasant Church.
March 11, 2025	Aces in Motion - Afterschool - Performance & Expenditure Review	Contract Manager (M. De Zutter), Evaluator (B. Wagner), and Finance team members met with program staff to discuss and review year-to-date progress.
March 12, 2025	Amplified Student Voice Coalition - Performance Measures and Reporting	B. Wagner met with program staff to negotiate and finalize performance measures and data reporting requirements.

March 12, 2025	Florida Association of Educators of Young Children One Voice Advocacy Coalition	M. Jones co-presented on Early Learning Roadmap Implementation.
March 13, 2025	ACCESS Task Force Meeting	M. Jones is a task force member and attended.
March 13, 2025	Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County Quality Committee	M. Jones is a committee member and attended.
March 18, 2025	Alachua County Child Abuse Taskforce	M. Jones is a task force member and attended.
March 19, 2025	North Central Florida Regional Fetal and Infant Mortality Case Review	M. Jones is a committee member and attended.
March 19, 2025	AMIKids Gainesville Board Meeting	Chief Operating Officer (K.Goldwire) attended as a guest, the March Board meeting for AMIKids Gainesville.
March 19, 2025	Willie Mae Stokes Community Center - Family Resource Center - Performance & Expenditure Review	Contract Manager (B. James), Evaluator (B. Wagner), and Finance team members met with program staff to discuss and review year-to-date progress.
March 19, 2025	Family Resource Center - Provider Convening & Data Review	B. Wagner led a meeting hosted by Partnership for Strong Families to bring together the Family Resource Center providers to review performance measures, data entry and collection processes in SAMIS, and review progress.

March 20, 2025	Deeper Purpose - Afterschool - Performance & Expenditure Review	Contract Manager (M. De Zutter), Evaluator (B. Wagner), and Finance team members met with program staff to discuss and review year-to-date progress.
March 20, 2025	Gainesville Neighborhood Housing & Development Corporation	Chief Operating Officer (K. Goldwire) met with and discussed opportunities to collaborate with GNHDC.
March 20, 2025	Carolyn's Hearth Inc.	Chief Operating Officer (K. Goldwire) met with the founder and CEO (Ramona Jackson) to discuss Trust funding options.
March 21, 2025	Douglass Historical Society	Chief Operating Officer (K. Goldwire) discussed Trust funding options for youth programming in the City of High Springs.
March 26, 2025	Boys & Girls Club - Afterschool - Performance & Expenditure Review	Contract Manager (M. De Zutter), Evaluator (B. Wagner), and Finance team members met with program staff to discuss and review year-to-date progress.
March 26, 2025	ELC Child Care Tuition Assistance Program - Performance Measure, Reporting, and SAMIS review	M. Jones, B. Wagner, and D. Tyson facilitated a training for program staff on performance measures, data reporting, and how to use SAMIS.
March 27, 2025	Briefing on the 2025 Legislative Session for community Drivers and Florida's Early Learning Roadmap Implementation Advisory Board	M. Jones is an advisory board member and attended.
March 27, 2025	Neighborhood Canvassing - Open House	Program Specialists (K. Welch & A. Bethune), Receptionist, (J. Mayberry), and Executive Assistant (K. Bailey Acevedo), canvassed the neighborhood to ensure neighboring businesses were aware of the open house and road closures

March 28, 2025	Safety Net Collaborative Meeting	Attended by Chief Operating Officer (K.Goldwire)
March 28, 2025	Annual MLK Prayer Breakfast	Attended by Executive Director (M. Kiner)

INITIATIVES

For the third summer, Alachua Head Start Summer Bridge kicks-off in April with the onboarding and training of 5 participating centers. There are two new participants this year: ECS4Kids directly operated centers located in Gainesville and Hawthorne. ECS4Kids will also incorporate CTAC's contracted Enrichment Community Partners to enhance the children's summer experience. We anticipate this program will serve 90 children over 34 days this summer.



ALACHUA HEAD START
Summer Bridge Program

HIGHLIGHTS

- Engaging curriculum
- Qualified educators
- Social and emotional development
- Nutritious meals
- Family involvement

LOCATIONS

- Building Dreams
- Martin Rochelle
- Hawthorne
- Gainesville
- I Rise Performing Kids Academy

PROGRAM DETAILS

- Dates: June 2nd - July 25th
- Time: 8 AM - 3 PM
- Age Group: 3 - 5
- Before and After Care available at every location except Hawthorne

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REQUEST ENROLLMENT FORMS

Shaquerria Campbell
Project Manager

904.479.6395
shaquerria.campbell@ecs4kids.org

Forms due Date: May 1, 2025

 **CHILDREN'S TRUST OF ALACHUA COUNTY**

 **Head Start**  **ECS4Kids**

Flourish Alachua is a collaborative effort between CTAC and Beam Birth Network LLC. This program aims to provide community centered training, community resources, and continuing education to emerging doulas. It is bridging gaps in care and building a sustainable network dedicated to improving maternal well-being and family transitions, in Alachua County. Building on our successful first postpartum doula training program, we are ready for Flourish Alachua's next cohort. Cohort 2 applications are now open and the training cycle will begin in May 2025. Beam Birth Network will kick-off cohort 2 with an Information Session scheduled for Saturday April 5, 2025 at 5 PM. Registration link: https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/n9b_39jmR82P156f5oBSQg

FLOURISH ALACHUA

POSTPARTUM DOULA TRAINING INITIATIVE

Applications Now Open
for Cohort #2!

Apply now- spaces limited



Do you have a passion for supporting new families?
Become a trained postpartum doula with the Flourish
Alachua Postpartum Doula Training Initiative!



 **May – August 2025**

Format: Online and In-Person Sessions

Eligibility: Must be an Alachua County Resident

Cost: Fully funded by The Children's Trust of Alachua County

This comprehensive training will equip you with the skills and knowledge to support parents and newborns during the postpartum period.

PROGRAMS CALENDAR

March	
March 1, 2025	Summer Sign-Up Blitz at MLK Center
March 3, 2025	Gainesville Thrives - Dolly Parton Imagination Library - Performance & Expenditure Review
March 3, 2025	IGB Education - Mentoring - Performance & Expenditure Review
March 3, 2025	Pleasant Street Civil Rights & Cultural Arts Center - Family Resource Center - Performance & Expenditure Review
March 4, 2025	Florida Association of Children's Councils and Trust (FACCT) Program Affinity Group
March 5, 2025	Girls Place - Afterschool - Performance & Expenditure Review
March 6, 2025	Alachua County Campaign for Grade Level Reading
March 6, 2025	Newborn RN Home Visiting Monitoring Meeting Quarter 1
March 6, 2025	Florida Association of Children's Councils and Trust (FACCT) Policy Affinity Group
March 6, 2025	Co-Chairs Planning - Early Learning System Transformation & Public Awareness & Recognition Working Groups
March 6, 2025	Big Brothers, Big Sisters - Mentoring Data and SAMIS training
March 6, 2025	Amplified Student Voice Coalition - Scope and Budget Review
March 7, 2025	Healthy Communities Quarterly Meeting
March 7, 2025	Training Q&A
March 8, 2025	Flourish Alachua Postpartum Doula Recognition Ceremony
March 10, 2025	Early Learning System Transformation & Public

	Awareness & Recognition Working Groups Meeting
March 10, 2025	IGB Education - Mentoring Data and SAMIS training
March 11, 2025	The Future Call: Conversations on Florida's Early Learning Future
March 11, 2025	Alachua County Comprehensive Literacy Report Review with Lastinger Center
March 11, 2025	Kids Count - Afterschool - Performance & Expenditure Review
March 11, 2025	Aces in Motion - Afterschool - Performance & Expenditure Review
March 12, 2025	Early Learning Session 4
March 12, 2025	Amplified Student Voice Coalition - Performance Measures and Reporting
March 12, 2025	GEZ and CTAC Meeting
March 12, 2025	UF Maternal Health Performance Measure and Data Review and Discussion
March 12, 2025	One Voice Advocacy Coalition: Presentation on Early Learning Roadmap Implementation
March 13, 2025	Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County Quality Committee
March 13, 2025	ACCESS Task Force March Meeting
March 13, 2025	Florida Association of Children's Councils and Trust (FACCT) Policy Affinity Group
March 14, 2025	CTAC and ACCESS Navigator Performance Measures Discussion
March 17, 2025	Harassment Training Program Staff
March 18, 2025	Alachua County Child Abuse Prevention Taskforce
March 19, 2025	Internal- Early Learning Collaborative Planning Meeting

March 19, 2025	North Central Florida Regional Fetal and Infant Mortality Case Review
March 19, 2025	Willie Mae Stokes Community Center - Family Resource Center - Performance & Expenditure Review
March 19, 2025	Family Resource Center - Provider Convening & Data Review
March 20,2025	Family Resource Center Consultation with HARC (Hawthorne Area Resource Center)
March 20,2025	Deeper Purpose - Afterschool - Performance & Expenditure Review
March 24, 2025	GEZ Monitoring Meeting Quarter 1
March 25, 2025	Internal Review and Planning Meeting: Comprehensive Literacy Assessment Phase 2
March 26, 2025	Boys & Girls Club - Afterschool - Performance & Expenditure Review
March 26, 2025	Florida Campaign for Grade Level Reading March Webinar + GLR Leads Discussion
March 26, 2025	Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County SAMIS Training
March 26, 2025	Managing Dysregulated Emotions and Behaviors-Not what to do but how to be- Training for Providers
March 27, 2025	Healthy Start of North Central Florida Board of Directors Meeting
March 27, 2025	Florida Association of Children's Councils and Trust (FACCT) Policy Affinity Group
March 28, 2025	Flourish Alachua Cohort 2 Planning Meeting
March 28, 2025	Summer RFP Review Team Final Score Deliberation
March 29, 2025	Open House

April	
April 1, 2025	Child Abuse Prevention Month Kick-off
April 1, 2025	Flourish Alachua Cohort 2-Applicant Interviews
April 1, 2025	Alachua County Child Abuse Taskforce Pinwheel Planting UF Health (Children's Wing side)
April 1, 2025	Alachua County BOCC Resource Center Meeting
April 3, 2025	Alachua County Campaign for Grade Level Reading
April 3, 2025	Florida Association of Children's Councils and Trust (FACCT) Policy Affinity Group
April 4, 2025	Internal- Early Learning Planning Meeting
April 4, 2025	Advanced Human Trafficking Training for Providers
April 5, 2025	Business and Leadership Institute Masterclass Cohort 4 Graduation
April 5, 2025	Celebrate the Child- Community Event at Westside Park
April 7, 2025	Outpatient Breastfeeding Champion class 1-2
April 7, 2025	HMG & CHILD Center Planning Meeting
April 7, 2025	CTAC Board Meeting - Summer Camp Freedom School Funding Recommendation
April 8, 2025	National Collaboration of Infant and Toddlers (NCIT) Steering Committee Meeting
April 8, 2025	NPR Radio Interview - TeensWork Alachua Business Recruitment
April 9, 2025	OBGYN Mobile Outreach ribbon cutting ceremony
April 10, 2025	Florida Association of Children's Councils and Trust (FACCT) Policy Affinity Group
April 14, 2025	Internal- Early Learning Planning Meeting
April 14, 2025	Outpatient Breastfeeding Champion class 2-2
April 15, 2025	Early Learning Network Collective Funder to Funder

	National Campaign for Grade Level Reading Meeting
April 15, 2025	Samis S3 Collaboration Meeting
April 16, 2025	North Central Florida Regional Fetal and Infant Mortality Case Review
April 16, 2025	FACCT IT Affinity Group
April 17, 2025	Florida Association of Children's Councils and Trust (FACCT) Policy Affinity Group
April 14-18, 2025	Children's Week
April 21, 2025	Children's Trust & Alachua County BOCC Joint Meeting
April 22, 2025	Early Learning Collaborative- Community Meeting
April 24, 2025	Healthy Start of North Central Florida Home Visiting Advisory Meeting
April 24, 2025	Safety Net Collaborative - Family Resource Center Presentation
April 24, 2025	Florida Association of Children's Councils and Trust (FACCT) Policy Affinity Group
April 25, 2025	Flourish Alachua Planning Meeting

PLANNING, RESEARCH, AND EVALUATION

Evaluation planning, data analysis, and support

Met with providers for mid year contract reviews and for discussions regarding progress toward meeting performance targets. Developed performance improvement plan with provider if needed.

Provided SAMIS training as needed, and discussed with providers evaluation and data requirements.

Providers listed below:

- UF Saving Smilies
- Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentoring Program
- IGB Mentoring
- Gainesville Thrives
- One Community Family Resource Center
- Partnership for Strong Families
- Girls Place
- Newborn Home Visiting Program
- UF Perinatal Navigator at the ACCESS clinic.
- Kids Count
- Aces in Motion
- Alachua County Amplified
- Willie Mae Stokes Community Center
- Deeper Purpose
- Early Learning Coalition
- Boys and Girls Club

Open House

Developed and implemented photo project with youth participants at three after school sites. Photos and youth narratives to be displayed at Open House.

After School Site Visits

- Implemented Afterschool CQI and Site Monitoring tool within SAMIS.
- Engaged in site visit, in collaboration with Contract Manager, to assess program safety, compliance, and youth engagement. Provider participating in site visit this month:
 - Girls Place, Inc.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

FY 2024 Audit

- Nearly all audit documents have been provided to PurvisGray
- Corrected G/L structure in NewWorld for capital and posted a series of journal entries to correctly reflect building purchase and related depreciation costs
- Preliminary audit results expected by May

FY 2025 February financial reports

- Formal month-end close procedures completed, and financial reports prepared

Internal Controls and Fiscal Infrastructure Assessment with BDO

- Final Policies & Procedures Workflow and Gap Analysis completed end of February
- A project outcomes summary and deliverable documents are included in the March Board financial report

Summer Camp & Freedom School RFP

- Collaborated with the Programs Operations team to structure a new budget proposal format that determines the cost per child per week for Summer Camp providers.
- Collaborated with the Programs Operations team to structure a new budget proposal that supports Provider reimbursement based on the Akwaaba Freedom School expansion site costs.
- Established a timeline for budget review concurrent with the proposal review period to streamline contracting and budget implementation and minimize delays
- Reviewed all budget proposals and outlined Provider feedback in anticipation of contract negotiations
- Prepared a scoring and budget summary for all submitted proposals

Conference Room Renovation

- Complete and operational

COMMUNICATIONS

Updates

- The Parenting Playbook resource guide is fully printed. A plan for community distribution is under development.
- The children's Trust Program Guide, a resource list of Trust funded programs is available for distribution. A plan for community distribution is under development.

In the News

- <https://www.wuft.org/florida-good/2025-03-30/childrens-trust-finds-permanent-home-to-serve-alachua-county>
- <https://www.mainstreetdailynews.com/news/childrens-trust-unveils-new-location>
- <https://www.mainstreetdailynews.com/education/citizens-of-the-month/february-2025-citizens-of-the-month>

BOARD MOTIONS AND REQUESTS

DATE	MOTION / REQUEST	STATUS
3.25.2024	Vice Chair Twombly suggested a presentation by a Medicaid outreach provider to discuss the full range of Medicaid's services. ED Kiner suggested that this be incorporated into staff's professional development and into the training offered to the Trust's providers.	June 2025
6.10.2024	See if the remaining balance of unallocated funds, up to but not exceeding \$491,131, can be spent in Goal 1.	Completed
8.12.2024	Member Chance mentioned that programmatic dashboards showing awarded amounts and actual invoiced/funded amounts for each program area would be helpful and useful for staff to create or distribute.	May 2025
9.9.2024	Chair Pinkoson requested to have a discussion for future RFPs about the maximum amount of funding a provider can request of the total allocation.	Finance Committee, May 2025
11.4.2024	The Board discussed the need for affordable housing for families with children, with a focus on those living in cars or motels. Member Hardt suggested contacting Anne Ray from the Shimberg Center to give a presentation on local issues and potential solutions.	August Board workshop (tentative)
11.4.2024	The Board requested a joint meeting with the Alachua County Library Board.	In progress
2.10.2025	Member Hardt requested the Board invite Theresa Beachy to discuss or lead a workshop on affordable housing, ALICE report, and the work she's doing with the chamber. Would also like to discuss the housing challenges in Gainesville, particularly among our "heroes" - teachers, law enforcement, fire rescue, and nurses.	August Board workshop (tentative)
3.10.2025	The Board directed the Executive Director to develop and present a policy establishing the COO's authority to sign on behalf of the ED. Delegation of Authority proposed in lieu of a policy.	In progress (Researching)
3.10.2025	Member Chance suggested checking with other CSC's and considering listing funded organizations under priorities on the website for accountability.	In progress (Researching)

3.10.2025	Dr. Labarta requested a follow-up to the community needs listing.	In progress (Researching)
3.10.2025	Dr. Hardt requested a follow-up report on future agenda from Partnership for Strong Families.	June FYI (tentative)

SUCCESS STORIES

Program Highlights from PEAK Literacy

February was a month of growth and connection for PEAK Literacy. We conducted eight new student intakes, paired and started lessons with nine students, and conducted three Great Leaps reviews. To support our growing volunteer base, we held two training sessions, each with 14 attendees. Our community engagement remained strong as Leah attended the Presidents' Breakfast with the Gainesville Chamber of Commerce and the United for Impact Tuxedo T-Shirt Gala. We also participated in the Brown's Center for Leadership Volunteer Fair at UF and began interviewing UF interns for summer and fall. Additionally, Leah collaborated with marketing students from the University of South Florida on their nonprofit support project for The Amazing Give. Program planning continued with GPAL for the Phoenix after school initiative launching in March, as well as with Kix for our program implementation in Homestead, Florida. Meanwhile, our Pineridge intern has been organizing a field day for students in their local community. We also explored a new partnership by attending the Teens Work Alachua open house. To wrap up the month, we joined GPAL for a Fun Friday event in the Phoenix neighborhood, strengthening our relationship with the community. We're grateful for all the volunteers and partners who continue to make this work possible!

Goodwill - Teens Work Alachua Civic Leadership Program: Success Story Testimonials

14 year-old Josiah Curley:

"At first, I never imagined myself in a leadership role. I was always the quiet one in the group, sitting back and letting others take the lead. The idea of speaking in front of a group, or organizing something was way outside of my comfort zone. But when the opportunity arose to participate in the TWA Leadership Program, I decided to step outside my comfort zone and challenge myself.

Early on, I often found myself second-guessing my thoughts, afraid of saying the wrong thing or failing to inspire others. But the program taught me something crucial; leadership isn't about being perfect; it's about showing up, learning, and growing. The TWA Leadership Program gave me the space to practice these skills in a supportive environment. As the weeks went on, I started to take more initiative. Whether it was volunteering for leadership roles in group projects or organizing events for our community, I became more comfortable stepping up.

One of the most rewarding moments came when I was asked to speak at a community event. A few months before, the thought of speaking in front of an audience would have made my heart race. But, thanks to the confidence I'd gained, I was able to deliver my speech with poise. The TWA Fall Leadership Program didn't just teach me how to be a better leader, it taught me how to believe in myself, take risks, and grow through the process."

15 year-old, Ky'Asha Cotman:

"As a shy teenager, I had always dreaded speaking in front of large crowds. I would get nervous and fumble over my words, feeling like everyone was judging me.

Through the TeensWork program I was given the opportunity to participate in workshops and training sessions that focused on public speaking, communication, and job readiness. At first, I was hesitant to participate, but with the encouragement of my peers and mentors, I slowly began to open up.

My first big breakthrough came when I was asked to give a presentation in front of my TeensWork group. I was nervous, but to my surprise, my words flowed smoothly and I received positive feedback from my peers. As I began to take on more leadership roles within TeensWork, I grew more confident with each challenge. But TeensWork didn't just help me become more comfortable with public speaking – it also taught me valuable skills for finding and keeping a job. I learned how to create a strong resume, practice interviewing techniques, and network with potential employers. As I look back on my journey, I realize that TeensWork has given me the tools I needed to succeed – and I am grateful for the experience.”

University of Florida School of Dentistry

Saving Smiles at Terwilliger Elementary School

During a visit to Terwilliger Elementary School, the University of Florida School of Dentistry, Saving Smiles Program had a record number of children sign up. During the 4-day stopover, 177 students received preventive dental care from the UF-Saving Smiles Team!

Waldo City Square

During our event at Waldo City Square, we reconnected with a family of three children whom we had initially met at Shell Elementary School. One child was 11 years old and had several cavities on permanent teeth, including front teeth. Fortunately, we identified the cavities early and began treatment with tooth-colored fillings to prevent further decay. During her appointment, we completed two fillings on her front teeth and reviewed dental hygiene practices to reduce her risk of future cavities. Her two younger siblings also had cavities, but on their back baby teeth. We treated these noninvasively using silver diamine fluoride, an antimicrobial medicine. Additionally, we worked with their mother to set achievable nutrition goals and provided her with three-sided toothbrushes to help her more efficiently and effectively clean her younger children's teeth. The mother was very appreciative of the convenient location of our program and has scheduled follow-up appointments for her children next month when we will be in East Gainesville.

Children's Trust of Alachua County

802 NW 5th Ave, Suite 100

Gainesville, FL 32601

Dear Children's Trust of Alachua County,

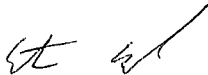
We are writing to express our sincere gratitude for the outstanding support we received from the NewboRN Home Visiting Program following the birth of our son last week. As physicians with backgrounds in pediatrics and newborn care, we are well-versed in many aspects of infant health and development. Yet, despite our medical training, the transition to becoming parents ourselves has been both exciting and humbling.

The guidance and expertise provided through this program have been invaluable, particularly in the areas of breastfeeding support and car seat safety. Having access to a knowledgeable and compassionate professional like Sandee Muir BSN, RN in our own home gave us the assistance and reassurance we needed in these critical early days. It is a testament to the incredible value of this program that even as medical professionals, we found the information, hands-on aid, and resources to be essential.

Knowing that families across Alachua County have access to such a well-structured and thoughtful initiative speaks volumes about the commitment of the Children's Trust to the health and well-being of newborns and parents. We wholeheartedly support the continuation of this program and hope that it remains a resource for families for years to come.

Thank you for your dedication to our community and for ensuring that families have access to the care and support they need during such an important time.

With appreciation,



Steven Raymond, MD



Izabela Oluwole, MD

File Attachments for Item:

10. BDO Engagement - Internal Controls and Fiscal Infrastructure Assessment

**Item:**

BDO Engagement - Internal Controls and Fiscal Infrastructure Assessment

Requested Action:

The Trust is asked to receive the final Policies & Procedures Manual workflow and gap analysis.

Background

The CTAC Finance team has made good progress on improving its financial processes and internal controls to establish the appropriate internal controls environment. The Finance team continues to fine tune the configuration of New World, its financial system, to ensure the efficacy of its financial statements.

CTAC finance staff have been engaged with BDO since September 2024 to perform a full assessment of internal controls and fiscal infrastructure. The detailed evaluation of all processes resulted in a comprehensive workflow and gap analysis to ensure optimal financial operations and embed preventive and detective controls.

Attachments

BDO PPM FINAL Mappings
BDO Final Gap Analysis Table

Programmatic Impact:

NA

Fiscal Impact:

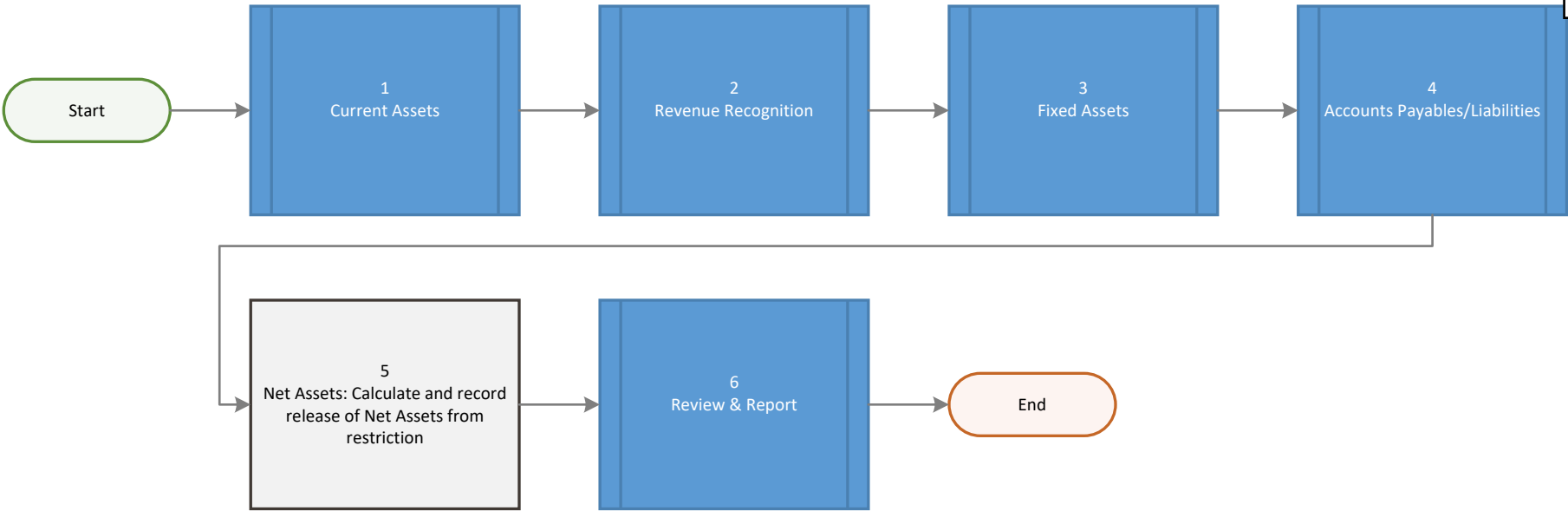
A one-time operating expenditure not to exceed \$100,000.

Recommendation:

Receive the report.

1. Record to Report

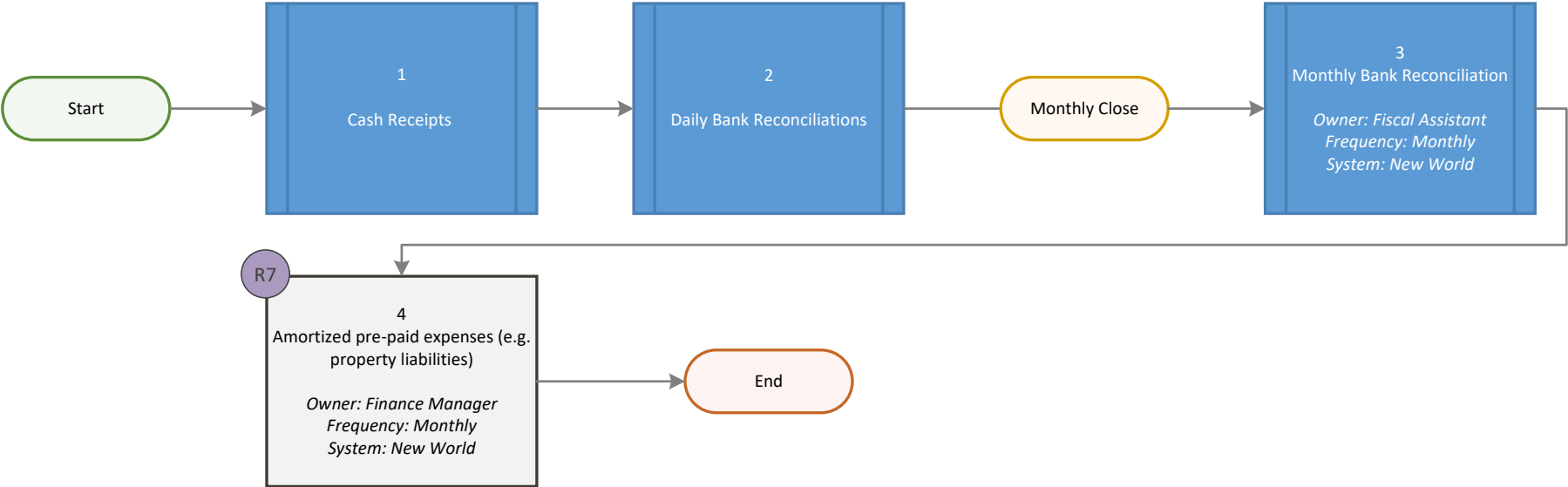
Item 10.



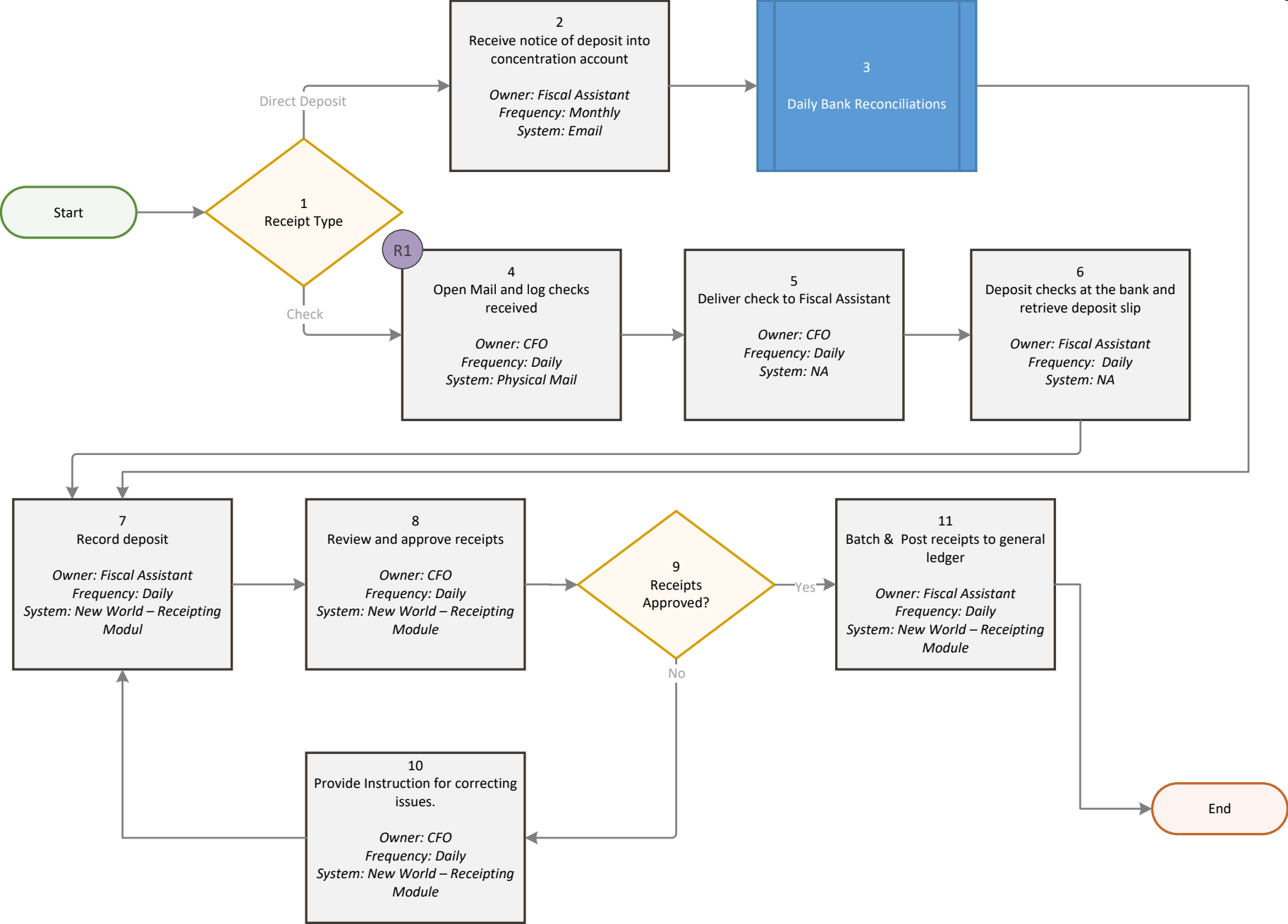
Legend

- Indicator of days after/before nearest event (unless otherwise specified)
- BDO recommendation
- Action step
- Subprocess
- Decision point
- Event
- External hyperlink

91

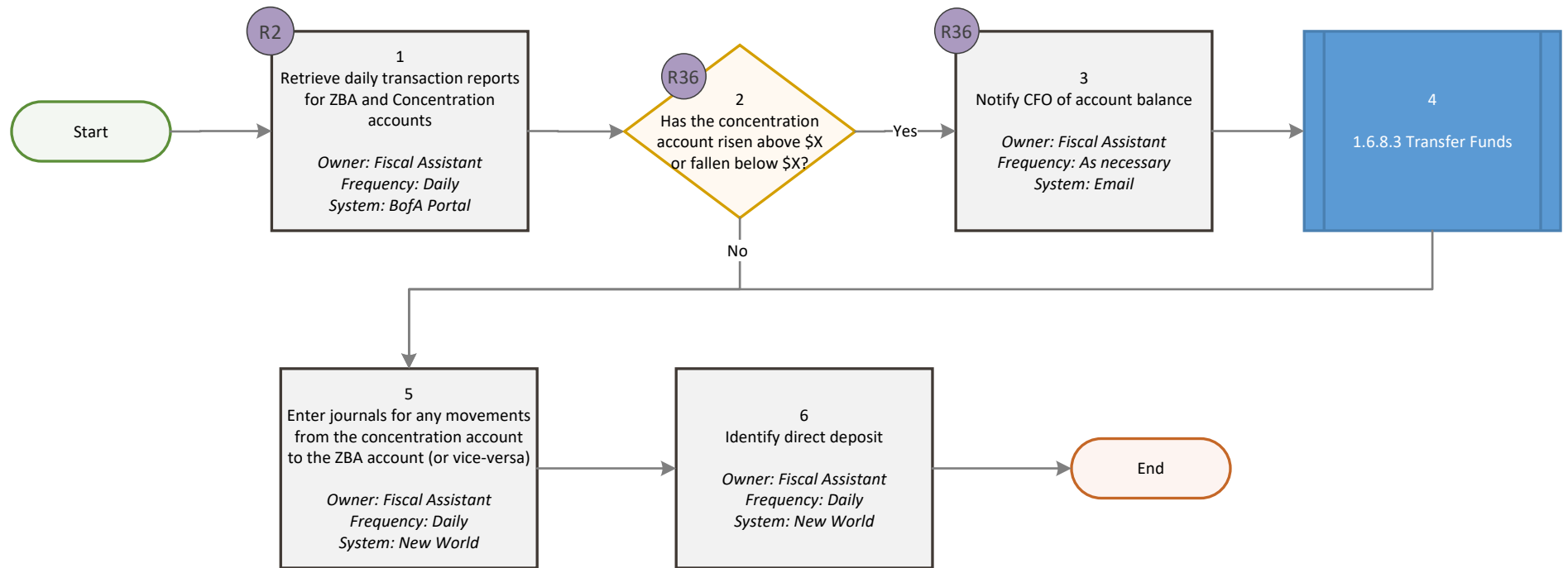


1.1.1 Cash Receipts (Revenue)



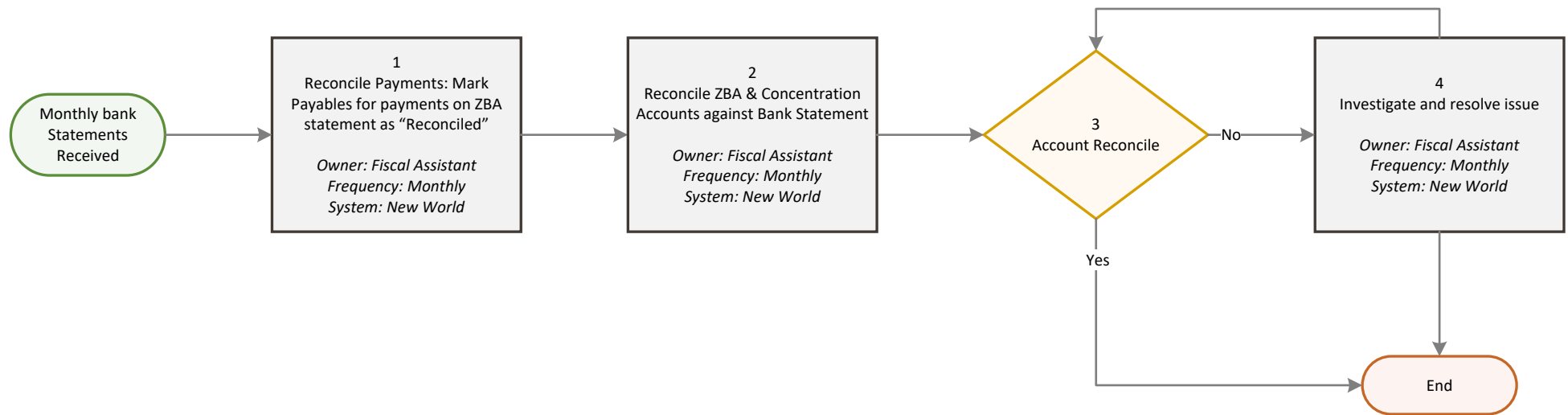
1.1.2 Daily Bank Reconciliation

Item 10.

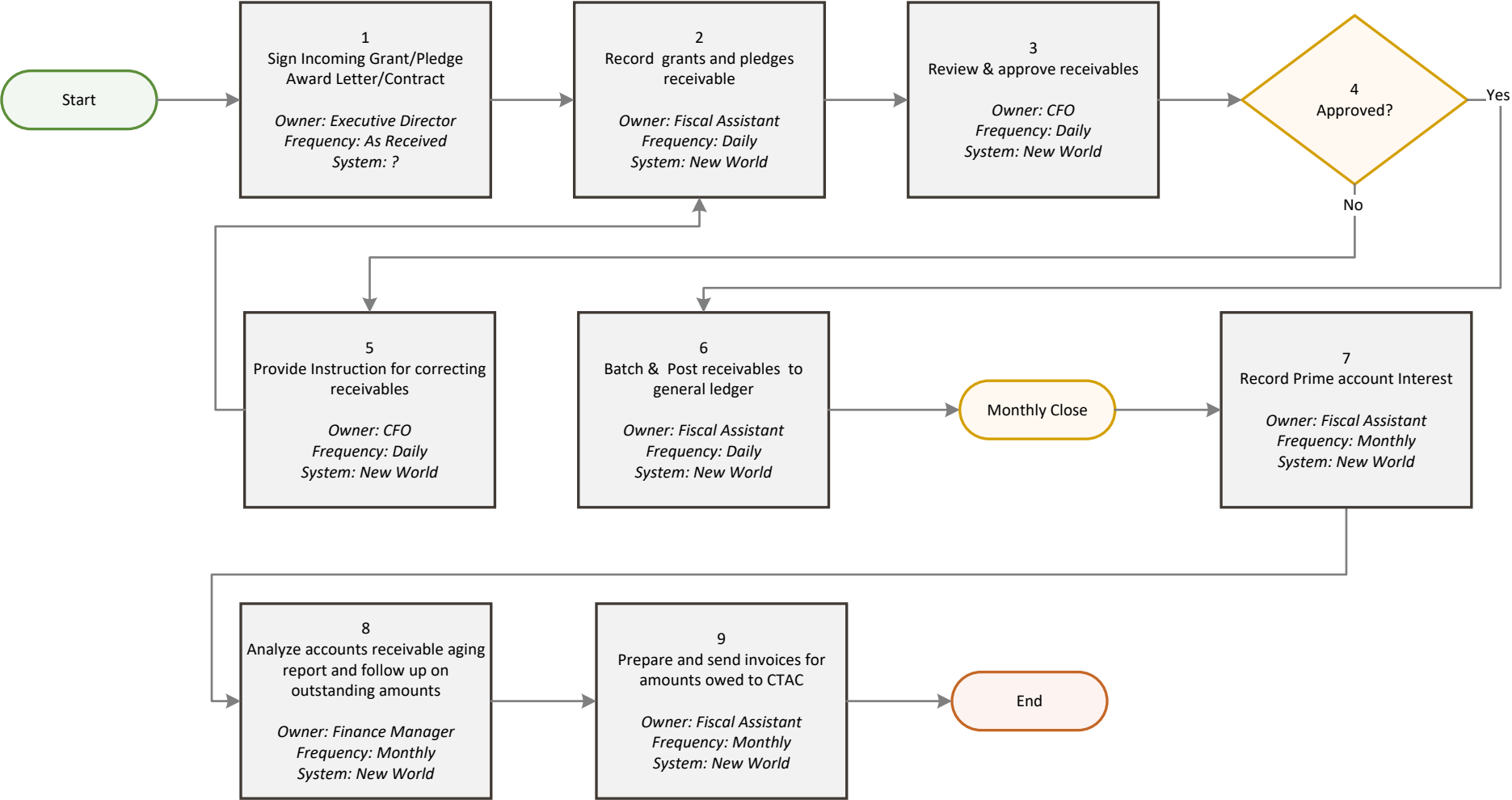


1.1.3 Monthly Bank Reconciliation

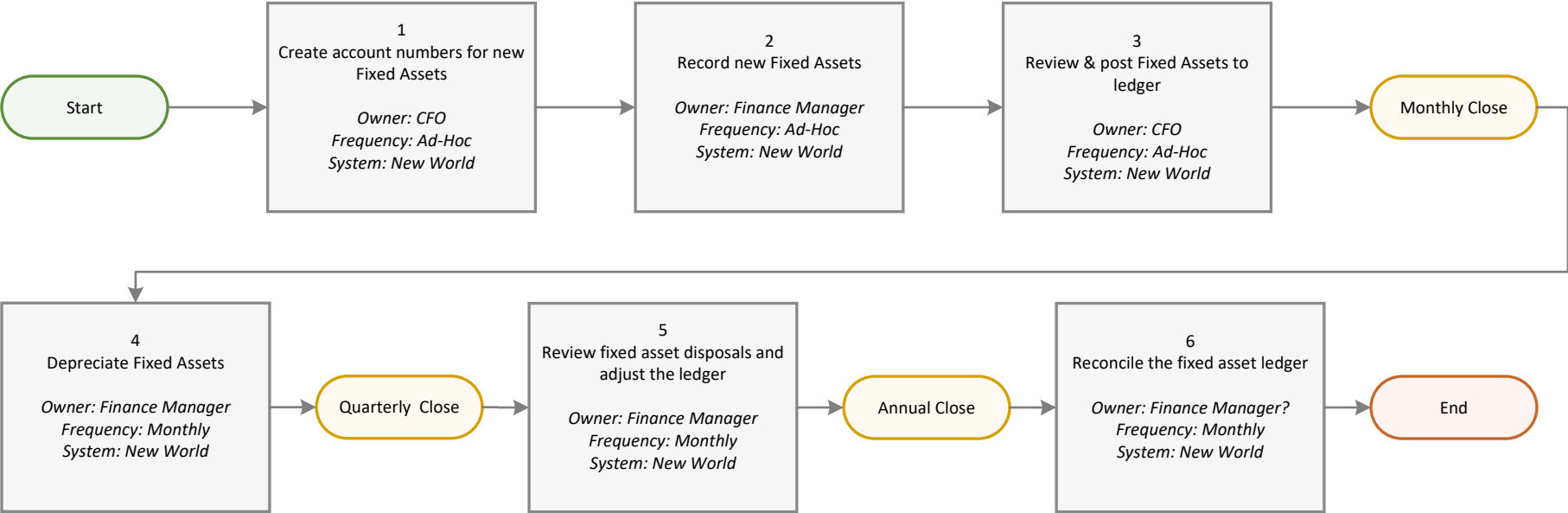
Item 10.



1.2 Revenue Recognition

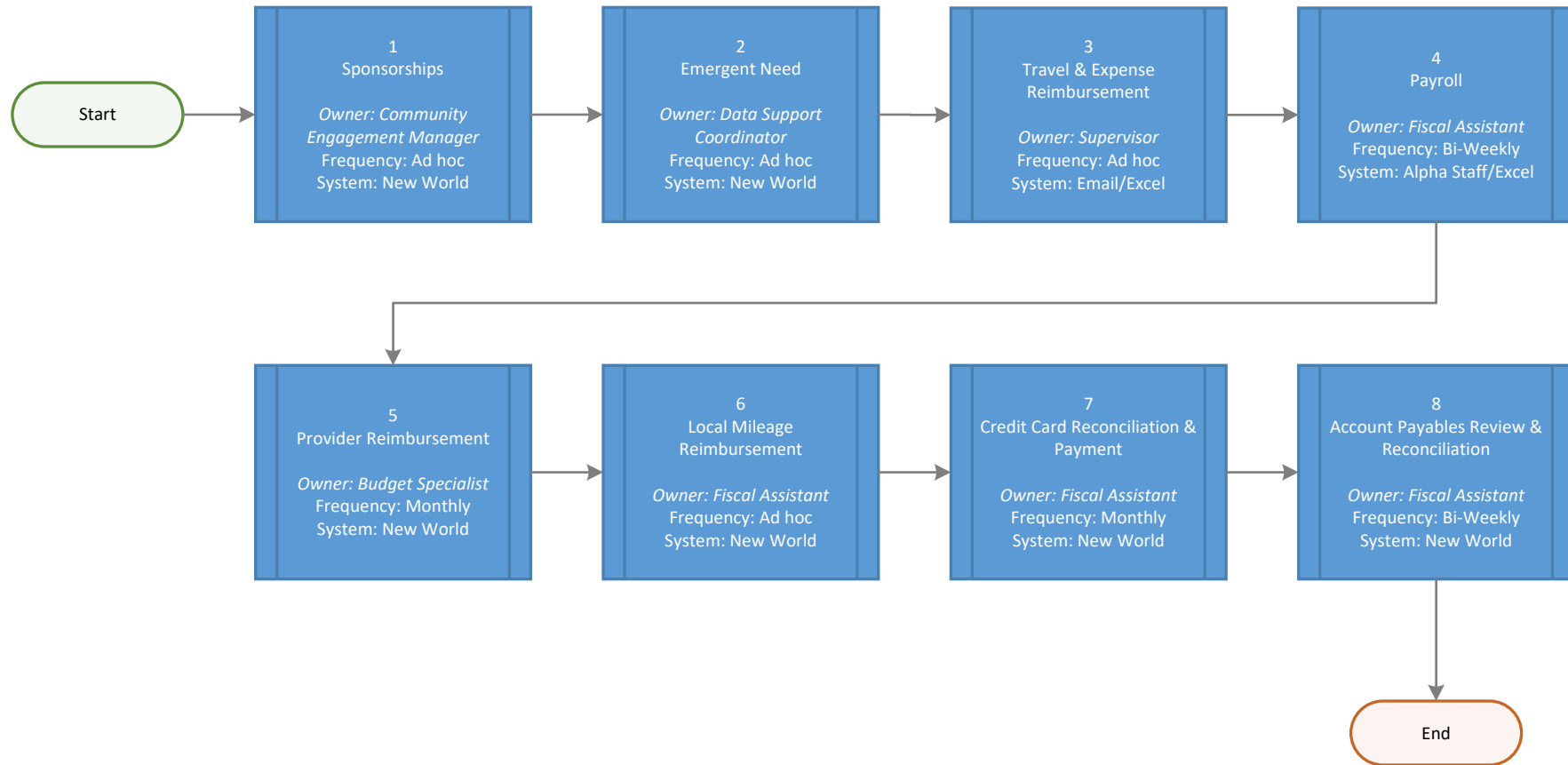


1.3 Fixed Assets



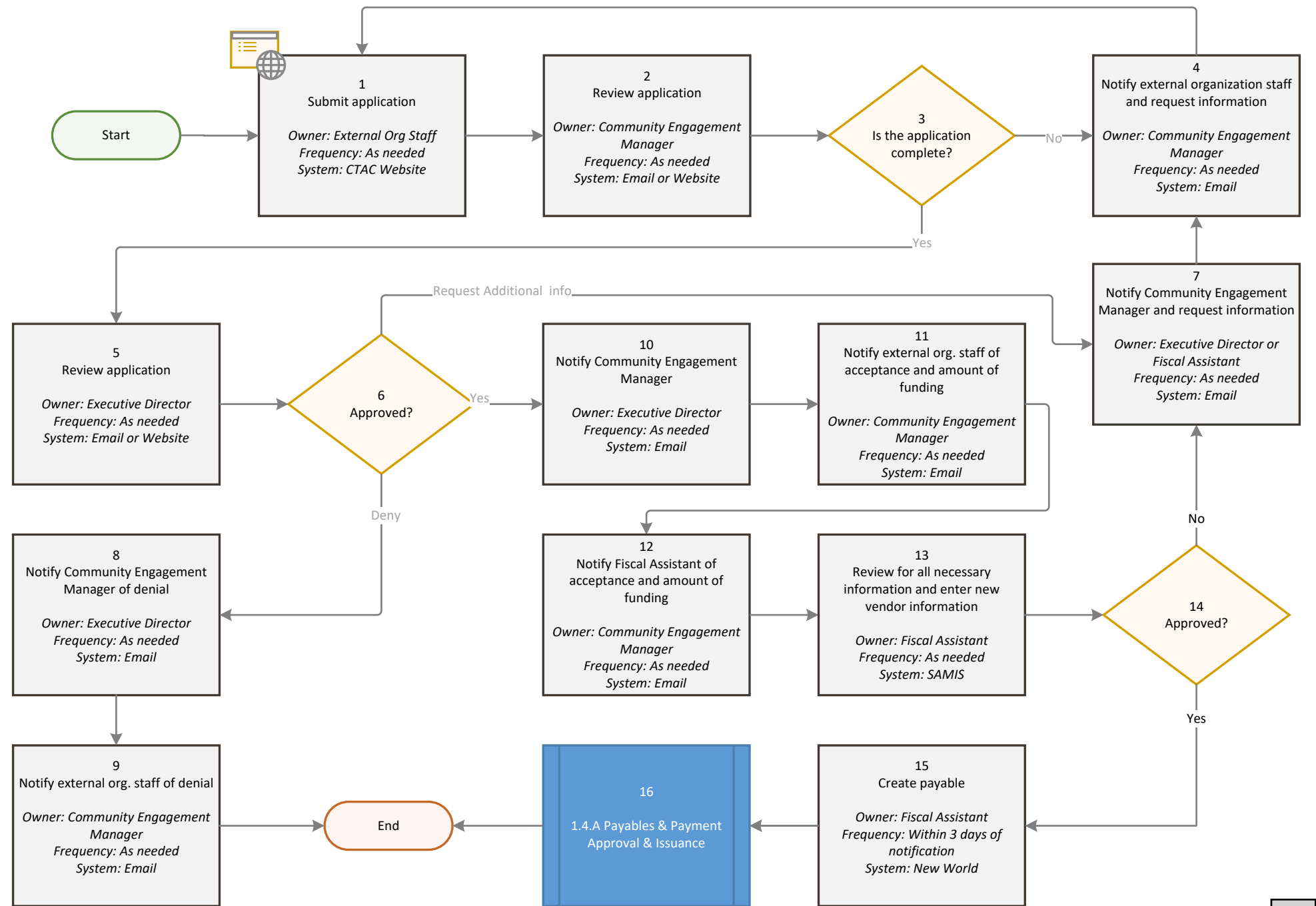
1.4 Accounts Payable/Liabilities

Item 10.



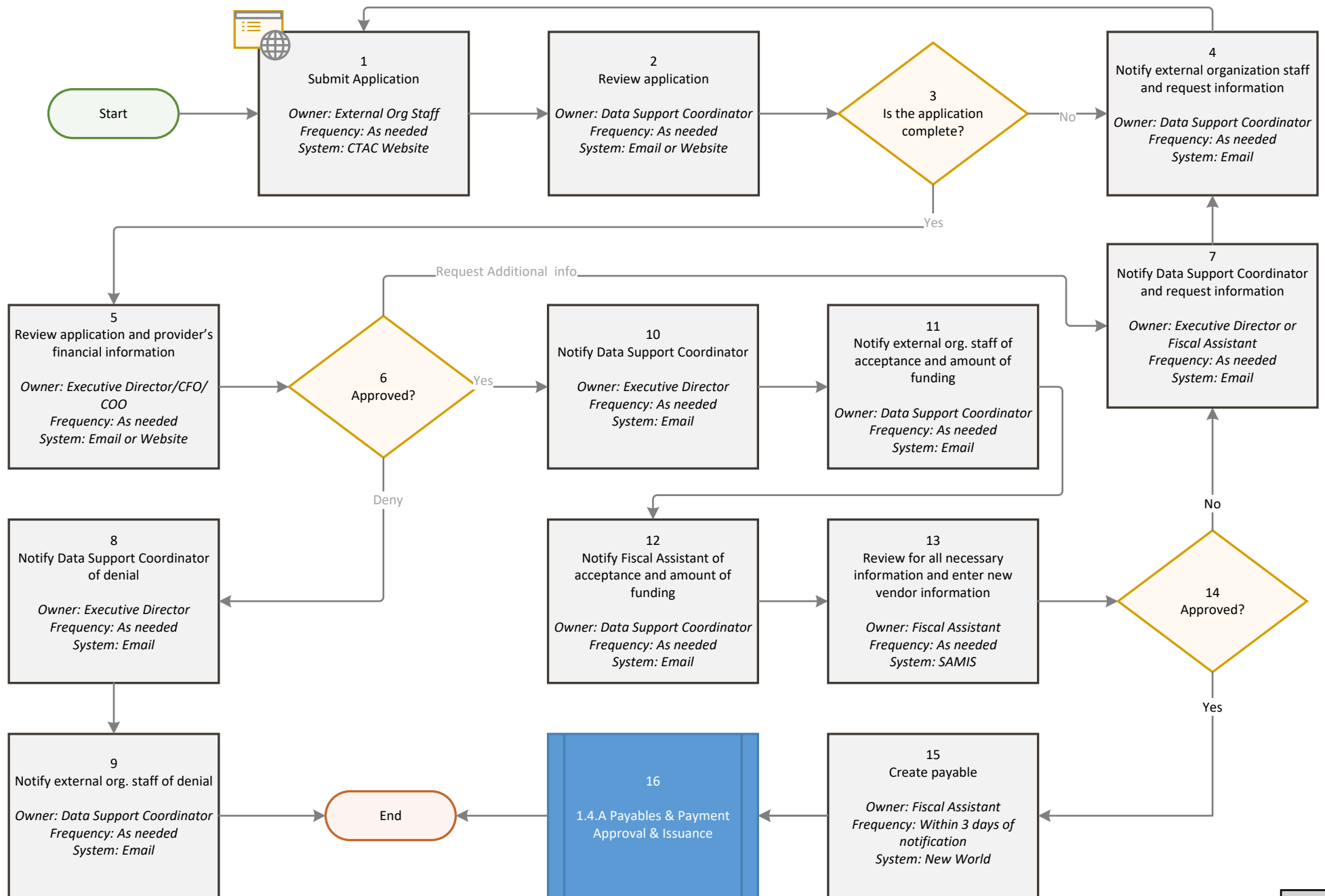
1.4.1 Sponsorships

Item 10.



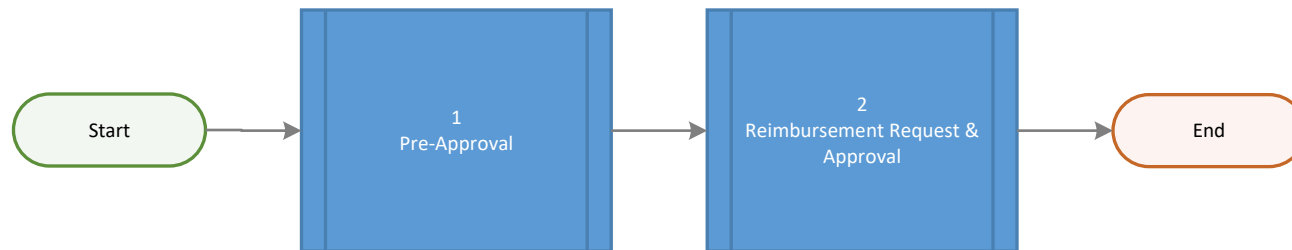
1.4.2 Emergent Needs

Item 10.



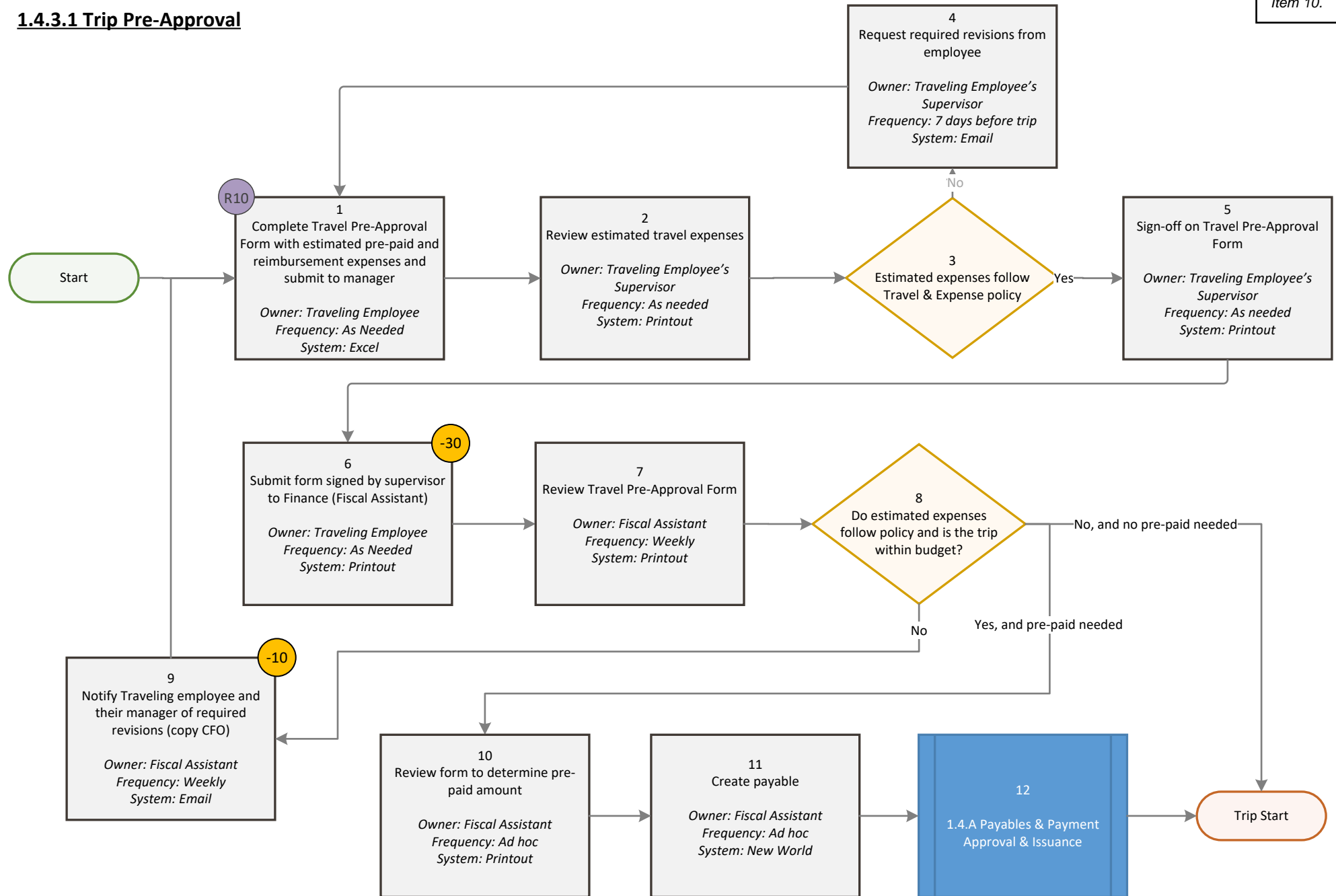
1.4.3 Travel & Expense Reimbursement

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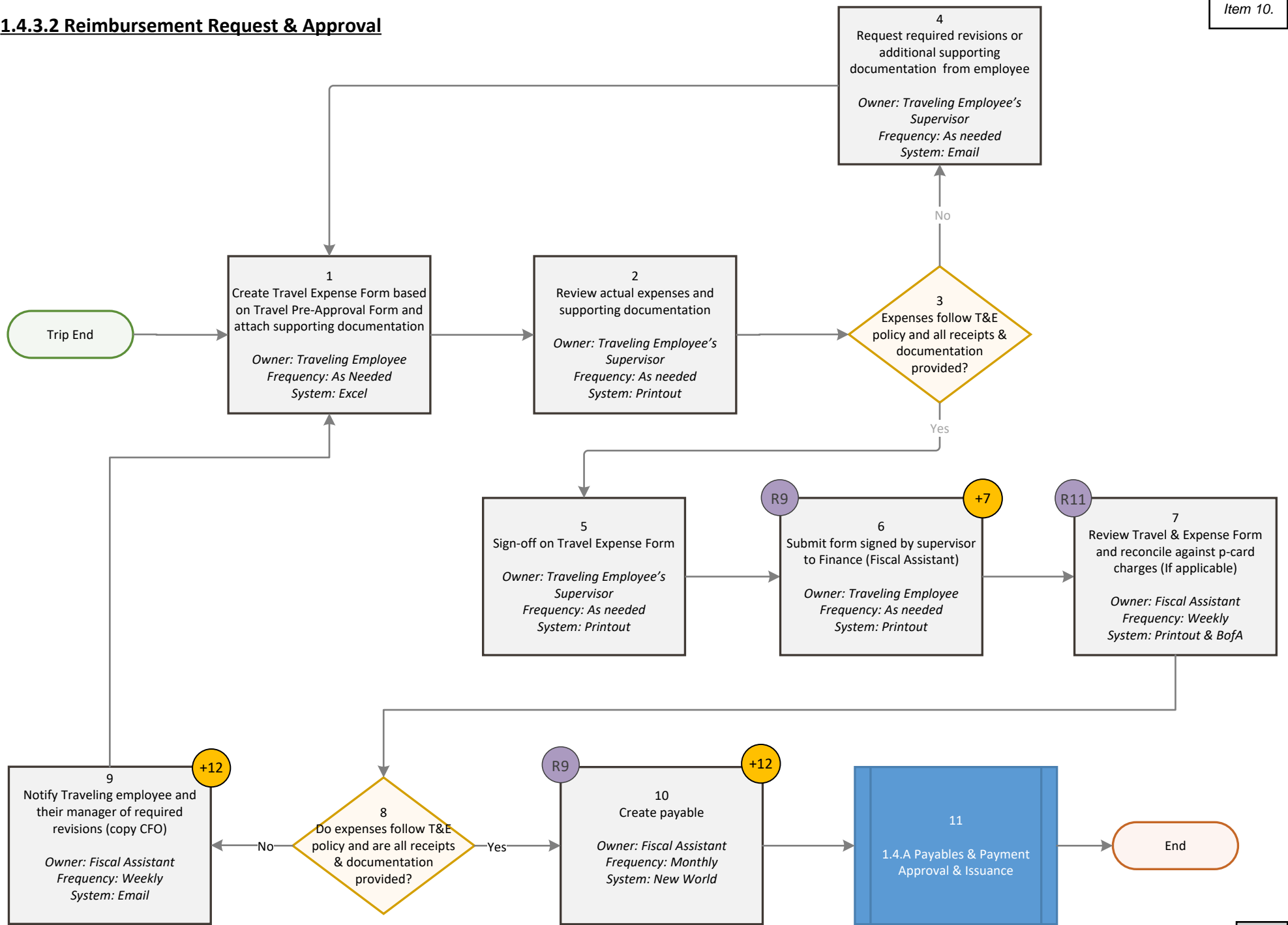


1.4.3.1 Trip Pre-Approval

Item 10.

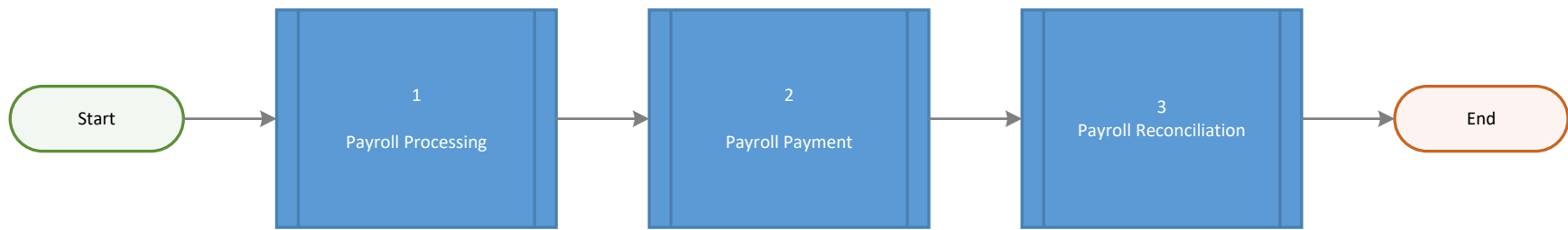


1.4.3.2 Reimbursement Request & Approval



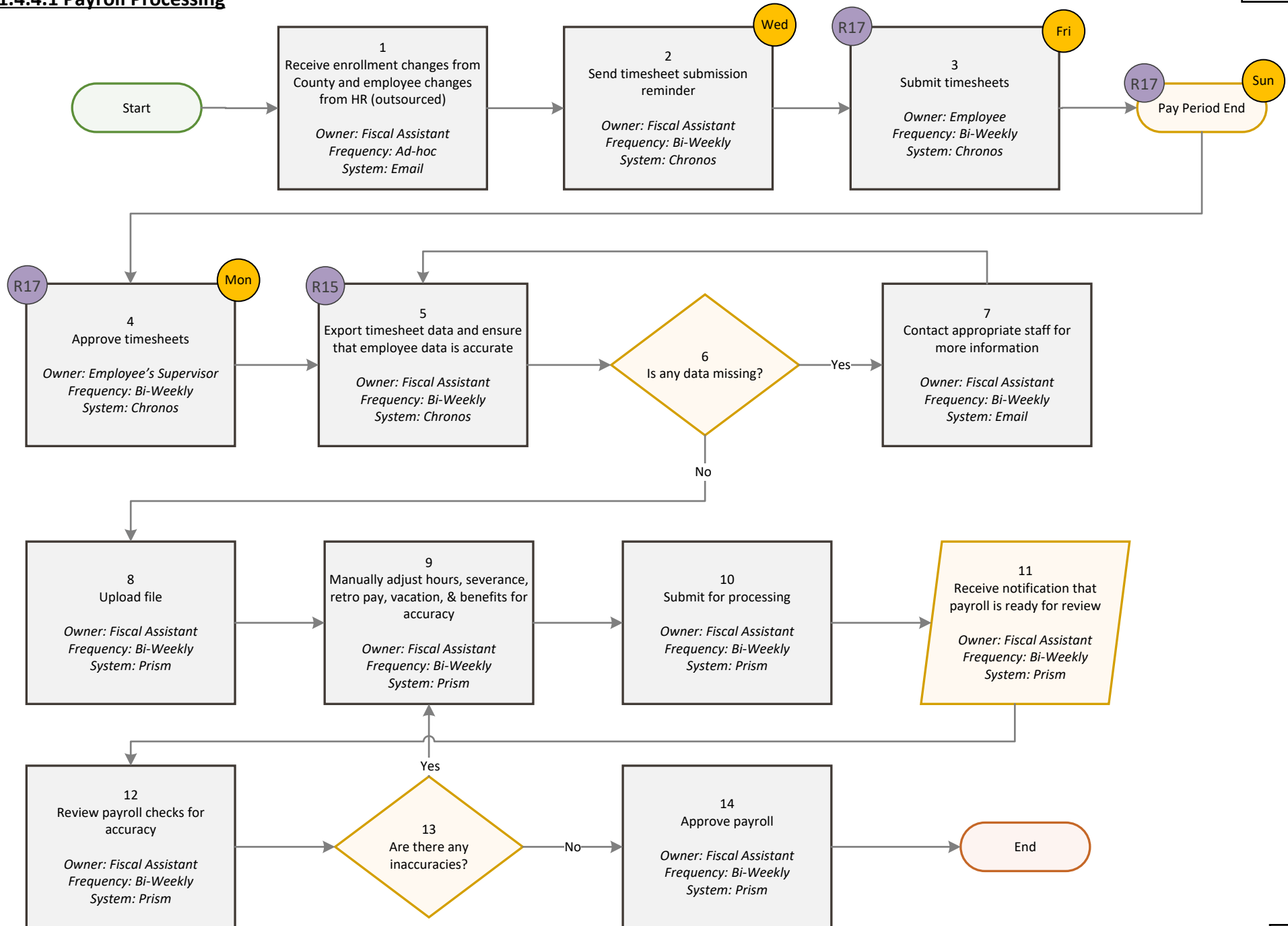
1.4.4 Payroll

Item 10.

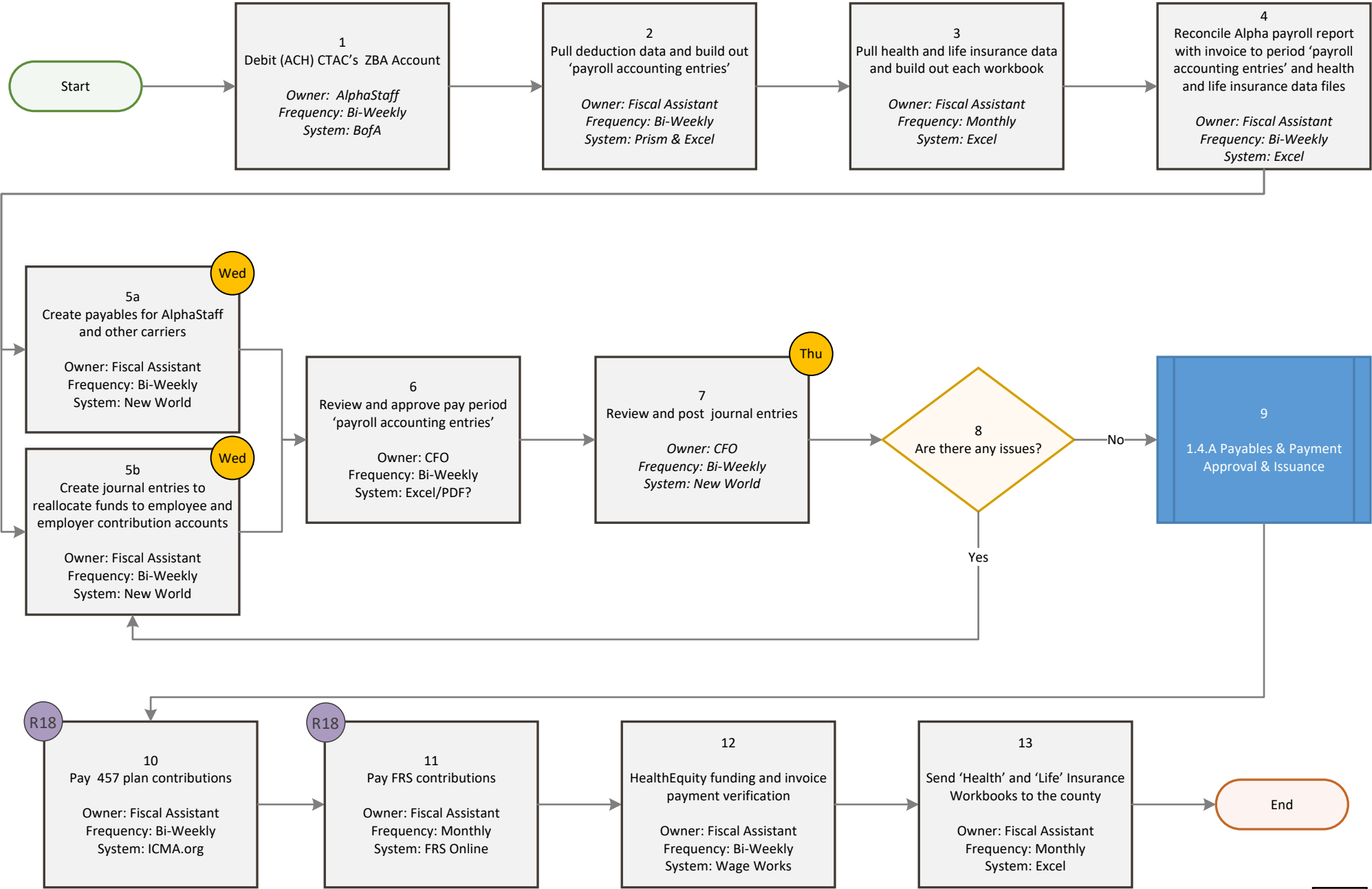


1.4.4.1 Payroll Processing

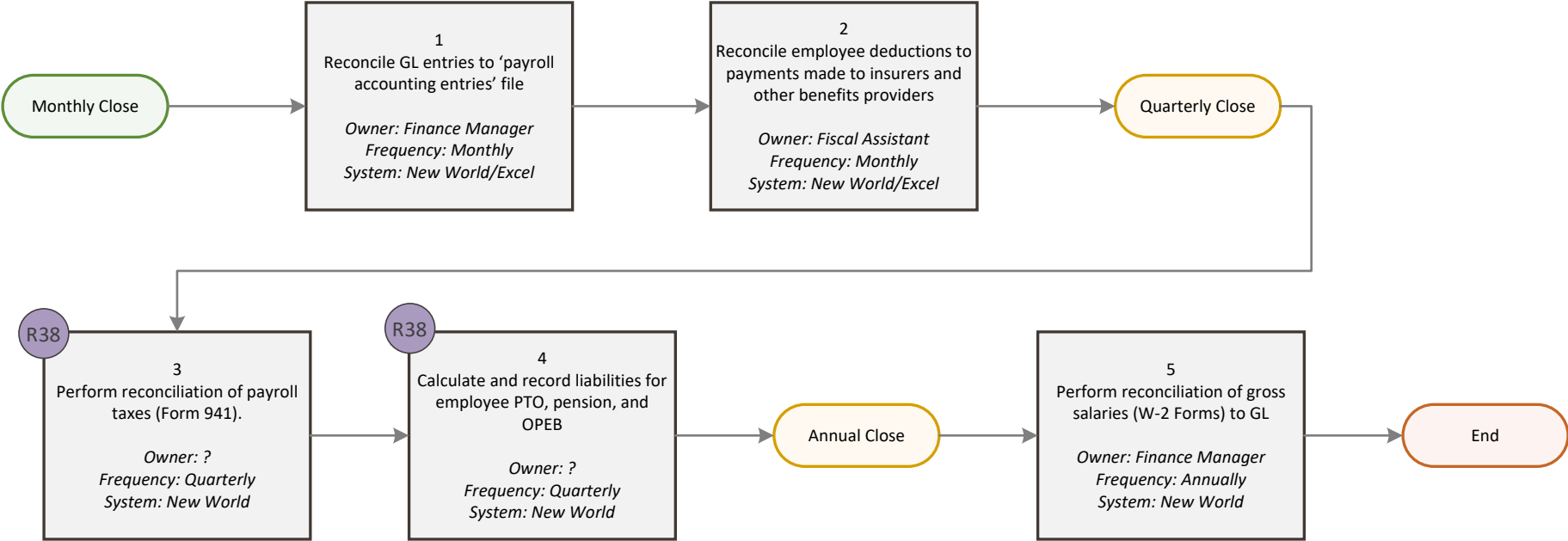
Item 10.



1.4.4.2 Payroll Payment

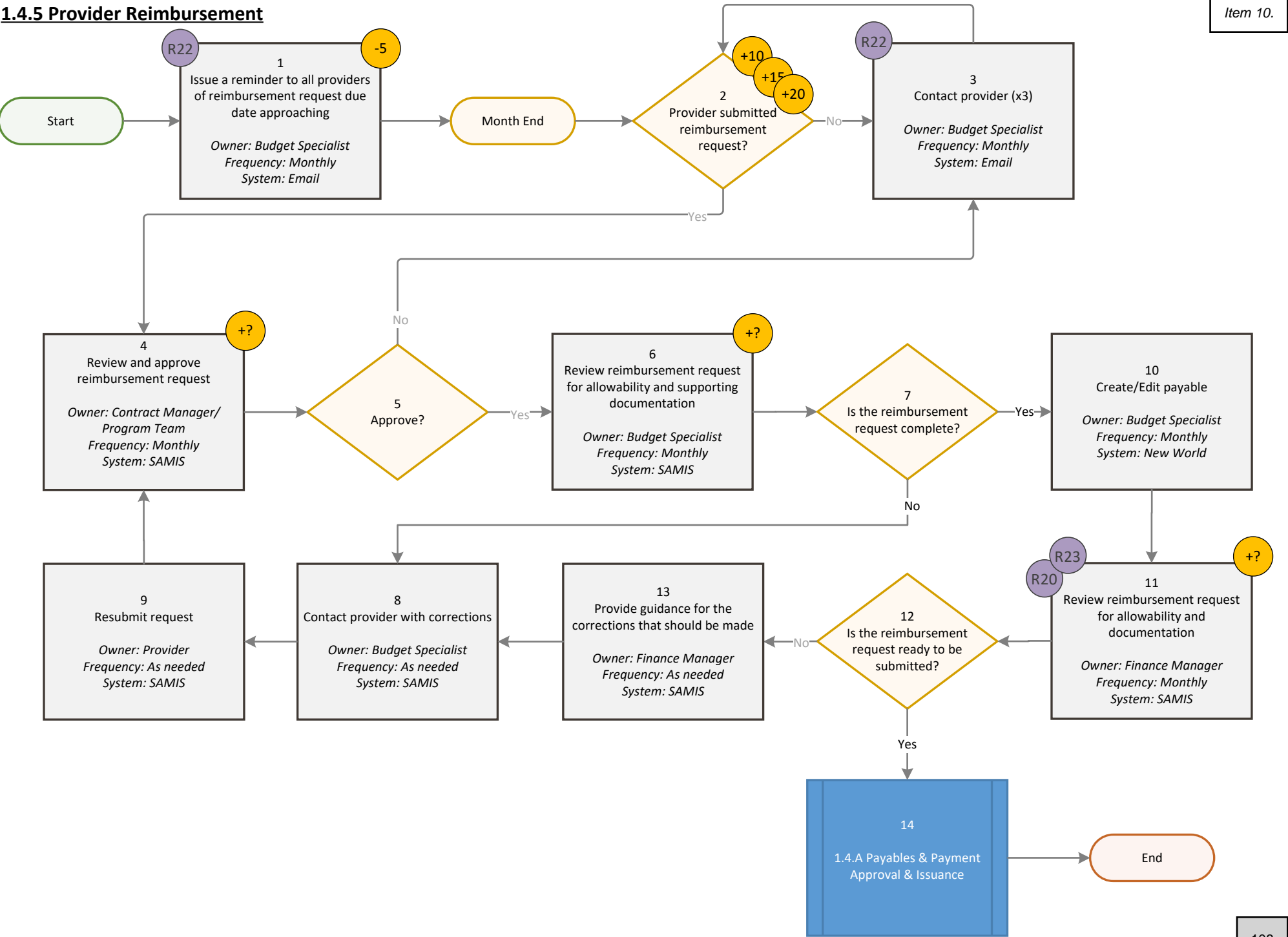


1.4.4.3 Payroll Reconciliation

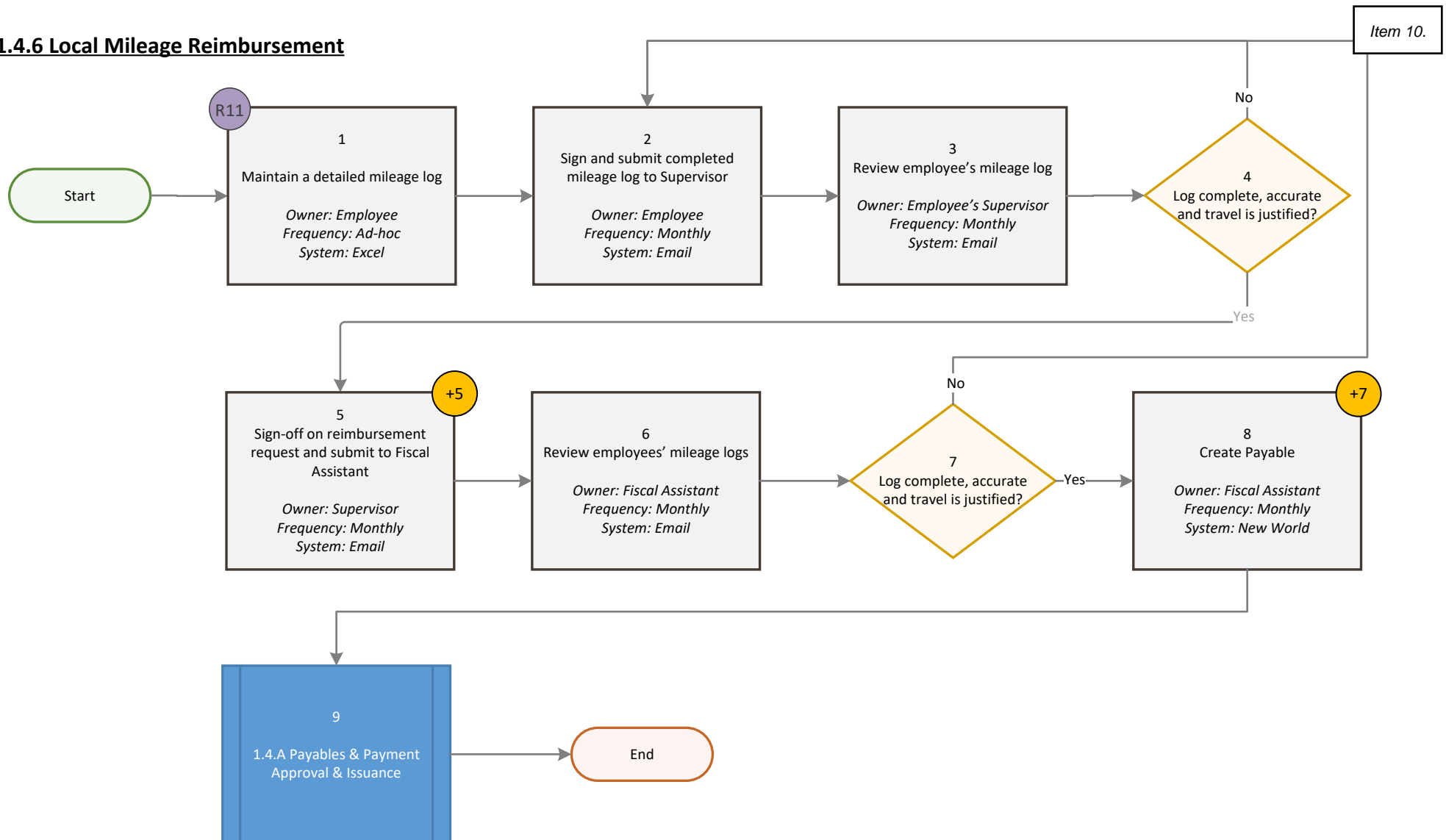


1.4.5 Provider Reimbursement

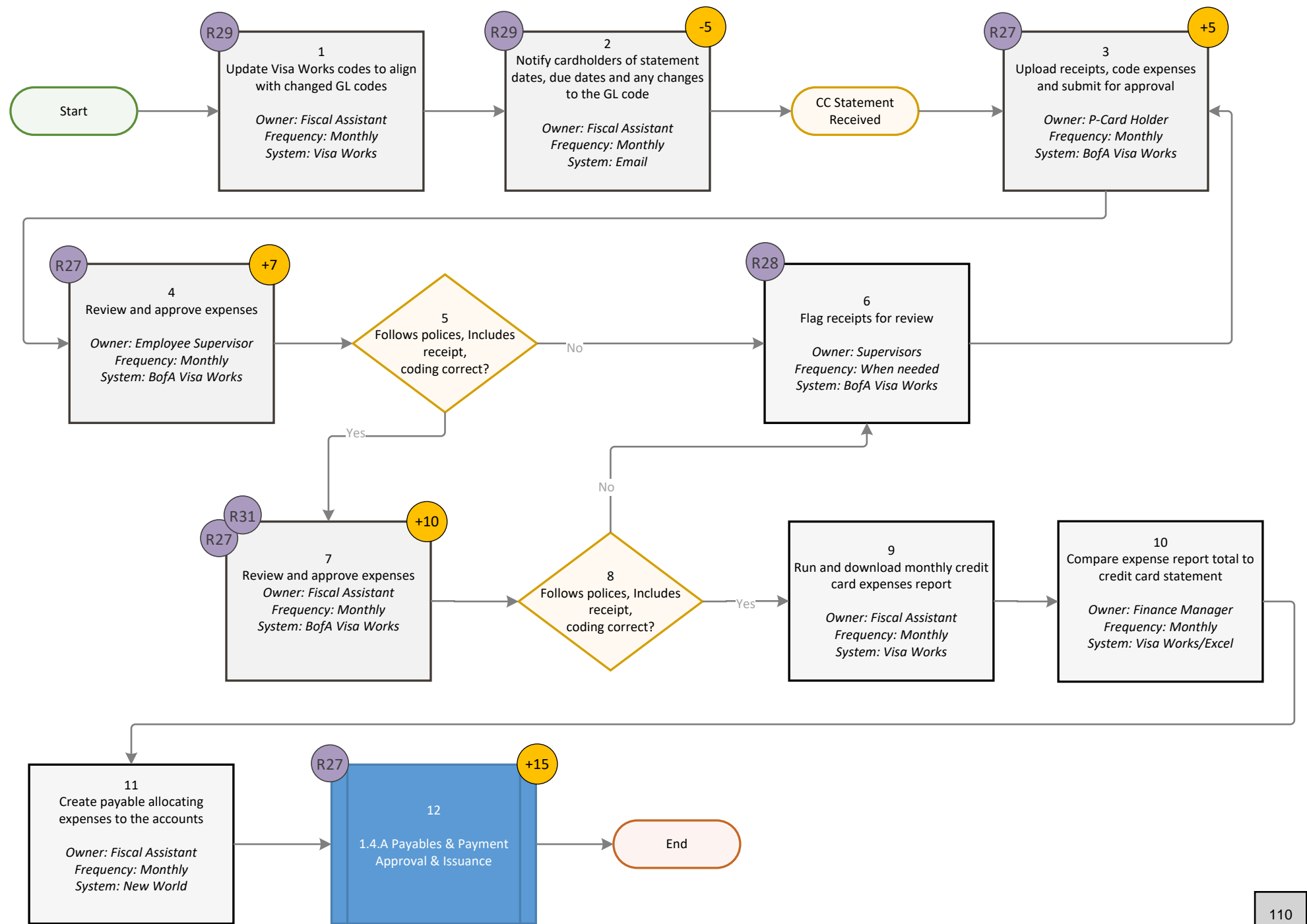
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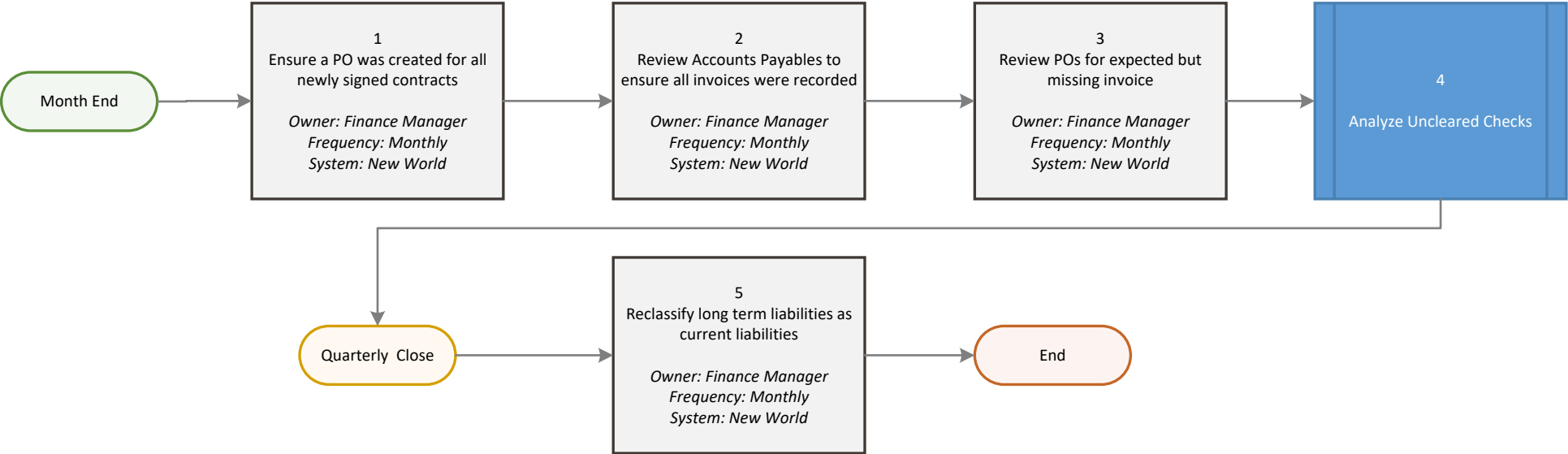
1.4.6 Local Mileage Reimbursement



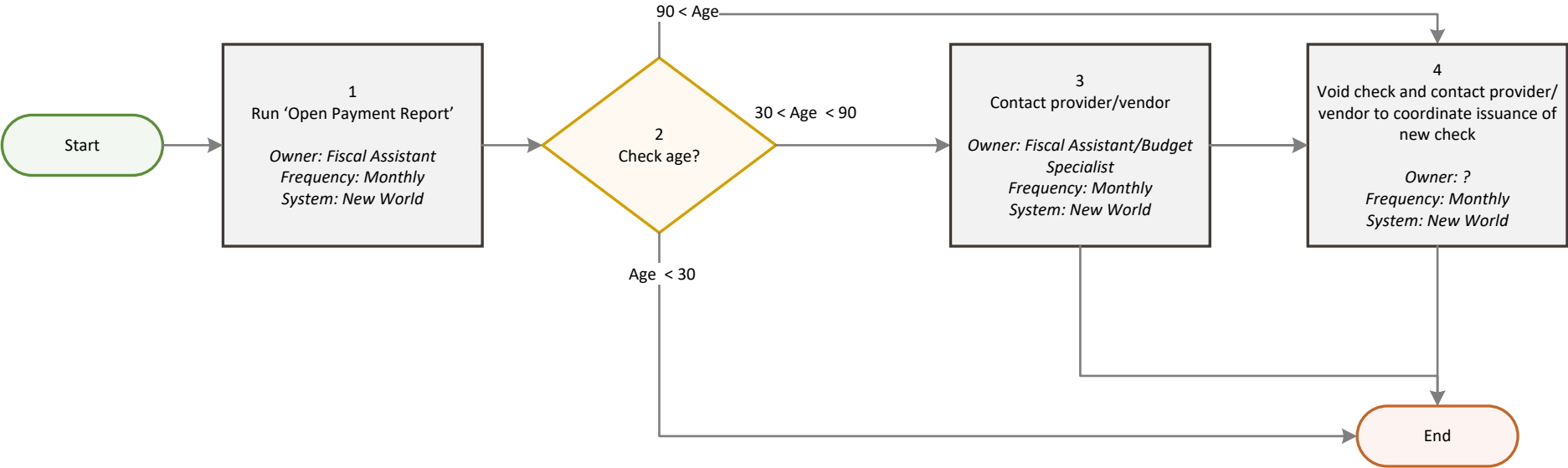
1.4.7 Credit Card Expense Reconciliation



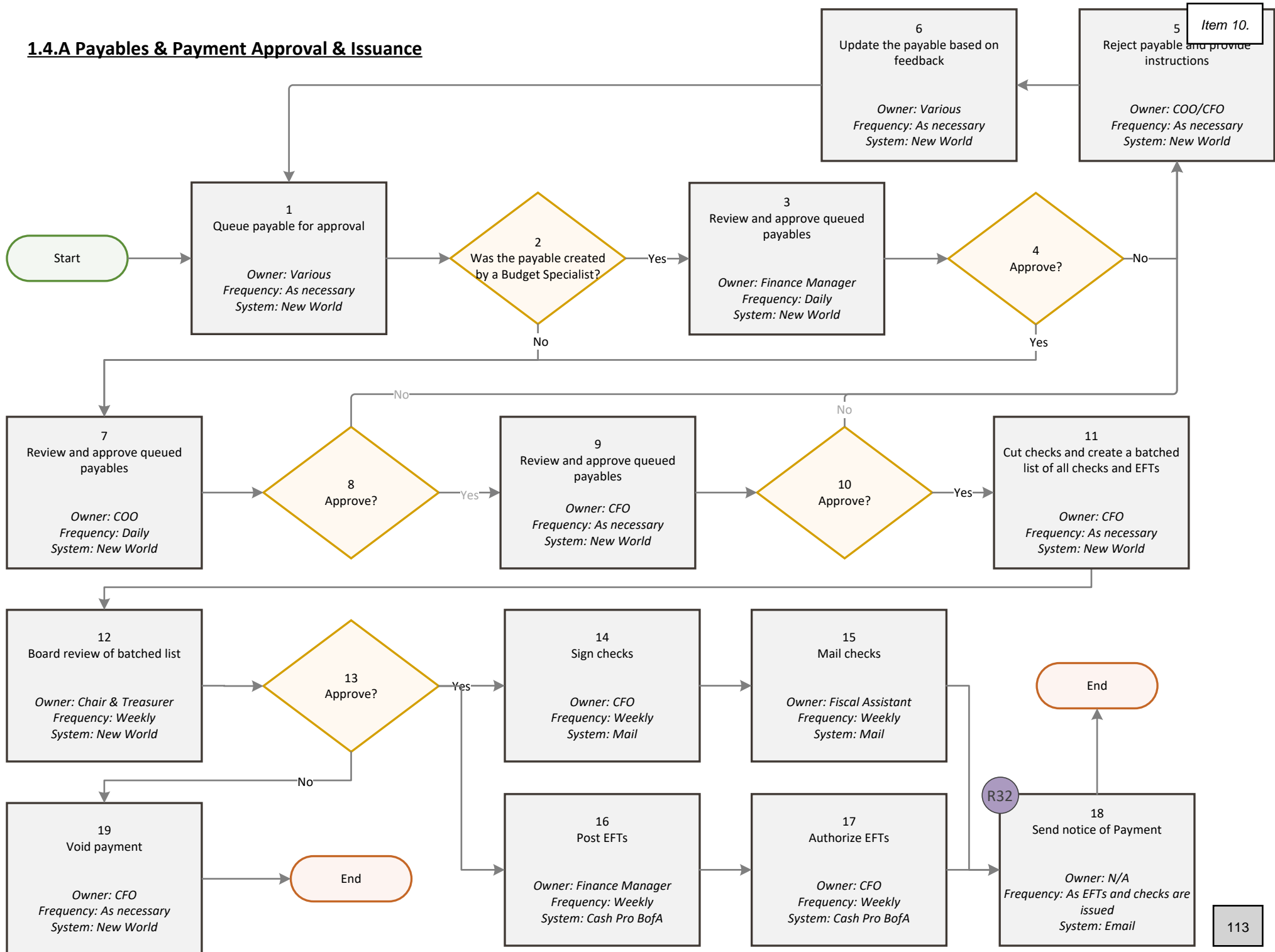
1.4.8 Account Payables Review & Reconciliation



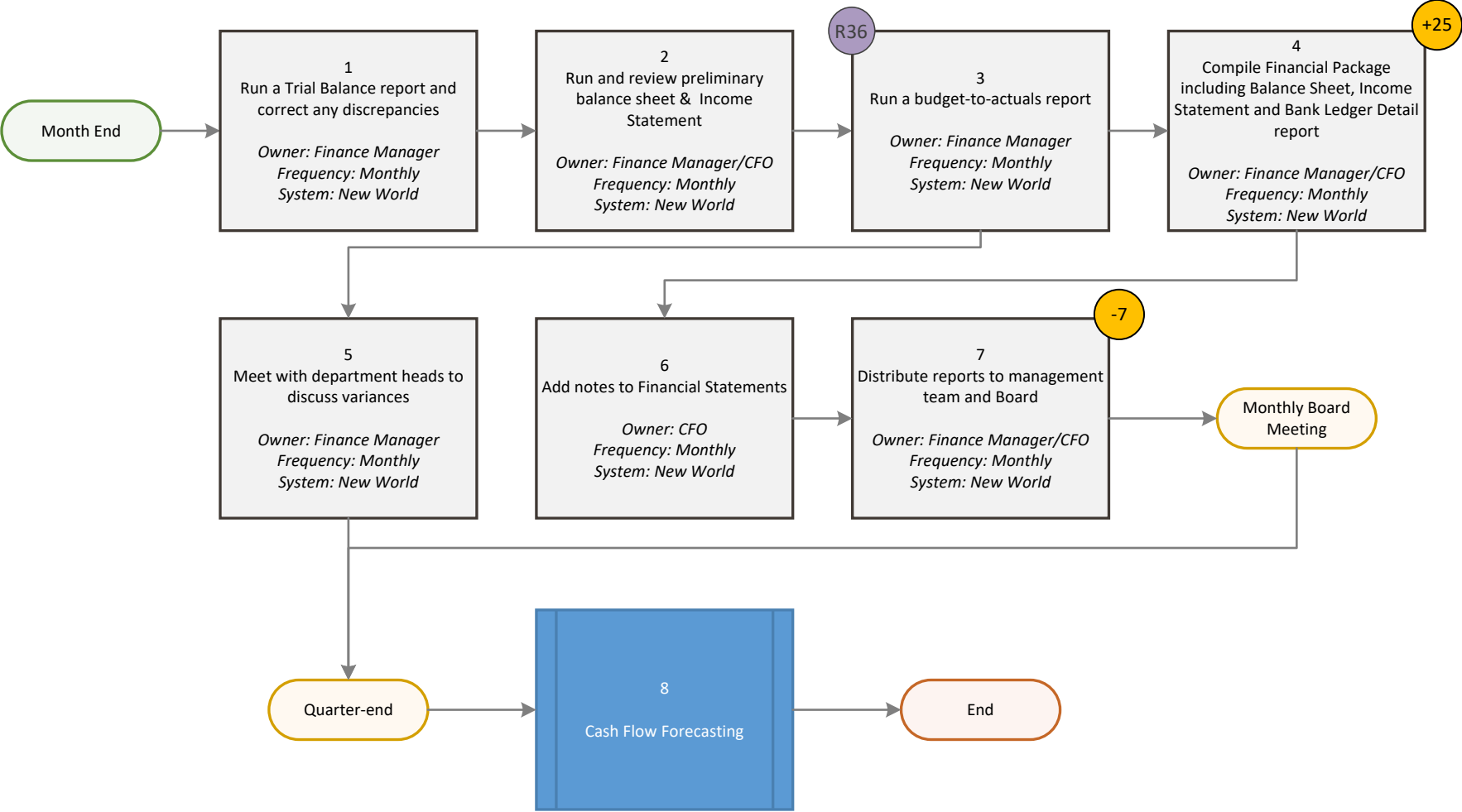
1.4.8.4 Analyze Uncleared Checks



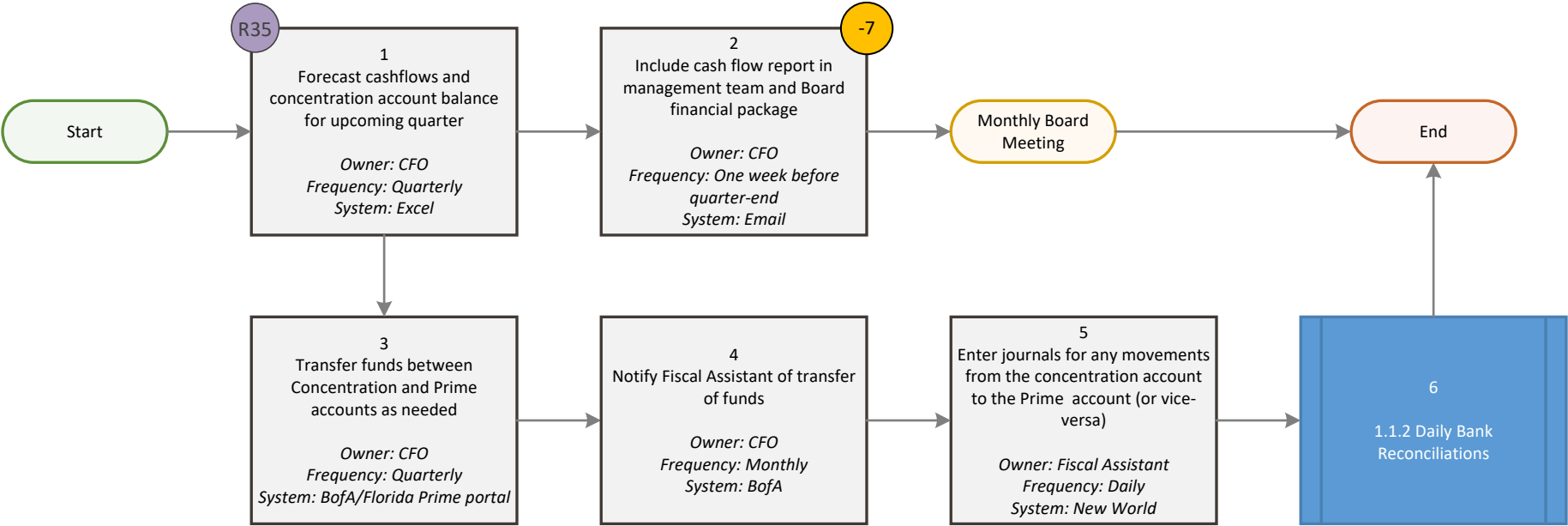
1.4.A Payables & Payment Approval & Issuance



1.6 Review & Report



1.6.8 Cash Flow Forecasting



Children's Trust of Alachua County
Internal Controls and Fiscal Infrastructure Assessment
Gap Analysis
February 2025

Recommendation Number	Process	Sub-Process	Current State/Finding/Identified Gap	Systems & Applications	Recommendation/Corrective Action	Purpose (Objective)	Impact/gap severity	Estimated LOE	KPIs
R1	1.1 Current Assets	1.1.1 Cash Receipts	The Fiscal Assistant is responsible for depositing checks, recording revenue in New World, and conducting bank reconciliations. This practice does not align with best practices for segregation of duties, which aim to minimize risks by distributing these responsibilities among different individuals.	New World	Establish a process in which mail is opened (currently CFO) and checks are <u>logged</u> by a staff member other than the staff member depositing the checks and recording the revenue in New World. Periodically reconcile log to bank deposits.	Ensure proper segregation of duties.	High	Low	NA
R2	1.1 Current Assets	1.1.2 Daily Bank Reconciliations	Daily bank reconciliation procedures are undocumented and solely known by the Fiscal Assistant, resulting in a lack of backup support during their absence.	New World/BoFA	Document the daily bank reconciliation procedures and train additional staff to ensure continuity and backup support in the Fiscal Assistant's absence. Implement a daily review process by management to verify that reconciliations are completed accurately and on time.	To ensure continuity, accuracy, and oversight in daily bank reconciliations.	Medium	Medium	Percentage of Daily Bank Reconciliations Completed and Reviewed On-Time.
R3	1.1 Current Assets	1.1.2 Daily Bank Reconciliations	Voided were inappropriately used, such as voiding transactions instead of recording returns and re-issuances, leading to reconciliation difficulties due to inaccurate financial records.	New World	Establish clear guidelines for when transactions should be voided and outline the proper process for recording returned checks.	Ensure accurate financial records and facilitate easier bank reconciliation.	Low	Low	NA
R4	1.1 Current Assets	1.1.3 Monthly Bank Reconciliation	New World's current setup permits entries to be edited after the month-end close.	New World	If possible, configure New World to lock entries after the month-end close to prevent post-close edits.	Ensure the integrity and accuracy of financial records by preventing edits after the month-end close.	High	Low	NA
R5	1.1 Current Assets	1.1.3 Monthly Bank Reconciliation	The absence of standardized month-end close procedures has resulted in inconsistencies, leading to missed journal entries and reconciliations.	New World	Continue developing, implementing and documenting standardized month-end close procedures to ensure consistency and accuracy in journal entries and reconciliations.	Ensure timely, consistent and accurate financial reporting by standardizing month-end close procedures.	High	Medium	Percentage of Month-End Close Processes Completed On-Time.
R6	1.1 Current Assets	1.1.3 Monthly Bank Reconciliation	The VisaWorks bank accounts are not directly integrated with New World.	VisaWorks, New World	Integrate the VisaWorks bank accounts with New World.	Ensure timely data flow, reduce manual processing, and enhance financial accuracy and	High	High	Time spent manually entering VisaWorks data into New World.
R7	1.1 Current Assets	1.1.4 Amortized Pre-Paid Expenses	Property liabilities are not classified and treated as prepayment expense.	New World	Develop a policy document outlining which expenses should be treated as	Adhere to established accounting principles.	Medium	Medium	NA
R8	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.3 Travel & Expense Reimbursement	Employees' lack of familiarity with the travel and expense reimbursement process and policies leads to inefficiencies in both pre-trip and post-trip procedures.	VisaWorks, Travel & Expense Spreadsheets	Document travel and expense reimbursement policies and procedures, and distribute them to employees. Develop concise training materials, such as one-pagers highlighting key information. Provide training for new employees and consider conducting annual training sessions for all staff.	Improve the efficiency of pre-trip and post-trip processes while reducing the burden on Finance staff to correct errors and follow up on missing or incorrect information from employees.	High	Medium	Average Time Spent on Pre-Trip and Post-Trip Approvals and Processing.
R9	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.3 Travel & Expense Reimbursement	Employees often submit their travel expense packets late.	Excel	Implement a policy with clear deadlines for submitting travel expense packets post-travel: • Submit form to Finance with 7 days after trip ends. • Revisions are made or payable is created 12 days after trip ends.	Ensure that travel expense packets are submitted in a timely manner.	Medium	Low	Percentage of Travel Expense Packets Submitted On-Time.
R10	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.3.1 Pre-Approval	Traveling employees submit a detailed list of anticipated expenses to obtain trip approval.	Travel & Expense Spreadsheets	For requests without an advance, simplify the pre-trip approval process by requiring the traveler and supervisor to submit an overall trip budget instead of a detailed expense list. Finance will use this budget to confirm fund availability within the department's budget.	Streamline and simplify Travel & Expense process for traveling employees and approvers.	Medium	Low	Average Time Spent on Pre-Trip and Post-Trip Approvals and Processing.
R11	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.3.2 Reimbursement Request & Approval	Travel and expense reimbursements are managed using Excel spreadsheets, and the lack of integration with the P-card program increases the risk of errors in the reimbursement process.	VisaWorks, Travel & Expense Spreadsheets	Implement an expense reimbursement software solution that integrates with the P-card program.	Streamline all spending verification and reimbursement processes into a single, unified system that includes P-card expenses, out-of-pocket expenses, and local mileage, ensuring efficiency and reducing the potential for errors.	High	High	Time spent on expense reconciliation and reimbursement processes.
R12	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.3.2 Reimbursement Request & Approval	The monthly timeline for submitting local mileage reimbursement requests is not documented or shared with employees. This leads to delayed submission of local mileage reimbursement requests.	New World	Document and distribute a recurring monthly timeline for mileage reimbursement, either as part of the employee handbook or as a separate policy. Additionally, send monthly reminders with specific deadlines for submitting mileage reimbursement requests.	Help ensure that reimbursements are submitted in a timely manner, allowing for the appropriate time to process and issue reimbursement.	Medium	Low	Number of late mileage reimbursement requests.
R13	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.4 Payroll	Some errors have occurred in the past with employee benefit enrollment information or calculations. In some cases those errors were not identified for several payroll cycles. This is at least partially due to the heavy reliance on spreadsheets for maintaining employee enrollment information and contribution calculations, which in turn may be a result of the limitations of AlphaStaff (at least under current setup) in the area of benefits management and reporting.	AlphaStaff Prism, Payroll Excel Sheets	1.Strengthen the review and approval phase of the bi-weekly payroll process by specifically focusing on changes to employee enrollment, underlying benefits rates, employee compensation, and any other factors that affect employee paychecks. 2. Enhance the monthly payroll reconciliation process by focusing on changes to employee enrollment. Incorporate a verification step with the outsourced HR team and the county benefits manager to confirm that all enrollment changes have been accurately reported and accounted for.	Ensure the accuracy of the payroll process, prevent errors and reduce the need for retroactive adjustments.	High	Medium	1. Number of errors per payroll cycle. 2. Number of payroll cycles it takes to identify and correct an error in a previous payroll.
R14	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.4 Payroll	The payroll processor is not promptly informed of changes to employee benefits enrollment, leading to potential inaccuracies in payroll processing and employee compensation.	NA	Collaborate with the outsourced HR team and the county benefits manager to improve the tracking of employee enrollment changes and establish a systematic process for notifying the payroll processor of these changes as part of the bi-weekly payroll cycle.	Proactively manage employee enrollment changes, thereby minimizing the need for retroactive corrections to employee and employer deductions.	High	Medium	1. Number of errors per payroll cycle. 2. Number of payroll cycles it takes to identify and correct an error in a previous payroll.
R15	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.4 Payroll	AlphaStaff, the payroll solution used by the organization presents several limitations in critical areas such as reporting, user account management, process automation and lack of integration between the time & attendance and payroll modules.	AlphaStaff Chronos & Prism	Short-Term: Create a list of requirements for AlphaStaff to address. Meet with AlphaStaff representatives and work with them to address identified issues. If AlphaStaff is unable to satisfactorily address requirement: Long Term: Initiate an RFP process for a system to replace AlphaStaff	Streamline payroll process: * Integrate timekeeping and payroll processes. * Improve reporting to facilitate payroll processing * Empower CTAC payroll processor/s to administer the system and user accounts without the need for external support.	High	High	Number of days it takes to complete payroll process for each pay period.
R16	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.4 Payroll	Jenime has covered for Tara and processed payroll while she was on leave, but had limited time to learn the process and has not been part of it since.	AlphaStaff Chronos & Prism	Identify and create an ongoing training plan for backup payroll processors. Create detailed documentation of the payroll process.	Ensure business continuity during employee absences or departures.	Medium	Medium	Number of days it takes to complete payroll process for each pay period.
R17	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.4.1 Payroll Processing	There aren't clear deadlines for submission and approval of timesheets.	AlphaStaff Chronos	Establish a monthly timeline for timesheet submission: • Employees to submit their timesheet on the Friday at the end of the pay period. • Supervisor/Manager Approval: by COB on Monday after the pay period ends.	Promote timely processing of payroll.	Medium	Low	Number of follow-up emails sent by Payroll Processor to staff regarding timesheets.
R18	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.4.2 Payroll Payment	FRS and 457 payments are handled by the Finance Manager.	ICMA.org and FRS Online	Make the main payroll processor (currently the Fiscal Assistant) responsible for processing all payroll related payments, including FRS and 457.	Streamline payroll process. Reduce the Finance Manager's workload.	Low	Low	Number of days it takes to complete payroll process for each pay period.
R19	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.5 Provider Reimbursement	There is inconsistency in the documentation that Budget Specialists require their providers to submit for reimbursements, such as timesheets.	SAMIS	Conduct an annual review and update of the Provider Handbook, training Budget Specialists on the changes to ensure they understand the streamlined processes and removed requirements.	Ensure Budget Specialists have a unified understanding of the Provider Handbook, fostering consistency across provider engagements.	High	Low	NA
R20	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.5 Provider Reimbursement	The provider reimbursement request process is burdened by lengthy and duplicate approvals, along with the unnecessary requirement to print backup documentation.	New World, SAMIS	Streamline the provider reimbursement request process by eliminating duplicate review and approval steps across New World and SAMIS and removing the requirement to print backup documentation.	Enhance efficiency and reduce processing time in the provider reimbursement request process.	High	Low	Average Processing Time for Provider Reimbursement Requests.
R21	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.5 Provider Reimbursement	Providers frequently submit invoices that fail to comply with contract guidelines.	SAMIS	1. Conduct an annual review and update of the Provider Handbook to remove unnecessary requirements and simplify processes. 2. Have budget specialists meet with providers upon signing a new contract with CTAC to provide a summary of the Provider Handbook. 3. Include guideline reminders in monthly provider submission notices, emphasizing areas that were problematic in previous submissions. 4. Escalate recurring issues with specific providers for resolution.	Enhance providers' compliance with reimbursement submission guidelines to improve the efficiency of processing reimbursement requests.	High	Medium	Percentage of Reimbursement Requests Processed Without Requiring Budget Specialist follow-up with provider.
R22	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.5 Provider Reimbursement	Providers fail to send invoices on time.	SAMIS	Establish consistent reminders and follow ups with providers who have not yet submitted their invoices.	Ensure timely receipt of invoices, facilitating accurate financial tracking and prompt payment processing.	Medium	Low	Percentage of Invoices Received On-Time from Providers.
R23	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.5 Provider Reimbursement	Reliance on the Finance Manager for provider invoice approval leads to bottlenecks during her unavailability.	SAMIS	Delegate invoice approval authority to additional qualified staff members.	Ensure continuity and prevent bottlenecks when the Finance Manager is unavailable.	Medium	Low	The number of invoices approved in the Finance Manager's absence.
R24	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.5 Provider Reimbursement	Budget Specialists are not alerted when providers submit reimbursement requests, complicating the tracking of outstanding submissions.	SAMIS	Collaborate with SAMIS administrators to create reports or a dashboard for Budget Specialists, displaying monthly submissions and any missing submissions for their provider portfolio. If reports are not feasible or if preferred, explore setting up email alerts to notify Budget Specialists when providers submit invoices.	To keep Budget Specialists informed about the status of their providers and reduce the risk of missed invoice submissions.	Medium	Medium	Percentage of Reimbursement Requests Processed Without Requiring Budget Specialist follow-up with provider.

Recommendation Number	Process	Sub-Process	Current State/Finding/Identified Gap	Systems & Applications	Recommendation/Corrective Action	Purpose (Objective)	Impact/gap severity	Estimated LOE	KPIs
R25	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.7 Credit Card Reconciliation & Payment	Policy for cardholder is not documented.	VisaWorks	Develop and circulate a policy for a purchasing card (P-card) program: Purpose and Scope: The policy defines the P-card program's objectives and applicable personnel. Eligibility and Application: Eligibility criteria and the application process for obtaining a P-card are outlined. Roles and Responsibilities: Specific duties for cardholders, approvers, and administrators are detailed. Card Usage Guidelines: The policy lists permissible purchases and sets spending and transaction limits. Security and Cardholder Responsibilities: Instructions for card security and reporting lost cards are provided. Reconciliation and Documentation: The process for transaction reconciliation and required documentation is described. Compliance and Audit: Compliance requirements and the audit process are explained. Training and Support: Mandatory training and available support resources are detailed. Consequences of Misuse: The policy outlines consequences for misuse or non-compliance.	Help ensure that the program is used effectively and responsibly, minimizing risk and maximizing efficiency.	High	Medium	Number of follow-up emails sent by Finance P-card program manager to staff regarding credit card expenses.
R26	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.7 Credit Card Reconciliation & Payment	Employees use P-cards for significant expenses without prior approval, a practice that would be better managed through an invoicing process.	VisaWorks	Implement a policy mandating pre-approval for large expenses and promote the use of an invoicing process over P-cards. Additionally, create a list of preferred vendors to streamline purchasing and enhance control.	Enhance financial oversight and control by ensuring large expenses are pre-approved, utilizing an invoicing process, and consolidating purchases through a list of preferred vendors.	High	Medium	NA
R27	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.7 Credit Card Reconciliation & Payment	Unclear credit card reconciliation deadlines lead to late receipt submissions by staff, requiring payment of credit card statements before identifying the correct accounts to charge for the expenses.	VisaWorks, New World	Establish clear credit card reconciliation deadlines and communicate them to staff, ensuring timely receipt submissions and accurate expense allocation. Suggested monthly timeline: •Cardholder Review & Submission: Day 5 •Supervisor/Manager Approval: Day 7 •Accounting Review and Reconciliation: Days 10 - 15	Ensure timely and accurate reconciliation of credit card expenses.	Medium	Low	Number of credit card reallocations performed each month.
R28	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.7 Credit Card Reconciliation & Payment	Employees fail to specify the purpose of each expense in the transaction's description making it hard to verify the justification for their purchase and the accuracy of their coding.	VisaWorks	Train and regularly remind staff of the information they should include in transaction's Description field and of the importance of doing so. Additionally, if the option is available, add help text to Description (and other relevant fields) in VisaWorks to guide users.	Enhance staff's understanding of the necessity to complete the Description field and provide clear instructions on how to do so.	Medium	Low	Number of follow-up emails sent by Finance P-card program manager to staff regarding credit card expenses.
R29	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.7 Credit Card Reconciliation & Payment	GL account codes in the system are outdated, causing cardholders to struggle with selecting the correct codes and leading to errors.	VisaWorks	Allow the P-card program manager (Fiscal Assistant currently) to update GL codes in the VisaWorks. P-card program manager should then update codes and inform cardholders of changes monthly.	Simplify submission process for card holders and reduce coding errors.	Medium	Low	Number of follow-up emails sent by Finance P-card program manager to staff regarding credit card expenses.
R30	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.7 Credit Card Reconciliation & Payment	New and existing cardholders and approvers do not receive training on card usage and guidelines.	VisaWorks	Require and provide training to all new cardholders before they receive their card, as well as to new approvers before they are added as an approver in VisaWorks. Develop training materials, such as short videos or one-pagers, focusing on expense report submission in the system. Consider implementing annual refresher trainings for cardholders and approvers.	Equip employees with the necessary knowledge to use their P-cards and submit their expense reports.	Medium	Medium	Number of follow-up emails sent by Finance P-card program manager to staff regarding credit card expenses.
R31	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.7 Credit Card Reconciliation & Payment	There is currently no one other than Tara that can serve as the Finance approver of credit card expenses in her absence. Delegate approval functionality is not currently being used for approvers.	VisaWorks	Document the Finance review and approval process for P-card expenses, and train at least one more member of the finance team in managing the process. Ensure that delegate approvers are identified for each approver and that approvers know how to set up their delegates in the system.	Ensure business continuity during employee absences or departures.	Medium	Medium	Number of follow-up emails sent by Finance P-card program manager to staff regarding credit card expenses.
R32	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	1.4.A Payables & Payment Approval & Issuance	EFT notices must be sent manually and are time consuming.	New World	Automate EFT notices.	Help increase the efficiency of the payables process.	Medium	Medium	The number of EFT notices that are manually emailed to providers.
R33	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	NA	A detailed procurement policy for internal administrative and overhead purchases is missing resulting in inconsistent handling of these transactions.		Update and document current procurement policies and procedures, and provide staff training. Consider annual refresher sessions for staff and develop reference materials, such as one-pagers, for easy access.	Ensure staff are well-informed and consistent in applying procurement policies and procedures.	High	Medium	Number of Procurement-Related Errors or Inconsistencies Reported Per Quarter.
R34	1.4 Account Payables/Liabilities	NA	The process for establishing and monitoring purchase orders for new vendors is undocumented and solely known by the Finance Manager, leaving no backup support in their absence.	New World	Document the purchase order setup and monitoring process for new vendors and train additional staff to ensure continuity in the Finance Manager's absence.	To ensure continuity and consistency in managing purchase orders.	Medium	Low	NA
R35	1.6 Review & Report	1.6.8 Cash Flow Forecasting	There is currently no policy outlining the purpose of the investment account, specifying the target balance to maintain, or providing guidelines for managing excess funds.	NA	Develop and implement a comprehensive policy that defines the purpose of the investment account, establishes a target balance to maintain, and provides clear guidelines for managing excess funds.	Ensure strategic management of the investment account.	High	Low	NA
R36	1.6 Review & Report	1.6.8 Cash Flow Forecasting	Cash flow analysis and management of the Concentration account balance are conducted on an ad-hoc basis by the CFO and Finance Manager.	BoFA / Florida Prime Portal	Conduct quarterly cash flow analyses to determine the ideal Concentration Account balance, transferring excess to the Prime Investment Account. Establish upper and lower balance thresholds, and have the Fiscal Assistant notify the CFO during daily reconciliations if these limits are breached, allowing for necessary adjustments.	Ensure sufficient funds are available in the Concentration Account for meeting obligations while maximizing returns on excess funds by transferring them to the Prime Investment Account.	High	Low	NA
R37	Overall	NA	Some processes or tasks do not have a clear backup delegate when the owner is away. Without a designated individual to back up certain processes or tasks, delays and inefficiencies may arise due to the absence of clear accountability. For example, only the Finance Manager knows the process for establishing and monitoring purchase orders for new vendors.	NA	Assign a dedicated "backup" owner to each process and task to ensure clear accountability and effective management in the event that the original owner is away.	Enhance accountability, improve efficiency, and facilitate communication by clearly defining responsibility. Ensure continuity, support performance tracking, and drive effective management aligned with organizational goals.	High	Medium	NA
R38	Overall	NA	Certain tasks continue to be assigned to finance staff and management based on outdated responsibility allocations and inadequate training time for new personnel. This approach impedes managers from focusing on strategic initiatives, creates dependencies among staff that affect their ability to perform independently, and may, at times, compromise the separation of duties.	NA	Conduct a comprehensive review of current responsibilities to identify tasks that can be reassigned or automated.	Enable managers to concentrate on strategic tasks, Automate transactional tasks wherever feasible. Organize tasks to allow staff to efficiently complete processes within their areas of responsibility, while maintaining appropriate oversight. Additionally, close any existing gaps in the separation of duties, ensuring robust internal controls and accountability.	High	Medium	NA

File Attachments for Item:

11. Comprehensive Literacy Needs Assessment Report and Recommendation Overview (Mia Jones)

**Item:**

Comprehensive Literacy Needs Assessment Report and Recommendation Overview (Mia Jones)

Requested Action:

The Board is asked to approve the staff to contract with a consultant to assist in the convening of literacy partners and the development of Alachua Reads.

Background:

In May 2023 the Children's Trust board had a joint meeting with the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners. During that meeting the Children's Trust staff were tasked with creating a Comprehensive Literacy Plan.

It was determined that a comprehensive needs assessment was needed to help inform the development of a comprehensive literacy plan aimed at improving literacy achievement for all students. In October 2023, discussions were held with UF Lastinger Center about project coordination and developing the assessment.

Project Phases and Overview:

Three Phases of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment

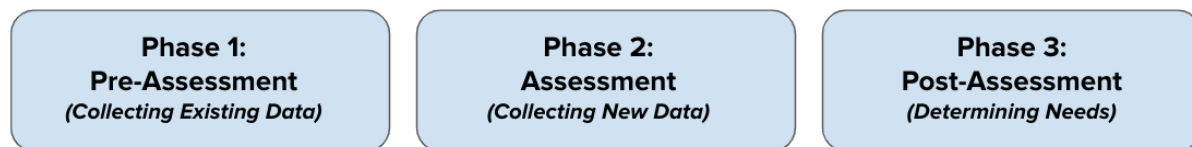


Figure 1: Three Phase of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment adapted from Witkin & Altschuld (1995).

We have completed all phases of the project plan.

Who's at the Table:

We know that schools can't do it alone, and that it will take our entire community to reach our goal for children to be ready for kindergarten and 90% reading on grade-level by the end of third grade. We also know there are many adults in our community who are faced with literacy challenges. To help with the 3 phases of the Comprehensive Literacy Needs Assessment, expertise was received from:

Alachua County School District

Alachua County Public Library

United Way of North Central Florida

**Alachua County Campaign for Grade Level Reading
Advisory Board**

UF Anita Zucker Center	Florida Campaign for Grade Level Reading
UF Lastinger Center	Greater Gainesville Chamber of Commerce
Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County	University of Florida Literacy Institute
Gainesville Thrives	Peak Literacy
Cuscowillia Nature and Retreat Center	One Community Health and Wellness Center
Episcopal Children's Services	

These organizations selected a representative with expertise in the space of early childhood learning, K-12 Education systems, adult literacy, and Community. A total of 15 meetings have been held with this committee.

Cost of Literacy Needs Assessment:

The total project cost was \$175,000.00 with approximately \$75,000 of in-kind services provided by the Lastinger Center. It was funded in collaboration as follows:

Children's Trust of Alachua County	\$62,500.00
Alachua County Board of County Commission	\$62,500.00 (Received)
Alachua County School District	\$50,000.00
University of Florida Lastinger Center	\$75,000.00 In-kind support which includes 2 additional Lastinger Center team members and additional personnel support

Overview:

Today the Lastinger Center will provide an overview of the final report and recommendations. The Children's Trust Project Manager will share CTAC recommendations and the next steps toward developing a literacy plan for the community.

Programmatic Impact:

Goal 2: Children & Youth Can Learn What They Need To Be Successful

Fiscal Impact:

\$175,000.00

Recommendation:

Approve the requested action

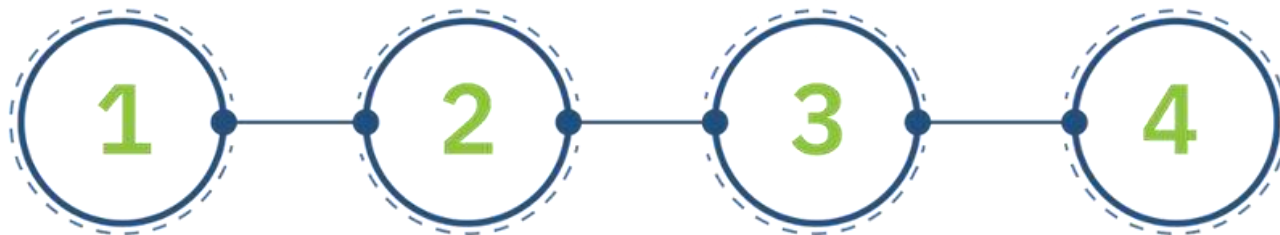
UF Lastinger Center and Children's Trust of Alachua County Comprehensive Literacy Needs Assessment



April & May 2025

UF | Lastinger Center for Learning
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

Project Goals (p. 3)



Solicit ideas for what the community *has done, is doing, or can do* to help children, youth, and adults in Alachua County achieve their full potential to read, write, and communicate.

Describe Alachua County's *existing needs* and possible improvements to meet those needs.

Create *specific recommendations* that, if acted upon, can promote literacy proficiency from birth through adulthood in Alachua County.

Provide a *comprehensive list* of organizations providing literacy-related programs, services, and resources in Alachua County.

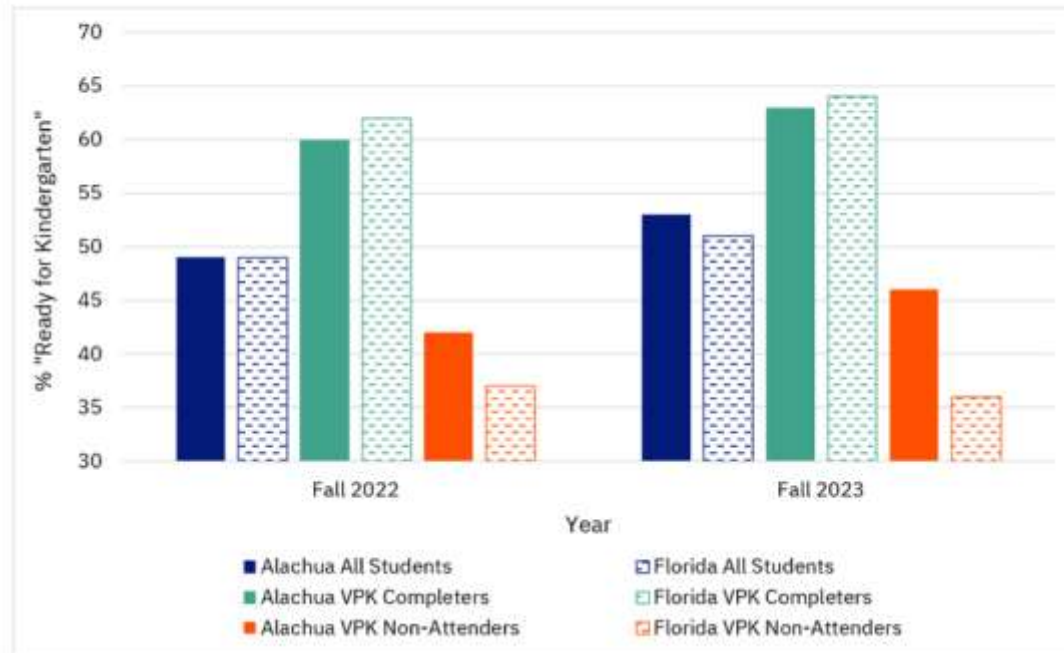
Overview of Literacy Needs Assessment Activities (p. 4)

Table 1. *Literacy Needs Assessment Outreach and Activities*

Activity	Number
Interviews	74
Elected Officials	9
ACPS District Staff	9
ACPS School Principals	3
ACPS Educators	2
Committee Organizations	12
Community Organizations	39
Focus Group Participants	157
Family Members	74
Community Members	42
ACPS Educators and District Staff	41
Survey Completers	1,122
Family Members	740
Community Members	188
Students	37
ACPS Educators and District Staff	157
Community Events	11
Classroom Visits	3

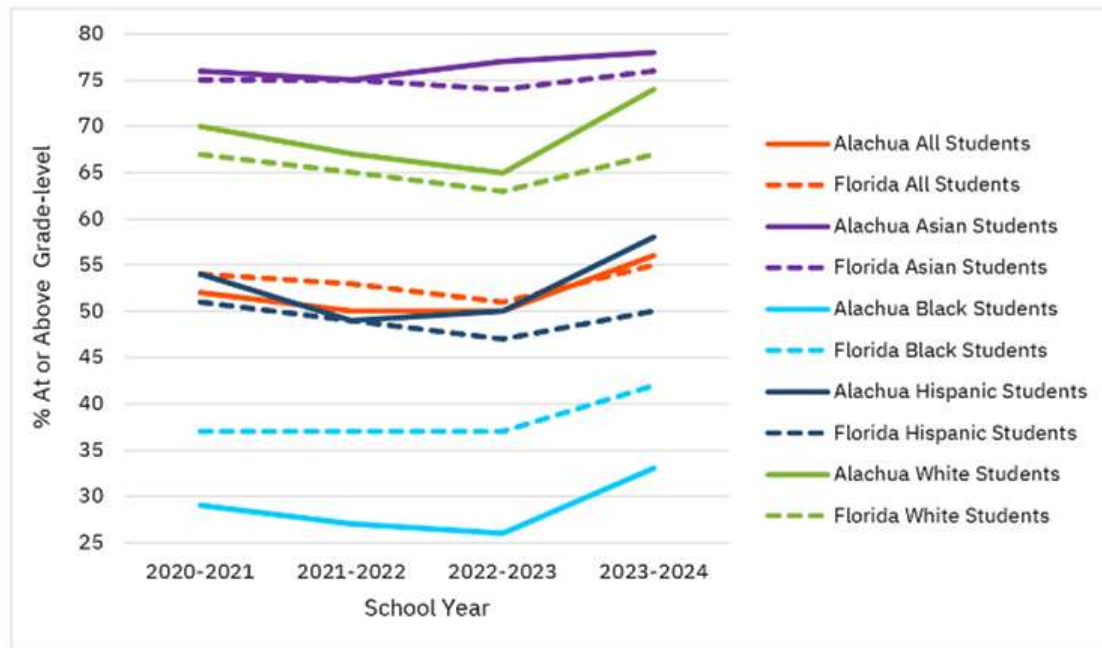
Kindergarten Readiness (p. 30)

Figure 8. Percent of Students "Ready for Kindergarten" Based on FAST Scores at Kindergarten Entry, including by VPK, Alachua County, Fall 2022 and Fall 2023



Reading on Grade Level by End of Third Grade (p. 34)

Figure 10. Third Grade Reading (At or Above Grade Level) by Student Race/Ethnicity, Alachua and Florida, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024



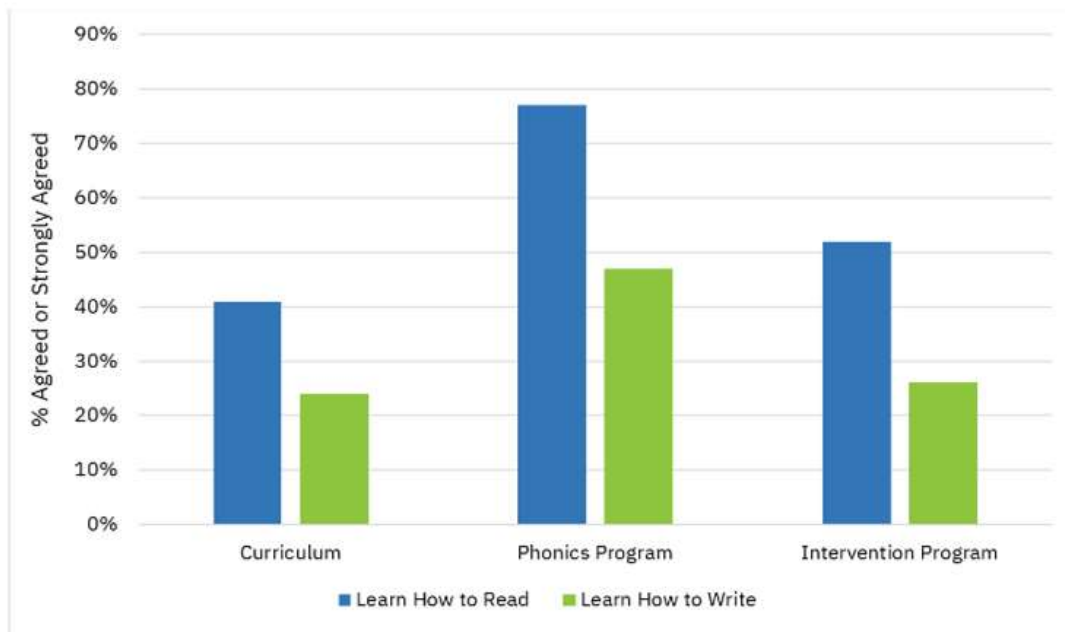
Survey Results: Family and Community Members (p. 60)

Figure 26. Percent of Respondents, by Respondent Type, Who “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” About **Children and Youth** Having Necessary Literacy Skills To:



Survey Results: ACPS Educators and District Staff (p. 67)

Figure 33. Percent of ACPS Elementary Educators Who “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” That Their School’s Literacy Programs Helps Students Learn How to Read or Write



Teacher Needs (p. 81)

Key Concerns:

- Inadequate training on new curriculum tools and assessment platforms, especially for new teachers.
- Lack of professional development on effective teaching practices, curricula, and practical tools teachers are expected to implement.
- Need for mentorship and peer collaboration.

“Many teachers are left to figure out instructional strategies on their own, which isn’t sustainable.”

– ACPS Educator

Organization Needs (p. 88)

“More funding would allow us to expand our literacy initiatives and offer high-quality resources to our students.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

“Better resource allocation can help us address the specific literacy needs of our students more effectively.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

Recommendations (p. 103)

1 

**Enhanced
Awareness and
Communication**

2 

**Focused
Support**

3 

**Expanded
Professional
Learning**

1. Enhanced Awareness and Communication (pp. 104-107)

- Coordinate existing resources by building awareness within *organizations* and within the *community*
 - ◆ Name a central organization to serve as the linking mechanism between organizations; fund staff member(s) to coordinate county-wide literacy efforts
 - ◆ Allocate funding for staff member(s) to create and maintain a centralized website and print materials that serve as a resource hub alerting Alachua County residents about existing programs, opportunities, and events
- Use public dollars wisely
 - ◆ Require organizations to show targeted literacy impacts to receive public funding
 - ◆ Infuse “fun” events with education - book giveaways, accessible resources to learn how to build language and literacy skills

2. Focused Support (pp. 108-112)

- Start early! Increase public investments in key early learning and intervention organizations to pay long-term dividends
- Provide ongoing evidence-based training for healthcare, education, and community providers serving multilingual learners, Black students, students experiencing poverty, and students with disabilities. Training topics would include the following:
 - ◆ Knowledge about how children best learn how to read and write
 - ◆ How to implement rigorous and systematic reading instruction
 - ◆ Understanding of the assets brought by each group
 - ◆ High expectations for attendance and learning

3. Expanded Professional Learning (pp. 113-118)

- Early learning providers, staff at community organizations, and ACPS educators all need targeted professional learning in key topics:
 - ◆ Providing evidence-based practices and strategies during reading instruction and support
 - ◆ Improving implementation of existing programs and technologies
 - ◆ Pacing and aligning instruction across grade levels to intensify learning
 - ◆ Developing a culture of data-driven decision making at all levels, including expanding access to data within and across organizations
- Other opportunities include the following:
 - ◆ Enhanced mentorship and collaboration at all levels
 - ◆ Increased opportunities for coaching
 - ◆ Better services for students with disabilities

Next Steps (p. 120)

Figure 37. *Next Steps for Alachua County Literacy Improvements*





CHILDREN'S TRUST

OF ALACHUA COUNTY

Comprehensive Literacy Needs Assessment

Children's Trust of Alachua County Next Steps and Recommendations

Phase 2: Next Steps and Recommendation



Phase 2

**Developing
Comprehensive Plan**



Phase 3

**Secure Funding
Secure Supports
Implementation**



Phase 4

Evaluation

Phase 2: Next Steps and Recommendation

Next Step

Contract with
Consultant

Literacy Plan
Workshop

Develop plan

Time Frame

Estimate
3-5 months

Community Partners

Library

County/City Gov't

ELC & ECS4Kids

School District

Community

Housing

Alachua County Comprehensive Literacy Needs Assessment

Report compiled by the
University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning

in conjunction with

**Children's Trust of Alachua County,
Alachua County Board of County Commissioners,
Alachua County Public Schools, and
Citizens of Alachua County**





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Executive Summary

Reading is among the most essential skills in life. Children who gain basic reading skills during the first few years of school can experience lasting benefits, such as academic achievement, positive social-emotional development, long-term economic security, and personal health and well-being (Connor et al., 2014; UNESCO, 2025). Literacy, defined in this report as the ability to read, write, speak, and listen, is important for Alachua County citizens to fully participate in an information-rich society.

Yet, Florida's students find reading difficult. Among Florida's fourth graders in 2024, **only one third read proficiently** on a national reading test (U.S. Department of Education, 2025) and **just over half read at grade level** on the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (Florida Department of Education, 2024).

Like the rest of Florida, only about half of Alachua County's K-12 students are reading on grade level. However, scores in Alachua County are consistently lower for Black students and students with disabilities. Issues related to access to education, employment, housing, transportation, and healthcare highlight why scores may vary for different groups of students (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2024). **Improving reading outcomes for Alachua County students requires community-wide efforts.**

This comprehensive literacy needs assessment continues longstanding efforts by organizations and literacy leaders in Alachua County to improve literacy. In May 2023, the Children's Trust of Alachua County board had a joint meeting with the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners. The topic of discussion was the need to unite the entire community, along with schools and educational organizations, to reach the goals of **children being ready for kindergarten** and **90% of students reading on grade level by the end of third grade**. In October 2023, the Executive Director of the Children's Trust, Marsha Kiner, asked the University of Florida (UF) Lastinger Center for Learning to serve as the coordinator for a comprehensive literacy needs assessment.

This executive summary and the full report that follows describe education in Alachua County, detail the literacy needs assessment activities, and outline key recommendations to support literacy learning in Alachua County.

Education in Alachua County

Alachua County, Florida, has a comprehensive education system, with 132 licensed childcare programs and voluntary prekindergarten (VPK) offered by 66 local providers. The county has a range of public and private schools, including 66 elementary schools, 39 middle schools, and 38 high schools (Florida Department of Education Data Publications and Reports, n.d.).

In 2023, 63% of VPK completers were “ready for kindergarten” compared to 46% of their peers who did not attend VPK. In 2024, Alachua County earned a B grade as a district, one of 26 districts in Florida to earn a B. Alachua County is home to 15 schools with an A grade, 13 with a B, 16 with a C, and 3 with a D (Florida Department of Education School Grades Overview, n.d.). Alachua County ranks 14th in the state for third-grade English Language Arts achievement, with 58% of students meeting the standard. The on-time high school graduation rate for the 2022-2023 school year was 84%. Higher education opportunities are provided by institutions such as Santa Fe College and the University of Florida, contributing to the county’s robust educational landscape (Florida Department of Education Advanced Reports, n.d.).

Literacy Needs Assessment

Description

Despite many strengths, Alachua County needs to improve reading outcomes for all children, youth, and adults. This is especially true for groups with only **1 in 3 students reading on grade level**: Black students, students with disabilities, and English language learners (Florida Department of Education Know Your Data, n.d.; see Figures 10 and 11 of the full report).

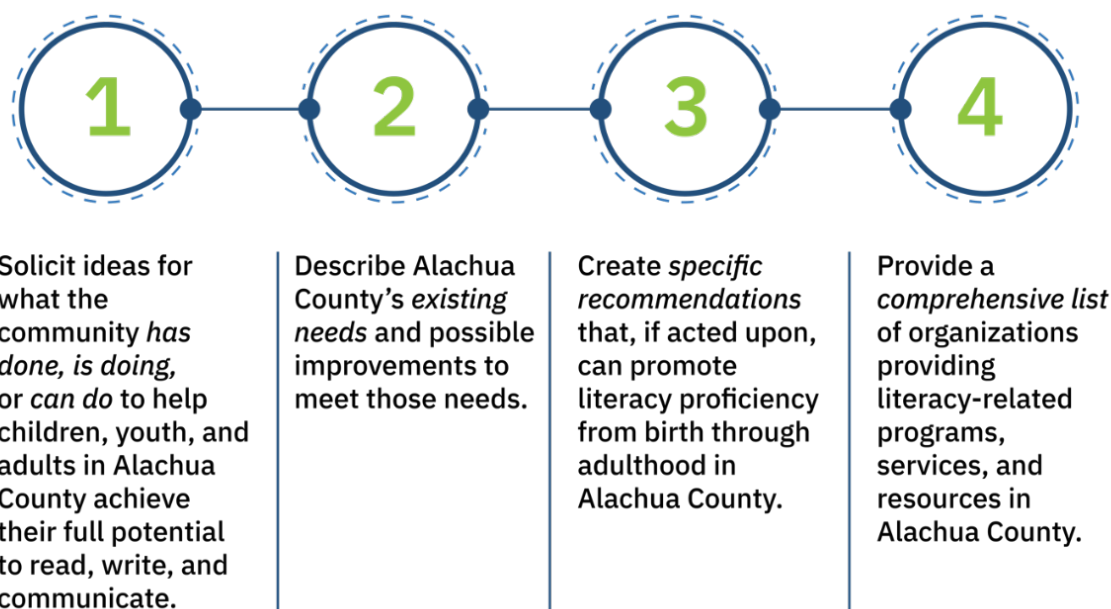
The Children’s Trust and UF Lastinger Center collaborated on a comprehensive literacy needs assessment to improve literacy in Alachua County from birth through adulthood. Key partners who engaged in the literacy needs assessment included the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners, School Board of Alachua County (SBAC), and Alachua County Public Schools (ACPS). Several community organizations provided guidance on this project, serving on the literacy needs assessment committee,

including Alachua County Library District, AskMeno, Cuscowilla Nature and Retreat Center, the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County, Episcopal Children’s Services, Florida Campaign for Grade Level Reading, Alachua County Campaign for Grade Level Reading, Gainesville Thrives, Greater Gainesville Chamber of Commerce, One Community Health and Wellness Center, Peak Literacy, Sunshine Moss, UF Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies, UF College of Education, UF Literacy Institute, and the United Way of North Central Florida.

Goals

The UF Lastinger Center, Children’s Trust, and committee members listed above created four goals for the literacy needs assessment (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Literacy Needs Assessment Goals*



Activities

The UF Lastinger Center engaged in the following activities to meet these goals:

- (1) Reviewed information from prior efforts and from members of the literacy needs assessment committee and analyzed data provided by ACPS and community organizations or available from public sources.

- (2) Distributed an anonymous survey throughout the county.
- (3) Conducted focus groups with a wide range of family and community members and ACPS educators.
- (4) Interviewed elected officials, members of community organizations, ACPS district staff, and ACPS educators after visiting their classrooms.
- (5) Attended community events to create knowledge about the literacy needs assessment and solicit survey and focus group participation.
- (6) Compiled this report and corresponding presentation offering recommendations for future implementation.

Participants

The UF Lastinger Center collected data through 74 interviews, 33 focus groups with 157 participants, 1,122 surveys, 11 community events, and 3 classroom visits (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Literacy Needs Assessment Outreach and Activities*

Activity	Number
Interviews	74
Elected Officials	9
ACPS District Staff	9
ACPS School Principals	3
ACPS Educators	2
Committee Organizations	12
Community Organizations	39
Focus Group Participants	157
Family Members	74
Community Members	42
ACPS Educators and District Staff	41
Survey Completers	1,122
Family Members	740
Community Members	188
Students	37
ACPS Educators and District Staff	157
Community Events	11
Classroom Visits	3

Key Findings

The literacy needs assessment revealed the following strengths in Alachua County:

- **Home and Community-Based Literacy Practices** – Many families reported actively engaging in literacy activities such as reading and discussing books and doing homework with their children.
- **Classroom-Based Literacy Instruction** – Educators reported having access to evidence-based strategies, such as structured phonics programs and digital learning tools, to support student learning.
- **Community and Organizational Contributions** – Local organizations reported providing valuable literacy support through resources, training, and events that complement school-based initiatives.
- **Policy and Governmental Support** – Local elected officials reported on the importance of early literacy exposure, targeted interventions, and increased resources for children and youth who need them most.

The literacy needs assessment uncovered the following issues hindering literacy progress in Alachua County:

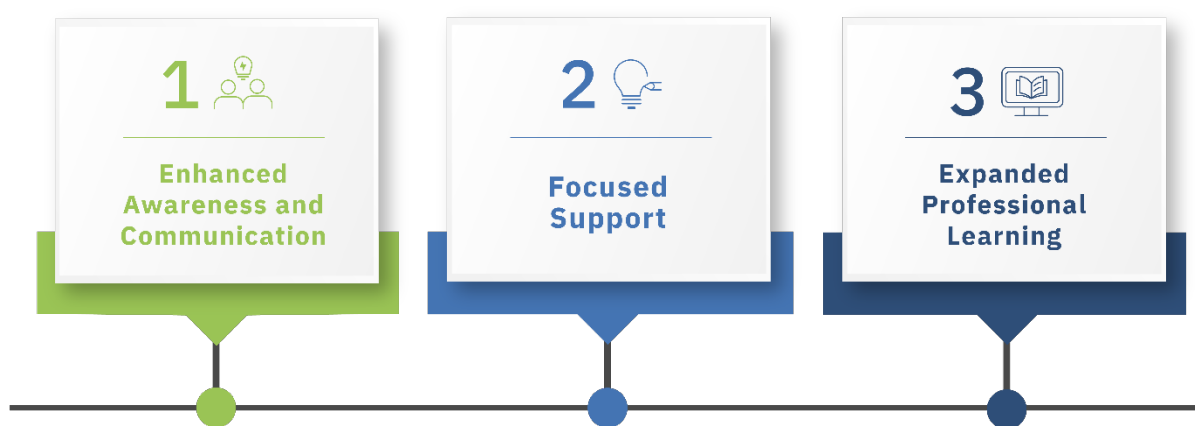
- **Challenges Faced by Families** – Families reported having limited access to literacy resources, financial constraints, and logistical challenges, such as work schedules and transportation, which create obstacles to support their children's literacy development.
- **Challenges in Education** – Educators reported curriculum misalignment, a lack of professional development, and inadequate instructional support as key concerns.
- **Structural and Financial Challenges for Organizations** – Local organizations reported challenges with securing funding and trained staff to implement structured evidence-based literacy programs.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, this report outlines three categories of recommendations to improve literacy outcomes across the county (see Figure 2).

- (1) **Enhanced Awareness and Communication** – Strengthen collaboration among literacy organizations, create a centralized literacy resource hub, and promote community-wide literacy initiatives.
- (2) **Focused Support** – Increase funding for early literacy programs, increase reading achievement for all students but especially those shown to need additional support, expand high-dosage tutoring, and enhance adult literacy programs.
- (3) **Expanded Professional Learning** – Provide targeted professional development for educators, improve collaboration among teachers, and train educators on strategies to support students with disabilities, among other groups.

Figure 2. *Categories of Recommendations from the Literacy Needs Assessment*



Next Steps

This report underscores the need for a coordinated, multi-sector approach to literacy improvement. Achieving long-term success will require sustained engagement from families, educators, policymakers, and community organizations. The next phase of this initiative will focus on developing a comprehensive plan, securing necessary funding, and continuing to monitor progress to ensure that all students in Alachua County achieve literacy proficiency.



Alachua County Comprehensive Literacy Needs Assessment: Full Report

Introduction

Learning to communicate, read, and write is vital in our society (UNESCO, 2024). These skills help children do well in school, leading to a greater chance of earning a high school diploma or equivalent, attending higher education, being employed, achieving economic wellbeing, and being an informed citizen (Kree et al., 2022).

Literacy

Literacy is defined as the ability to read, write, speak, and listen to fully participate in an information-rich society.

Improving literacy in areas marked by significant income and quality-of-life disparities can be a transformative force for individuals and communities (Rothwell, 2020). Enhancing literacy rates can equip individuals with the skills needed to access better educational and employment opportunities and helps to break cycles of poverty that often perpetuate inequality (Kree et al., 2022). On a community level, higher literacy rates are associated with improved civic participation and foster a more engaged and

informed population (Hansen & Tyner, 2019). Further, literacy contributes to improved public health outcomes because individuals are better able to understand healthcare information and make more informed decisions for themselves and their families (Vernon et al., 2007). By narrowing literacy gaps, communities can foster an environment where economic mobility, social cohesion, and collective wellbeing are more attainable (Feister, 2013).

Continued low literacy rates, on the other hand, can undermine the stability and growth of a region by magnifying income inequality and reducing social and economic advancement (Reardon, 2011). Low levels of literacy lead to reduced workforce productivity, increased reliance on social programs, lower lifetime earnings, increases in incarceration rates, and a wide range of other adverse health outcomes (DeWalt et al., 2004). Over time, widespread literacy challenges can entrench existing disparities and create a feedback loop where these disparities are reinforced (Reardon, 2011).

Report Roadmap

The purpose behind this literacy needs assessment is to improve literacy learning for *all* children, youth, and adults in Alachua County in order to enhance the county's future growth and opportunities. The data presented below show that some residents need additional and enriched resources, services, and programs, including people in Alachua County's Black communities, Hispanic/Latino communities, people who are disabled, and people who have low incomes or are experiencing poverty (see, for example, Figures 10-12 on pp. 35–37). These data show that **more work is needed to improve literacy opportunities for all Alachua County residents.**

The literacy needs assessment was designed to provide recommendations for making key literacy improvements in Alachua County. The remainder of the introduction describes the Alachua County context, prior efforts that have been made to address literacy improvements, and the goals of the literacy needs assessment. The report is then comprised of the following sections, which are differentiated by pages with a green background and/or photos:

- Literacy needs assessment activities
- Data analyzed from Alachua County Public Schools (ACPS), community organizations, and public sources detailing how Alachua County is served by

existing resources for children in early learning environments (birth-age 5), students in K-12 educational settings, and adults in continuing education

- Findings from the surveys, focus groups, and interviews
- Recommendations and next steps for how Alachua County can enhance and improve literacy outcomes for all residents
- Details about the numerous organizations that strive to meet the literacy needs of Alachua County (see [Appendix A](#))

Alachua County Context

Alachua County is the 22nd largest and 25th most populous county out of 67 counties in Florida. Over 275,000 people live in Alachua County. The poverty rate in Alachua County in 2023 was 19% as compared to 12% for the state of Florida (U.S. Census Bureau, 2024). Over 17% of children in Alachua County experience poverty. Estimates from 2023 showed that more White, Black, and Asian citizens, but fewer Hispanic/Latino citizens, lived in Alachua County as compared to the state of Florida (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023).

Building on Prior Efforts

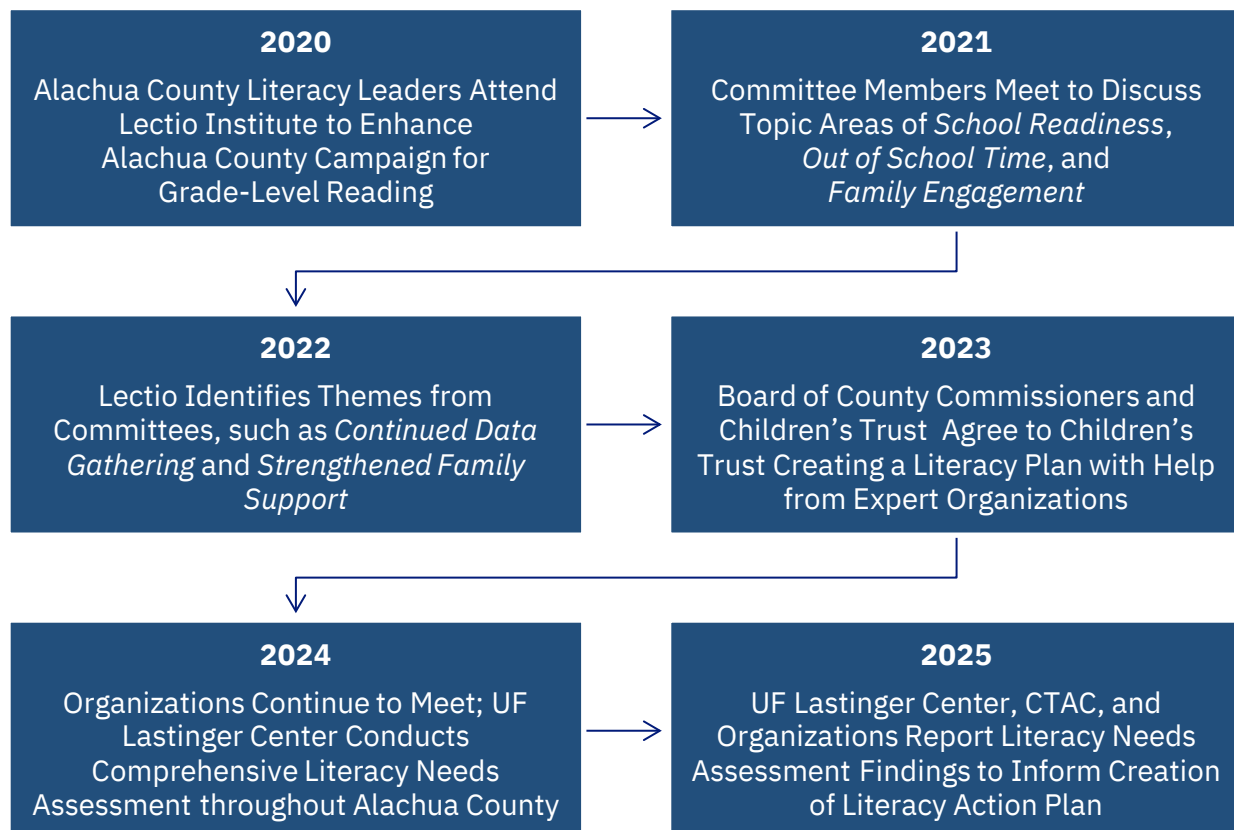
This project continues prior efforts by Alachua County literacy leaders and organizations (see Figure 3), as well as other initiatives. For example, the Alachua County Campaign for Grade Level Reading, hosted by the United Way of North Central Florida, is a network of agencies, community members, providers, institutions, and individuals that meet once per month to maximize the efforts of the community and organizations to ensure children are reading on grade level by the end of third grade. The Alachua County Campaign for Grade Level Reading holds active membership with the Florida Campaign for Grade Level Reading and is an affiliate of the National Campaign for Grade Level Reading, which was launched to reverse the trend of children not reading on grade level by supporting solutions at the federal, state, and local levels. In communities nationwide, the Campaign works within four solution areas that promote third grade reading proficiency: (1) School Readiness, (2) Out of School Learning, (3) Parental and Family Support, and (4) Attendance.

In the fall of 2020, eight Alachua County literacy leaders participated in the Lectio Institute to lay the groundwork for enhancing the Alachua County Campaign for Grade Level Reading. As part of this work, information about literacy programming from 12 organizations was compiled. Committees were formed to address the following three areas aligned with the Campaign for Grade Level Reading: (1) School Readiness, (2) Out of School Time, and (3) Family Engagement and Support. Each of these committees met throughout 2021.

The following themes from the committees were compiled by Lectio in May 2022:

- Need for continued, focused data gathering within the literacy landscape (e.g., programming, impact)
- Interest in building capacity through tools and data to enhance the delivery of literacy programs
- Importance of a culture of learning and community of practice for partners
- Recognition of the need to support parents and caregivers

Figure 3. Timeline of Literacy Improvement Efforts in Alachua County



In May 2023, the Children's Trust board had a joint meeting with the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners. The topic of discussion was the need to unite the entire community, along with schools and educational organizations, to reach the goals of **children being ready for kindergarten** and **90% of students reading on grade level by the end of third grade**. During that meeting, the Board of County Commissioners and the Children's Trust agreed that the Children's Trust would assist with creating a comprehensive literacy plan. To help with the creation of the plan, Children's Trust staff created a committee comprised of representatives of the following organizations who are experts in the space of early care and education, K-12 education systems, and community literacy support: Alachua County Library District, AskMeno, Cuscowilla Nature and Retreat Center, Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County, Episcopal Children's Services, Florida Campaign for Grade Level Reading, Gainesville Thrives, Greater Gainesville Chamber of Commerce, One Community Health and Wellness Center, Peak Literacy, Dr. Sunshine Moss, UF Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies, UF College of Education, UF Literacy Institute, and the United Way of North Central Florida.

The committee met five times between May 2023 and April 2024. Topics of discussion included the following:

- Set a purpose, describe literacy gaps from member perspectives, and identify other interested parties who should be included in the plan development.
- Review and discuss the work completed by the Alachua County Campaign for Grade Level Reading.
- Review and discuss research and the Literacy Roadmap completed by Dr. Sunshine Moss.
- Look at plans and talk with other communities, such as Martin County Children's Services Council, that have focused on supporting early learning, strong families, and success in school and life.

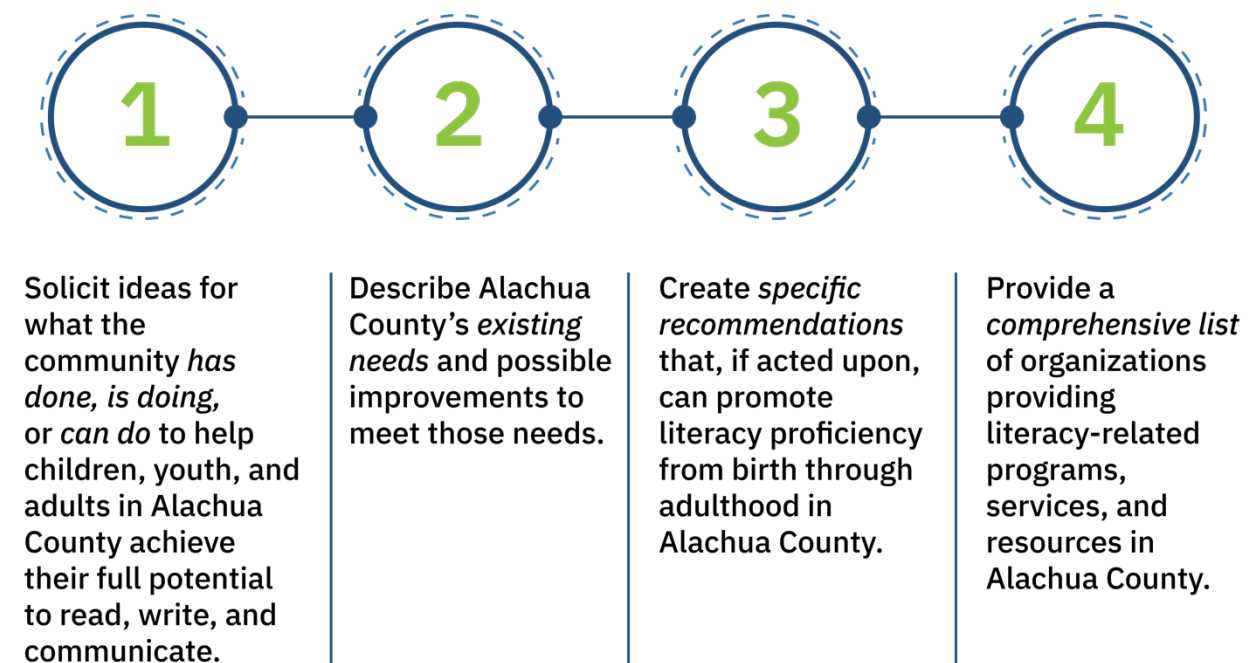
In October 2023, the Executive Director of the Children's Trust, Marsha Kiner, asked the UF Lastinger Center to serve as coordinator for a comprehensive literacy needs assessment intended to help Alachua County form an action plan to improve literacy in the county. The literacy needs assessment, which began in April 2024, included the following phases: Phase 1: Pre-Assessment (Collect Existing Data); Phase 2: Assessment (Collect New Data); and Phase 3: Post-Assessment (Determining Needs). In this role, the UF Lastinger Center created and administered surveys, completed

organization interviews, conducted focus groups, attended public events, and visited schools. Community leaders, community members, families, students, educators, and staff at community organizations – over 1,300 people – participated in the literacy needs assessment between June 2024 and January 2025. The UF Lastinger Center met monthly with literacy needs assessment committee members to continually inform the project, soliciting guidance and direction for project activities.

Goals of the Literacy Needs Assessment

The Children’s Trust, UF Lastinger Center, and committee members established goals of the literacy needs assessment (see Figure 4, which is the same as Figure 1 from the Executive Summary). The goals were as follows: (1) collect data throughout the community to understand what is working and what needs to be improved, (2) present information related to Alachua County’s current needs, (3) create specific recommendations to help target improvements, and (4) provide a list of organizations serving children, youth, and adults in Alachua County.

Figure 4. *Goals of Literacy Needs Assessment*





Description of Literacy Needs Assessment Activities

The UF Lastinger Center engaged in the following activities to meet these goals:

- (1) Reviewed information from prior efforts and from members of the literacy needs assessment committee and analyzed data provided by ACPS and community organizations or available from public sources.
- (2) Distributed an anonymous survey throughout the county.
- (3) Conducted focus groups with a wide range of family and community members and ACPS educators.
- (4) Interviewed elected officials, members of community organizations, ACPS district staff, and ACPS educators after visiting their classrooms.
- (5) Attended community events to create knowledge about the literacy needs assessment and solicit survey and focus group participation.
- (6) Compiled this report and corresponding presentation offering recommendations for future implementation.

This section describes how these activities were conducted, who participated in the literacy needs assessment, and how data were analyzed.

Review and Analysis of Existing Data Sources

To create the tables and figures depicted below, UF Lastinger Center examined publicly available data from the following data sources:

- [Florida Department of Education](#)
- [Florida Department of Health](#)
- [School Board of Alachua County Board Docs](#)
- [City of Alachua Education Taskforce](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection](#)
- [U.S. Census Bureau](#)

The UF Lastinger Center requested data from Alachua County Public Schools (ACPS), the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County, and other organizations to ask for student, educator, and school/program data to inform the literacy needs assessment. Data were received in December 2025.

Participant Groups and Recruitment Strategies

The UF Lastinger Center engaged in numerous activities with the aim of hearing from Alachua County residents from the following groups:

- Parents/guardians/caregivers of children enrolled in K-12 schools, homeschool, or early learning programs/centers in Alachua County
- Students enrolled in or recently graduated from K-12 schools, homeschool, or higher education in Alachua County
- Adult education program staff and students
- General public/community members living or working in Alachua County
- ACPS district staff, school principals, educators, and instructional support staff
- Elected officials
- Staff or volunteers in organizations providing literacy resources or support
- Alachua county and municipality staff
- UF staff and faculty in education- and health-related departments
- Senior citizens

Survey and focus group participants were recruited in the following ways:

- Webpage on the UF Lastinger Center website
- Social media posts, including via a toolkit created by the UF Lastinger Center communications team and shared with literacy needs assessment committee organizations
- Emails created for the literacy needs assessment committee organizations to share widely
- Community organization gatherings and meetings
- Conversations and postcards distributed at community events
- Emails to UF Lastinger Center's existing list of contacts, including enrolled educators and families
- Emails to all ACPS educators and families

Interview participants were recruited via email and were identified by the following strategies:

- Organizations on the literacy needs assessment committee
- Organizations named on a comprehensive list that was created in conjunction with the Children's Trust and the literacy needs assessment committee
- Organizations found through web searches
- Organizations referred to during interviews
- Elected officials, including Alachua County Commissioners, Gainesville City Commissioners, and School Board of Alachua County
- Organizations and departments from ACPS

Data Collection Procedures and Measures

The UF Lastinger Center created questions for surveys, focus groups, and interviews that asked for Alachua County residents' thoughts on literacy learning for children, youth, and adults. The UF Lastinger Center also attended community events to ask people to complete surveys. This section describes how data were collected, when the data were collected, and information about the respondents and participants. All of the questions that were asked on the surveys, focus groups, and interviews are available upon request from the UF Lastinger Center (email Lastinger@coe.ufl.edu for more information).

Surveys

Surveys were collected throughout Alachua County. Families, community members, students, ACPS educators, and ACPS district staff were offered different surveys. People were eligible to complete a survey if they (1) live in Alachua County, (2) work in Alachua County, (3) currently attend school in Alachua County, (4) attended school in Alachua County in the last five years, (5) have a child currently attending school in Alachua County, and/or (6) have a child who attended school in Alachua County in the last five years. The surveys were anonymous, offered in English and Spanish, and collected online via Qualtrics. Respondents could decide which items they wanted to answer, so the response rates were different for each item.

The UF Lastinger Center collected surveys between June 7, 2024, and January 13, 2025. During that time, 1,784 people started a survey and 1,122 people (63%) did the entire survey and completed the final item (see Table 2). A total of 56 respondents (3%) answered the survey in Spanish. The rest completed the survey in English.

Table 2. *Survey Completion Numbers, by Respondent Type*

	Started Survey	Completed Survey
Family Members	1,073	740
Community Members	369	188
ACPS Educators and District Staff	269	157
K-12 Students	73	37
Total	1,784	1,122

Respondents had the option to write in open-ended responses, and 1,015 people (90% of survey completers) chose to do so (see Table 3).

Table 3. *Provided Written Feedback, by Respondent Type*

	Completed Survey	Wrote Answers
Family Members	740	690
Community Members	188	146
ACPS Educators and District Staff	157	149
K-12 Students	37	30
Total	1,122	1,015

Survey respondents answered items about their background, education, and income. This information was compiled for all respondent groups (family members, community members, students, and ACPS educators/district staff), along with U.S. Census data for Alachua County as a whole (see Table 4). Survey respondents, for the most part, had more advanced education degrees; spoke English, although 8% spoke Spanish and 5% indicated 21 other languages; were female; and were in higher income brackets. The race/ethnicity of survey respondents largely reflected the race/ethnicity of Alachua County residents. The largest discrepancies (that is, more than 5% difference) between survey respondents and the larger population of Alachua County residents included the following: Survey respondents were more likely to have higher education degrees (master's degree or higher), speak English in the home, be in the 35-54 age bracket, and have higher incomes.

Table 4. *Survey Respondent Information*

	Alachua County	All Respondents ^a	Family Members ^b	Community Members ^c	ACPS Educators and Staff ^d	Students ^e
Education						
Less than high school	N/A	2%	2%	3%	0%	N/A
High school or GED	18% >	7%	6%	12%	1%	
Some college	16% >	10%	10%	11%	1%	
Associate's degree	11%	11%	12%	11%	0%	
Bachelor's degree	22%	24%	24%	20%	29%	
Master's degree or higher	29% <	46%	46%	42%	69%	
Language(s)						
English	86% <	92%	92%	89%	95%	83%
Spanish	7%	8%	8%	10%	2%	8%
Another language	9%	5%	5%	6%	3%	14%
Age						
18-24	15% >	3%	1%	10%	3%	N/A
25-34	15%	14%	12%	20%	13%	
35-44	11% <	41%	50%	20%	24%	
45-54	10% <	26%	29%	17%	32%	
>55	25% >	15%	9%	32%	28%	
Sex						
Female	51% <	86%	87%	81%	87%	N/A

	Alachua County	All Respondents ^a	Family Members ^b	Community Members ^c	ACPS Educators and Staff ^d	Students ^e
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian	0.3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%
Asian	7%	5%	5%	4%	2%	15%
Black	19%	23%	24%	24%	12%	30%
Hispanic/Latino	12%	14%	14%	16%	11%	27%
White	61%	65%	56%	56%	75%	37%
Income						
<\$10,000	10% >	4%	4%	8%	0%	N/A
\$10,001-\$25,000	8%	6%	5%	12%	2%	
\$25,001-\$50,000	20%	16%	14%	21%	15%	
\$50,001-\$75,000	15%	18%	18%	13%	30%	
\$75,001-\$100,000	12%	15%	15%	17%	19%	
\$100,001-\$150,000	14% <	21%	23%	17%	21%	
>\$150,000	15%	19%	22%	11%	13%	

Source for Alachua County percentages: [U.S. Census Bureau](#). Note: N/A = not asked. ^a (All Survey Respondents) Education $N = 1,027$ (ages ≥ 25); Language $N = 1,030$; Age $N = 1,042$; Sex $N = 1,077$; Race/Ethnicity $N = 1,020$; Income $N = 850$. ^b (Family Members) Education $N = 746$ (ages ≥ 25); Language $N = 708$, family members indicated speaking Afrikaans, American Sign Language, Arabic, Cebuano, Creole, Czech, Filipino, French, German, Malagasy, Marathi, Tagalog, Tigrinya, Yoruba; Age $N = 740$; Sex $N = 720$; Race/Ethnicity $N = 704$; Income $N = 613$. ^c (Community Members) Education $N = 170$ (ages ≥ 25); Language $N = 176$, community members indicated speaking Arabic, Bangla, Creole, and German; Age $N = 188$; Sex $N = 180$; Race/Ethnicity $N = 177$; Income $N = 141$. ^d (ACPS Educators and District Staff) Education $N = 154$ (ages ≥ 25); Language $N = 151$, ACPS educators and district staff indicated speaking American Sign Language, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi; Age $N = 157$; Sex $N = 149$; Race/Ethnicity $N = 147$; Income $N = 132$. ^e (Students) Language $N = 36$, students indicated speaking Arabic, Bengali, Hindi, Nepali, and Persian; Race/Ethnicity $N = 33$.

Students answered an additional item about what type of school they attended (see Table 5), with just over half attending elementary school.

Table 5. Student Survey Respondent Information

Characteristic	%
School Level	
Elementary	51%
Middle	21%
High	28%

Note: School Level $N = 43$.

ACPS educators and district staff answered additional items about their role, certifications, and age/grade levels (see Table 6). Most described themselves as teachers (76%), although other roles included district or school administrators (6%). Most (89%) considered themselves to be directly teaching or supporting the teaching of reading. Eighty-three percent had professional certification, but 17% did not.

Table 6. *ACPS Educators and District Staff Survey Respondent Information*

Characteristic	%
Role	
District or School Administrator	6%
Teacher	76%
Instructional Support Staff	5%
Non-Instructional Support Staff	9%
Paraprofessional or Tutor	1%
Provides Reading Instruction or Support for Reading Instruction	89%
Certification	
Professional Certification to Teach	83%
Temporary Certification to Teach	13%
No Certification to Teach	4%
Age/Grade Level	
Early Childhood	3%
Elementary	53%
Middle	22%
High	22%

Note: Role *N* = 205, Provides Reading Instruction *N* = 184, Certification *N* = 192, School Level *N* = 184.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were different from interviews in that they included two or more participants at a time. Focus groups were role specific and included questions related to the participant's role as an educator, family member, or community member. Some participants had multiple roles. Educators were asked about literacy instruction, challenges with student learning, and professional learning opportunities. Families were asked about the importance of literacy for their children, their children's literacy progress, and what families and schools can do to promote literacy for their children. Community members were asked about how the larger community can help children,

youth, and adults gain literacy skills. Focus groups were conducted either in person or through Zoom. Focus groups were audio recorded, and the recordings were transcribed.

The UF Lastinger Center completed 33 focus groups between September 15, 2024 and January 16, 2025. One hundred fifty-nine people participated in a focus group. Focus group participants were more likely to speak English, range in age from 25 to 44, be female, Black, and less likely to be White than Alachua County as a whole (see Table 7).

Table 7. Focus Group Participant Information

	Alachua County	All Focus Group Members ^a	Family Members ^b	Community Members ^c	ACPS Educators and Staff ^d
Education					
Less than high school	N/A	6%	2%	18%	
High school or GED	18% >	11%	11%	15%	
Some college	16%	14%	19%	8%	
Associate's degree	11%	7%	9%	8%	
Bachelor's degree	22%	22%	22%	13%	45%
Master's degree or higher	29%	34%	33%	28%	55%
Language(s)					
English	86% <	100%	100%	100%	100%
Spanish	7%	6%	4%	14%	0%
Another language	9% >	1%	3%	0%	0%
Age					
18-24	15%	13%	11%	10%	3%
25-34	15% <	26%	25%	19%	32%
35-44	11% <	30%	43%	14%	32%
45-54	10% <	18%	18%	14%	23%
>55	25% >	16%	3%	40%	10%
Sex					
Female	51% <	84%	88%	74%	90%
Race/Ethnicity					
American Indian	0.3%	3%	1%	7%	3%
Asian	7%	2%	3%	2%	0%
Black	19% <	41%	46%	55%	6%
Hispanic/Latino	12%	13%	7%	21%	16%
White	61% >	47%	47%	26%	84%

	Alachua County	All Focus Group Members ^a	Family Members ^b	Community Members ^c	ACPS Educators and Staff ^d
Income					
<\$10,000	10%	12%	6%	26%	0%
\$10,001-\$25,000	8%	7%	7%	12%	0%
\$25,001-\$50,000	20%	24%	28%	14%	23%
\$50,001-\$75,000	15% <	22%	21%	14%	35%
\$75,001-\$100,000	12%	11%	10%	7%	19%
\$100,001-\$150,000	14%	9%	13%	5%	13%
>\$150,000	15% >	6%	6%	10%	6%

Source for Alachua County percentages: [U.S. Census Bureau](#). Note: ^a (All Focus Group Participants $N = 157$) Education $N = 128$ (ages ≥ 25); Language $N = 141$; Age $N = 141$; Sex $N = 141$; Race/Ethnicity $N = 141$; Income $N = 141$. ^b (Family Members) Education $N = 64$ (ages ≥ 25); Language $N = 72$; Age $N = 72$; Sex $N = 72$; Race/Ethnicity $N = 72$; Income $N = 72$. ^c (Community Members) Education $N = 39$ (ages ≥ 25); Language $N = 42$; Age $N = 42$; Sex $N = 42$; Race/Ethnicity $N = 42$; Income $N = 42$. ^d (ACPS Educators and District Staff) Education $N = 29$ (ages ≥ 25); Language $N = 31$; Age $N = 31$; Sex $N = 31$; Race/Ethnicity $N = 31$; Income $N = 31$.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted to map community assets, or the resources that are currently available in Alachua County. Elected officials, staff at literacy needs assessment committee organizations, staff at literacy-related organizations, ACPS educators, and ACPS district staff participated in interviews. Staff were asked to complete surveys about their organizations/departments. Interview questions asked about literacy-related program activities, staffing (including volunteers), learners served, professional learning opportunities, funding, and collaboration. Interviews were conducted through Zoom. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

The UF Lastinger Center completed 73 interviews between April 29, 2024 and January 16, 2025. The following people were interviewed: 9 local elected officials, 9 ACPS district staff, 3 ACPS school principals, 2 ACPS educators, staff members at 12 committee organizations, and staff members at 38 community organizations. One organization provided survey data but was not interviewed. In addition, 35 organizations were contacted but not surveyed or interviewed for various reasons. Thus, a total of 109 organizations were approached (see Table 8).

In-person school visits were conducted in January 2025. The purpose of the school visits was to observe literacy-related instruction. The UF Lastinger Center completed 2 school visits, observing English Language Arts (ELA) instruction in 3 classrooms: kindergarten and third grade at Lake Forest Elementary School and an intensive reading class at Kanapaha Middle School. Follow-up interviews were conducted with two of the participating teachers.

Table 8. *Interviews Conducted for Literacy Needs Assessment*

Type of Contact	Number of Interviews or Number of Organizations Contacted but Not Interviewed
Surveyed/Interviewed	74
County Commissioners	4
Gainesville City Commissioners	1
School Board of Alachua County	4
ACPS District Staff	9
ACPS Principals	3
ACPS Educators	2
Literacy Needs Assessment Committee Organizations	12
Community Organizations	38
Provided Survey Data (No Interview)	1
Not Surveyed/Interviewed	35
Called (Confirmed No Literacy Focus)	13
Called or Emailed (No Response)	19
Emailed (Declined)	3
Total	109

Community Events

The UF Lastinger Center participated in tabling at events throughout Alachua County (see Table 9), which provided community members with the opportunity to complete surveys and sign up for focus groups.

Table 9. *Events Attended During Literacy Needs Assessment*

Event	Sponsor	Date
Fanfare and Fireworks	WUFT-FM	07/03/2024
Backpack Event	Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County	07/13/2024
Stop the Violence Backpack Event	People Against Violence Enterprises	07/27/2024
Back to School Giveaway High Springs	Alachua County Children’s Trust	08/11/2024
Fall Teen Art Show	Alachua County Library District	10/12/2024
Coon Hollo Farm Fall Festival	Coon Hollo	10/14/2024
Monthly Dinner	SWAG	10/17/2024
Lights on Afterschool	Alachua County Children’s Trust	10/24/2024
YMCA Trunk-or Treat	YMCA of North Central FL	10/25/2024
Superhero 5k	Partnership for Strong Families	11/03/2024
Family Fishing Day	Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences	11/09/2024

Data Analysis

Survey items were coded to represent the percent of respondents who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” on individual items. These responses were examined descriptively and presented in tables and figures.

Detailed notes and transcripts were produced from the virtual and in-person focus groups and interviews. Notes and transcripts were analyzed using generative AI tools offered through UF. Generative AI has been found useful in qualitative data analysis by streamlining data processing. It has also been found effective in thematic analysis,

such as identifying recurring patterns, themes, and trends within qualitative data (Hitch, 2023; Zhang, et al., 2023). Generative AI specifically enhances efficiency of the coding process and summarizes large volumes of qualitative data without losing critical details (Hitch, 2023; Morgan, 2023) and is now integrated into the most recent version of NVivo 15 (Lumivvero, 2023), a qualitative analysis tool that is widely used in academic, social science, and business research to process large volumes of unstructured data (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019; Sinha, et al., 2024).

UF's GPT-4 AI model has advanced natural language understanding (NLU). In this application, the GPT-4 model was used to identify patterns, categorize, and generate summaries of responses. To ensure the accuracy, validity, and ethical integrity of the assessment, research team members independently reviewed analyzed data and regularly convened to discuss and refine themes through the consensual qualitative research (CQR) approach to check and confirm consistency in thematic interpretation (Hill, 2012).

Transcripts and spreadsheets of survey data without any names or identifying information were uploaded into AI tools by type (survey open-ended responses, focus groups, interviews) and by participant group (families and community members, ACPS educators and district staff, students, committee and community organization staff members, and elected officials). Specific questions were asked when uploading files in the AI tools, including what's working and what challenges exist for each group, and what each group recommended to improve literacy skills. These questions and more details about the AI analysis are available upon request from the UF Lastinger Center (email Lastinger@coe.ufl.edu for more information).

The AI tools returned major themes, a description of findings from each theme, and representative quotes from the participants on each theme. From there, UF Lastinger staff, aided by staff at Children's Trust and committee organizations, extensively reviewed the findings. Repetitive information was condensed. Recommendations were included if they had an evidence base or support from research and, if so, prioritized based on perceived importance and practicality.

Thus, the UF Lastinger Center synthesized data from multiple sources to draw out key themes, which are outlined in the following sections describing findings from the literacy needs assessment.



Findings: Literacy Learning in Alachua County's Educational Settings

Data from numerous sources were compiled and analyzed to provide information about how the literacy needs of children, youth, and adults are currently met by programs, schools, and organizations throughout Alachua County. These findings are organized into the following sections: Early Learning, K-12, College and Workforce Readiness, and Adult Education.

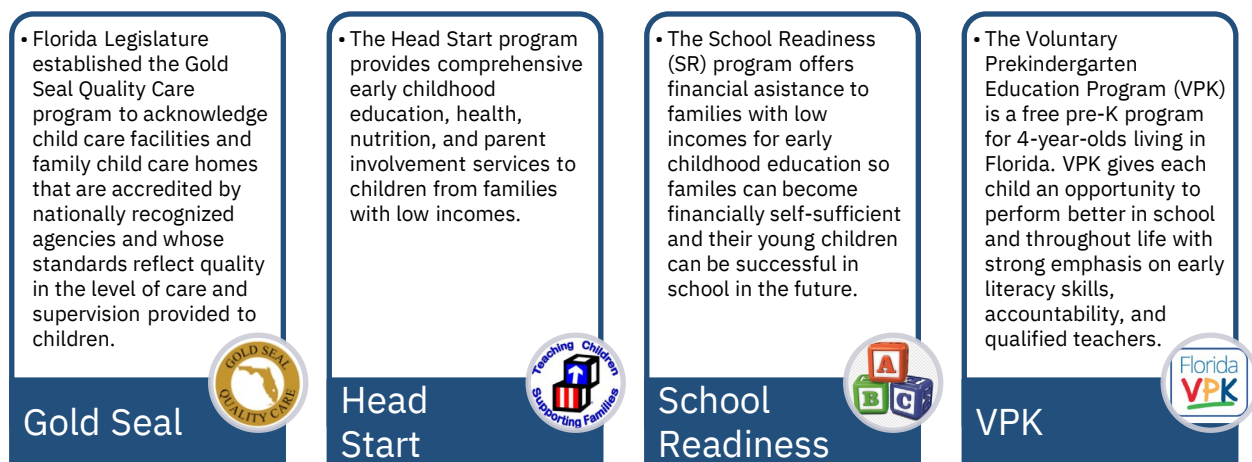
Early Learning

Children's earliest years are instrumental in setting the foundation for literacy learning (Dickinson & McCabe, 2001). Access to high-quality early learning environments from birth through age five, both in the home and in early childhood education settings, can improve children's early communication skills, language development, and emergent literacy (Davis Schoch et al., 2023). The characteristics of "high-quality early learning" vary slightly by age level (infants, toddlers, preschoolers), but all children ideally have access to language-rich environments that include back-and-forth conversations with adults, exposure to new words and word meanings, and a focus on building familiarity with many topics. Talking *with* – not just talking *to* – children is important in helping children build language skills that will later impact their ability to read. Children should also have multiple opportunities to engage in meaningful ways with books, print, and

writing materials (Bowne et al., 2017; Cabell et al., 2015; Grifenhagen et al., 2017; Hadley et al., 2022; Hindman et al., 2019; Justice et al., 2018; Neuman et al., 2000; Romeo et al., 2018).

In Alachua County, children from ages 0-5 are cared for at home, in family childcare homes, at community-based childcare centers, and at schools. Over 130 providers offer licensed childcare options for families in Alachua County. School Readiness (SR) and Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) are both publicly funded by the state. Head Start is federally funded. Gold Seal accreditation helps families select high-quality programs (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Child Care Services



Source: [Florida Department of Children and Families](#)

The [Florida Department of Children and Families](#) provides a childcare provider search function on its website. Families can find provider name, address, license number, provider type, capacity, days and hours of operation, services offered, and three-year inspection history of each provider.

Organizations Serving Young Children and Families in Alachua County

The UF Lastinger Center interviewed several organizations that serve the language and emergent literacy needs of young children in Alachua County (see [Appendix A](#)). For example, the [Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County](#) serves as a resource to families and child care providers. Their goal is to ensure that children and families have access to quality, affordable early learning programs. [Episcopal Children's Services](#)

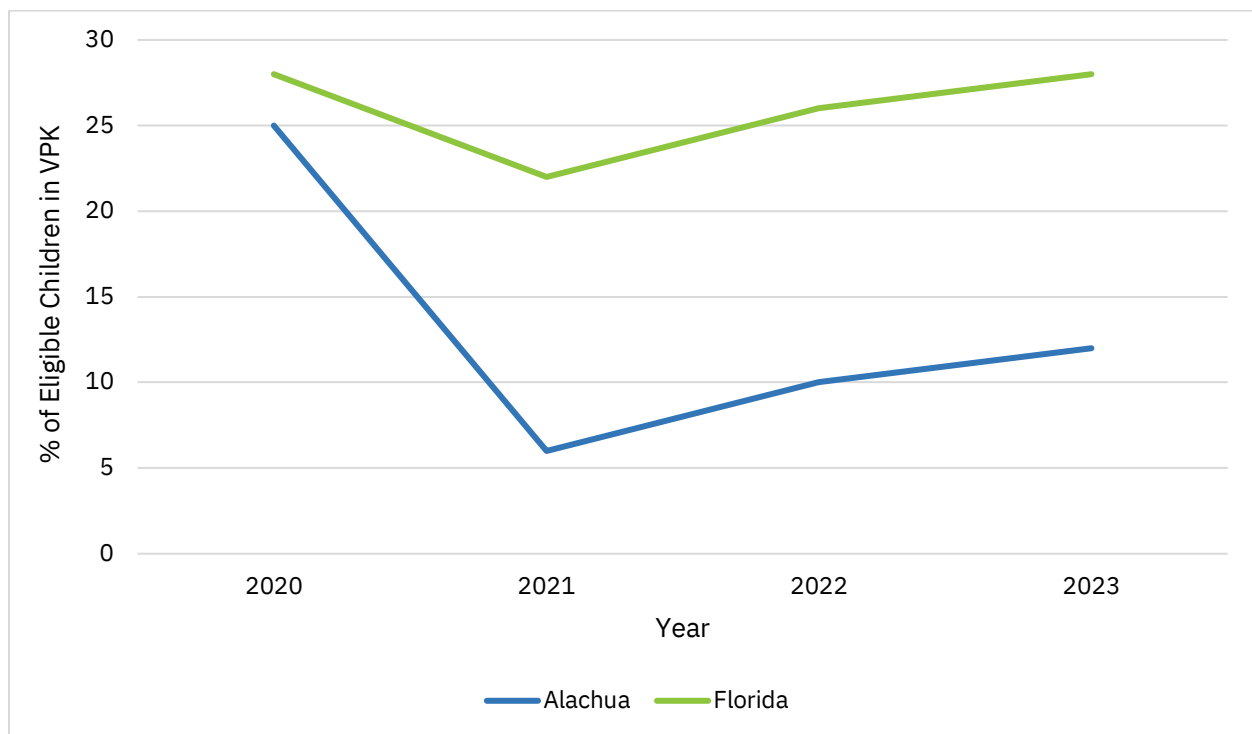
supports families in Alachua County by providing Head Start, VPK, and School Readiness services. Staff from both organizations serve on the literacy needs assessment committee.

The following sections describe information related to access and quality of VPK and SR in Alachua County.

Participation in VPK

A smaller percentage of Alachua County four-year-olds are enrolled in VPK as compared to the Florida average. This has been consistently true since 2020, but the percentage especially declined starting in 2021 (see Figure 6). This is problematic because children enrolled in VPK have higher school readiness compared to unenrolled children (see pp. 18–19), so increasing VPK participation is important.

Figure 6. *Percent of Eligible 4-Year-Olds Attending VPK, Alachua County and Florida, 2020 through 2023*



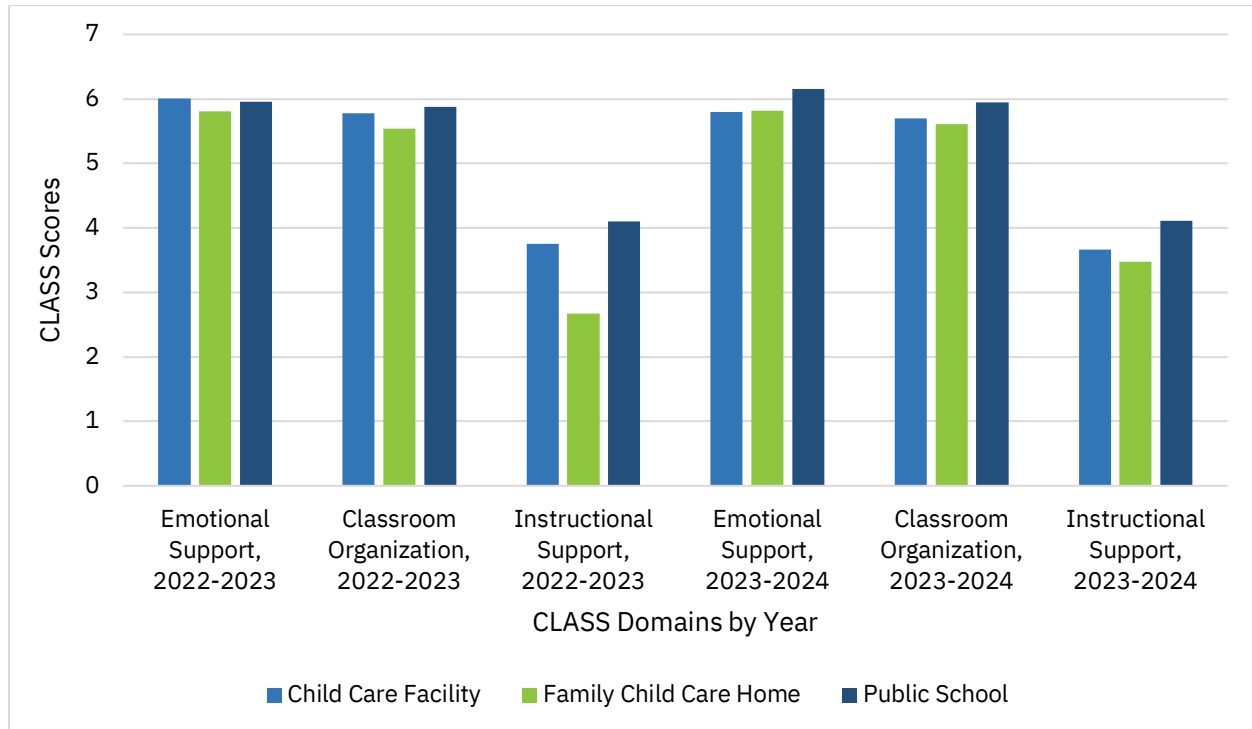
Source: [Florida Department of Health](#)

Quality of VPK and SR

Florida requires VPK and SR classrooms to meet quality standards using an observation tool called the Classroom Assessment Scoring System, or CLASS (Pianta et al., 2008). Observers rate VPK and SR classrooms on CLASS indicators, which are averaged to create three CLASS domains: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. Combined, these domains show the quality of teacher-child interactions in classroom settings. VPK classrooms are required to have an average of 4 (on a scale of 7) on CLASS indicators as a “quality threshold.”

Data provided from the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County to the UF Lastinger Center included CLASS scores by provider type (childcare facility, family childcare home, or public school). Instructional Support scores across Florida and the US are typically lower than Emotional Support and Classroom Organization scores, but Alachua County childcare providers scored well in Instructional Support (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. *Alachua County VPK Scores by Childcare Type, 2022-2023 and 2023-2024*



Source: Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County

School Readiness at Kindergarten Entry

The Florida legislature has defined “*ready for kindergarten*” through student scores on assessments administered in the fall of kindergarten. Results are based on the first assessment administered to each student. Prior to 2022-2023, Florida used the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS), with a score of 500 or higher indicating “ready for kindergarten” per Rule 6M-8.601, F.A.C.

[Starting in 2022-2023](#), Florida adopted a statewide coordinated screening and progress monitoring system known as the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) Star Early Literacy. [FAST Star Early Literacy](#) now serves as the state’s kindergarten screener. A score of 690 on FAST Star Early Literacy is equivalent to a score of 500 on the FLKRS. FAST Star Early Literacy is also implemented in all VPK programs as required by s. 1002.68, F.S., and used to assess student achievement of the performance standards established in s. 1002.67(1)(a), F.S., in early literacy and mathematics.

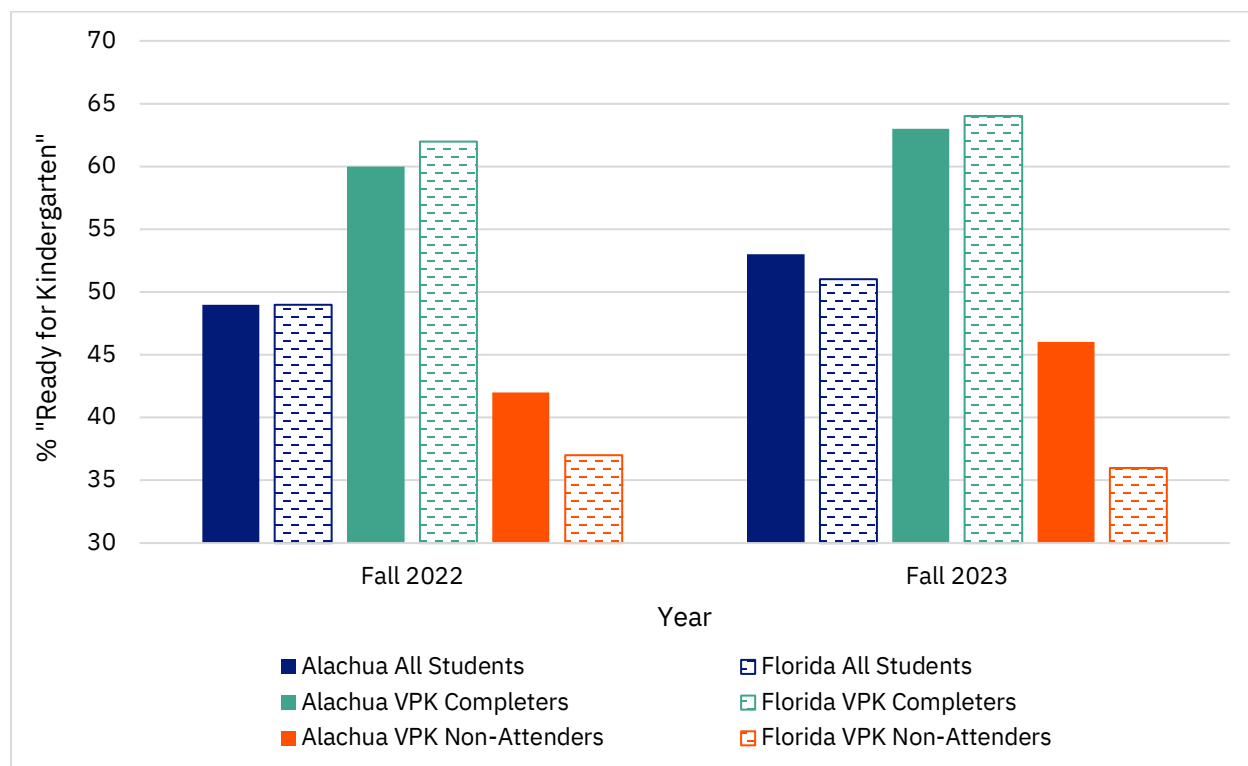
In most years, Alachua County children had slightly higher school readiness scores than the Florida average (2023 was an exception; see Table 10). Children who completed VPK tended to have the highest readiness scores in 2022 and 2023, both in Alachua County and Florida (see Table 10 and Figure 8).

Table 10. *School Readiness at Kindergarten Entry, All Students, Alachua County and Florida*

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Alachua	56.9%	58.4%	54.8%	48.6%	52.5%
Florida	53.4%	56.9%	50.0%	49.2%	51.0%

Source: [Florida Department of Health](#)

Figure 8. *Percent of Students “Ready for Kindergarten” Based on FAST Scores at Kindergarten Entry, including by VPK, Alachua County, Fall 2022 and Fall 2023*



Source: [FAST 2022, 2023 data](#); Note: “All Students” refers to all children who took beginning of year (BOY) FAST assessment at the beginning of kindergarten. “VPK Completers” refers to children who attended $\geq 70\%$ of VPK the year before kindergarten. “VPK Non-Attenders” refers to children in kindergarten who did not attend VPK or were unmatched to a VPK record; these children may have experienced home care or other forms of childcare.



K-12

K-12 education plays a foundational role in shaping students' literacy skills, which are critical for academic success and broader life outcomes. Early literacy development in kindergarten through third grade has long been established as critical in setting students' literacy trajectories (Stanovich, 1986). Although it is never too late to intervene, research indicates helping older students is significantly more resource-intensive than preventing reading difficulties in the elementary years (Torgesen, 2004). However, effective literacy instruction must extend beyond elementary grades to support students at all grade levels. Secondary students who struggle with reading require targeted, evidence-based interventions that recognize their unique needs and build on their strengths. A commitment to literacy at every age ensures that each learner has access to the instruction and support needed to develop strong literacy skills.

Alachua County's literacy data provides valuable insight into students' reading proficiency, progress over time, and areas of concern. Disparities in literacy achievement can highlight challenges that impact specific student populations, including Black and Hispanic/Latino students, students who are economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, or English language learners. Reviewing trends helps Alachua County identify strengths and gaps in literacy supports.

Organizations Serving K-12 Students and Families in Alachua County

The UF Lastinger Center interviewed several organizations that serve the language and literacy needs of K-12 children and youth in Alachua County (see [Appendix A](#)).

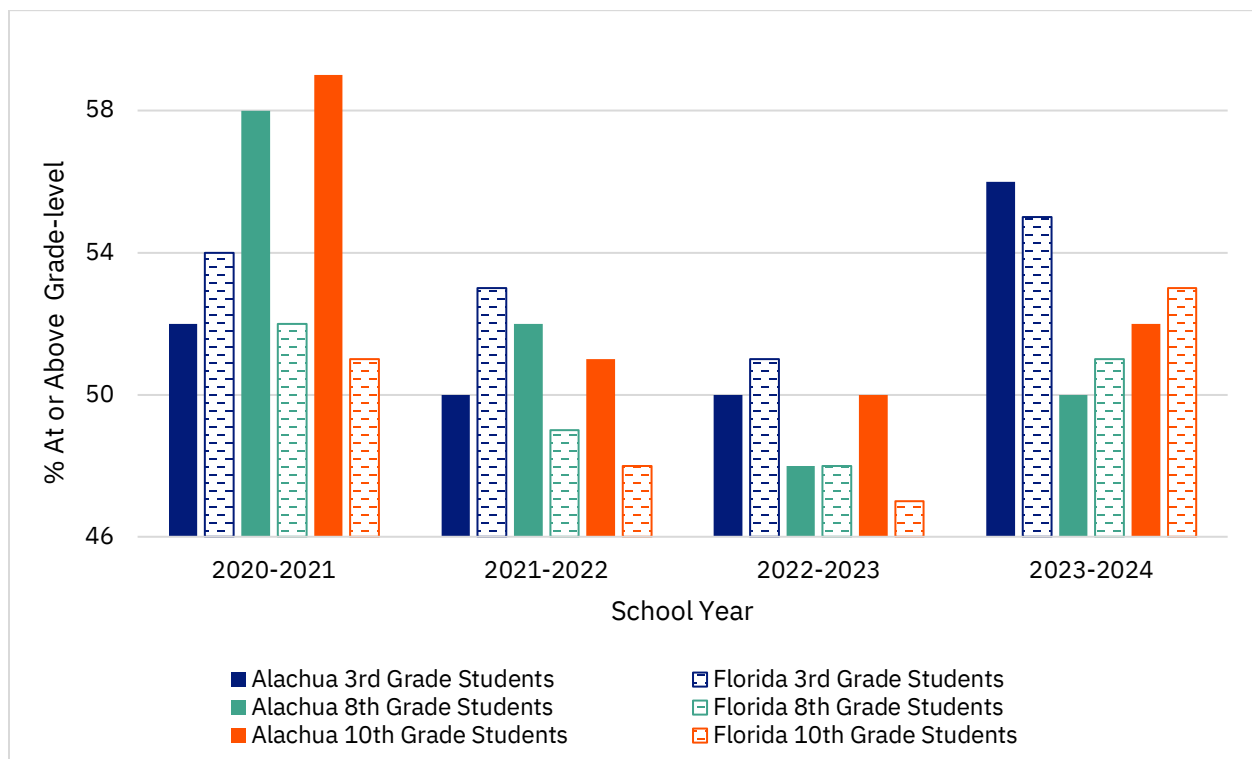
K-12 Literacy Achievement

The state of Florida has used various standardized assessments over time to measure grade level proficiency for K-12 students. During the data collection window for this literacy needs assessment, Florida used two standardized assessments: Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) and Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST). FSA was the statewide standardized test used in Florida from 2015 through the 2021-2022 school year to measure student proficiency in the English Language Arts (ELA) standards in grades 3–10. FSA was a summative assessment, administered once at the end of the school year, providing a snapshot of student achievement. Florida replaced FSA with FAST during the 2022-2023 school year. FAST also measures students' proficiency with ELA standards but is administered three times per year, allowing educators to monitor students' progress throughout the year and adjust instruction as needed. The timing of FAST assessments is referred to as “progress monitoring” or “PM.” PM1 is fall, PM2 is winter, and PM3 is spring.

Both FSA and FAST describe a student's proficiency as falling within a range of 5 achievement levels, (Level 1 is the lowest and Level 5 is the highest). Level 3 or higher is used to determine which students are considered at or above grade level.

The percentage of students in grades 3–10 in Alachua County scoring at or above grade level generally falls either slightly above or slightly below the state average (see Figure 9). Students in the middle and high school grades tend to slightly outperform students across the state in terms of total percentage scoring at or above a level 3 over time. More third grade students in Alachua County are performing at or above grade level than the state average as of the 2023-2024 school year.

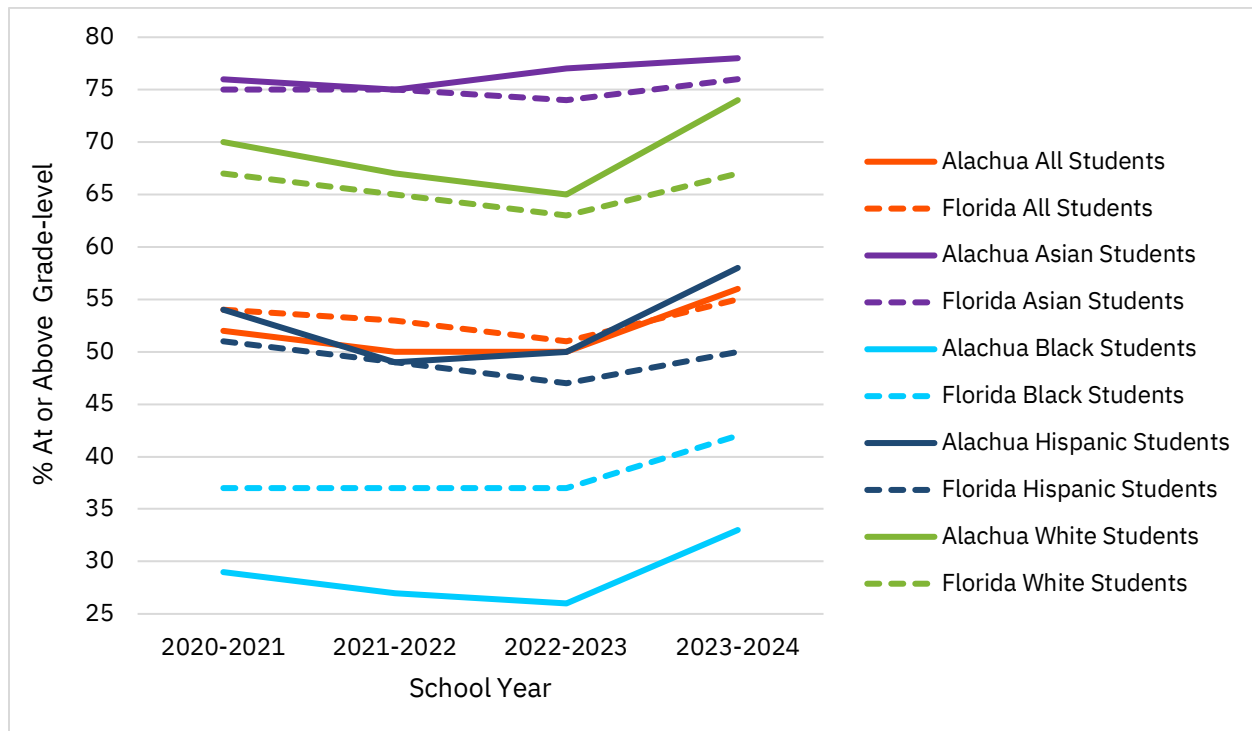
Figure 9. *Percent of Students At or Above Grade Level Reading Proficiency Rates (score 3 or higher), Alachua and Florida, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024*



Source: [Florida Department of Education](https://fldoe.org/data/assessment/reading-proficiency/)

The total percentage of third grade students scoring at or above grade level is roughly similar between Alachua County and the state average (see Figure 10). However, an analysis of performance by race/ethnicity and other subgroups reveals significant differences across groups. Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and White students in Alachua County consistently perform similar to, or better than, statewide averages for those groups. Yet, there is a consistent trend of a much smaller percentage of Black students in Alachua County scoring at or above grade level than Black students across the state. Scores trended upwards in 2023-2024, both in Alachua County and Florida.

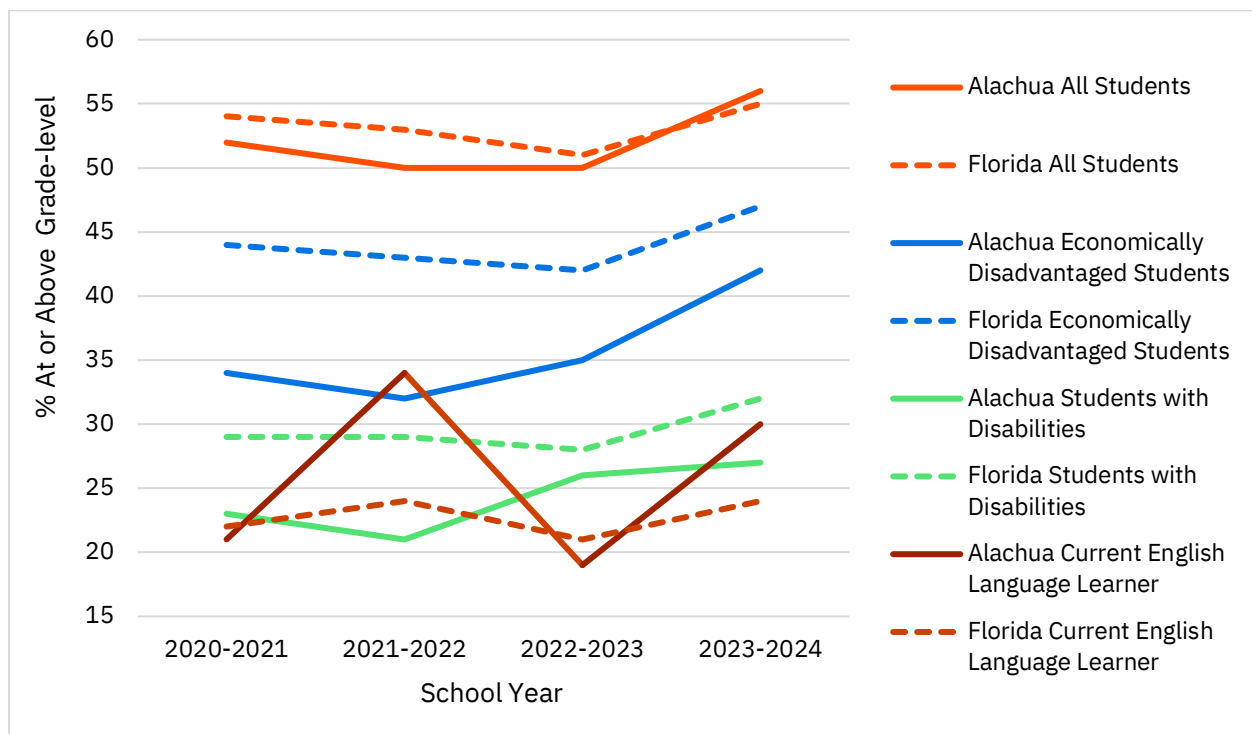
Figure 10. *Third Grade Reading (At or Above Grade Level) by Student Race/Ethnicity, Alachua and Florida, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024*



Source: [Florida Department of Education](https://fldoe.org/data/assessment/standards/grade3/reading/)

Economically disadvantaged students and students with disabilities in Alachua County also underperformed relative to similar groups of third graders across the state (see Figure 11). During the 2023-2024 school year, English language learners in Alachua County appeared to have made significant gains relative to the average statewide performance.

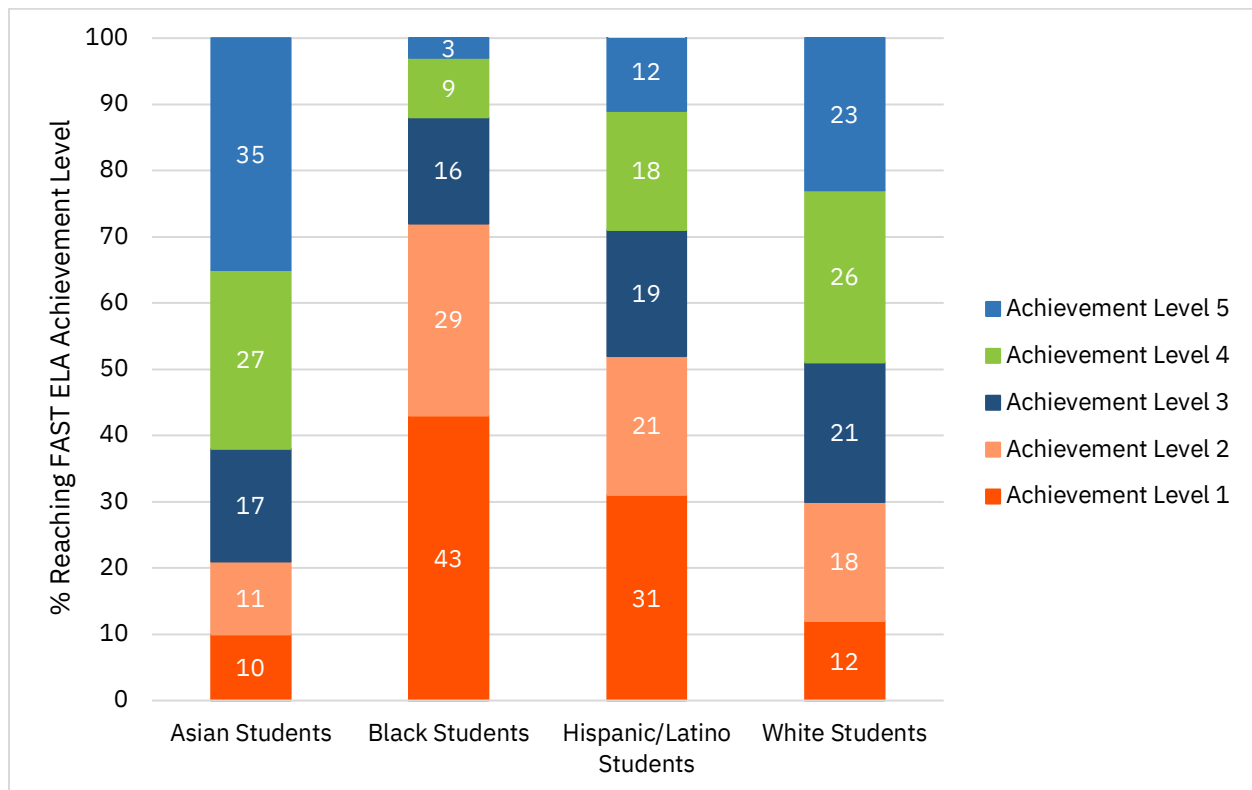
Figure 11. *Third Grade Reading (At or Above Grade Level) by Student English Language Learner, Economic Disadvantage, and Disability Status, Alachua and Florida, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024*



Source: [Florida Department of Education](https://fldoe.org/data/assessment/3rd-grade-reading/)

In addition to reviewing publicly data from the Florida department of Education, the UF Lastinger Center analyzed data received from Alachua County Public Schools (ACPS). ACPS FAST data for PM3 in Spring 2024 confirmed that less than 12% of Black students and 29% of Hispanic/Latino students scored 4 or 5 on the ELA assessment (see Figure 12). The data shown in this figure suggests that Black and Hispanic/Latino students are not adequately getting their literacy needs met in the current educational environment.

Figure 12. *Percent of Students reaching FAST ELA Achievement Level by Race and Ethnicity, Alachua, Grades 3–10, PM3 2023-2024*



Source: Alachua County Public Schools

K-12 Attendance and On-Time Graduation

Direct literacy instruction plays a crucial role in developing reading and writing skills. Several non-instructional factors within the school environment also significantly influence literacy outcomes. Attendance patterns, including chronic absenteeism, affect students' exposure to instruction and opportunities for literacy development (Ginsburg et al., 2014). High suspension rates reduce valuable instructional time, disproportionately impacting students who may already be struggling with literacy skills (LiCalsi et al., 2021).

Additionally, ELA grades often reflect students' ability to engage with text, comprehend content, and express their understanding, all of which are deeply tied to literacy proficiency. Graduation rates offer another important lens through which to view literacy outcomes, as students who struggle with reading, writing, and communication are at a greater risk of dropping out or failing to complete high school on time (Hernandez, 2012). These factors do not exist in isolation. They interact with literacy achievement in complex ways, reinforcing either success or challenges.

Understanding these non-instructional outcomes provides essential context for assessing literacy needs and developing targeted interventions. By examining these broader indicators, a more comprehensive view emerges of the challenges with learning to read and opportunities to improve outcomes.

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of school days for any reason. ACPS tracks the percentage of school days attended for all students enrolled in the district for at least 10 days during the school year. Overall, Alachua County's absence rates were similar to state averages (see Table 11).

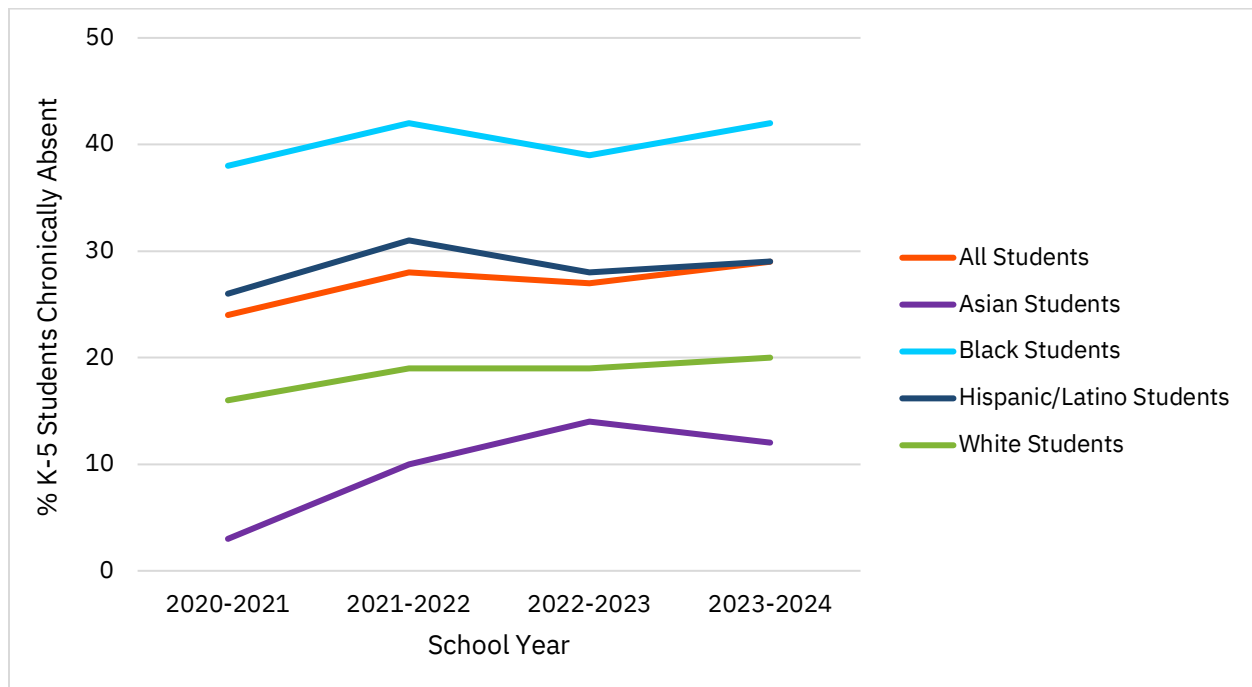
Table 11. *Student Attendance, Alachua and Florida, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024*

	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024	
	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua
% Students Absent =>21 Days	17%	16%	21%	19%	19%	19%	20%	20%
% Students Absent =>10%	25%	24%	32%	30%	31%	30%	31%	32%

Source: [Florida Department of Education](#)

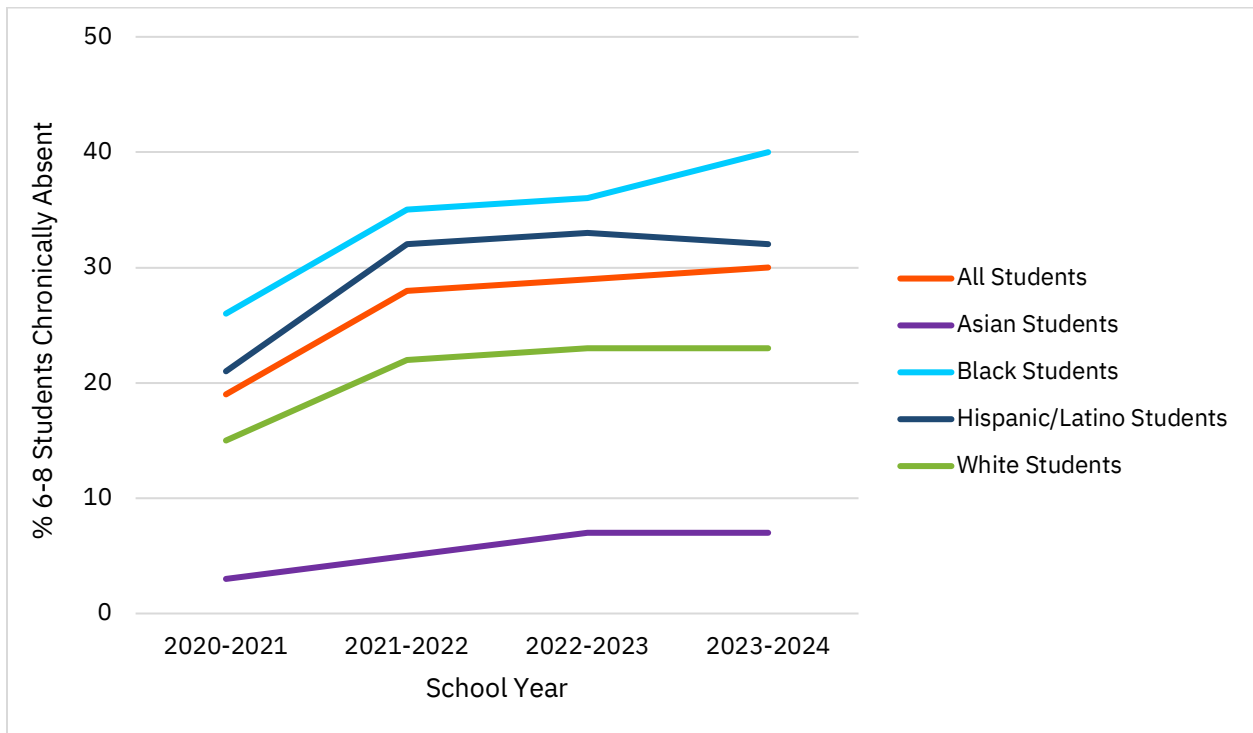
Average rates of chronic absence increased for all students in Alachua County between the 2020-2021 and 2023-2024 school years (see Figures 13–15). This follows statewide trends of increasing chronic absence since pandemic school closures in 2020. Across all school levels, Black and Hispanic/Latino students have the highest rates of chronic absence while Asian students exhibit the lowest rates.

Figure 13. *Percent of Chronically Absent K-5 Students by Race/Ethnicity, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024*



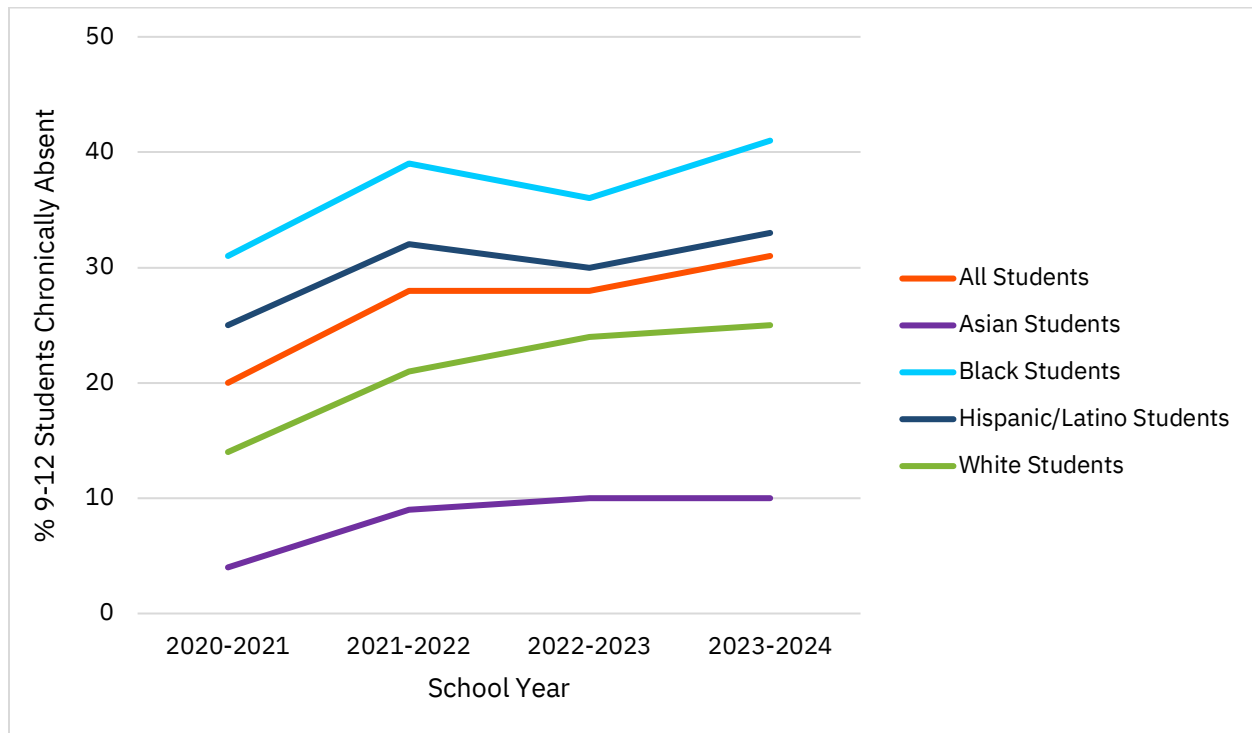
Source: Alachua County Public Schools; Note: Chronically absent is defined as missing 10% or more of school days that the child was enrolled in ACPs.

Figure 14. *Percent of Chronically Absent 6-8 Students by Race/Ethnicity, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024*



Source: Alachua County Public Schools; Note: Chronically absent is defined as missing 10% or more of school days that the child was enrolled in ACPs.

Figure 15. *Percent of Chronically Absent 9-12 Students by Race/Ethnicity, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024*



Source: Alachua County Public Schools; Note: Chronically absent is defined as missing 10% or more of school days that the child was enrolled in ACPs.

Data about student ELA grades was also provided by ACPs. The chance of failing an ELA course for students in ninth through twelve grades was calculated from 2020-2021 through 2022-2023. Failure rates averaged 16% for fall courses and 19% for spring courses. An additional indicator of academic success is the percentage of students graduating from high school. Alachua County had lower rates of on-time graduation than Florida averages, a gap of 6% in 2023-2024 (see Table 12).

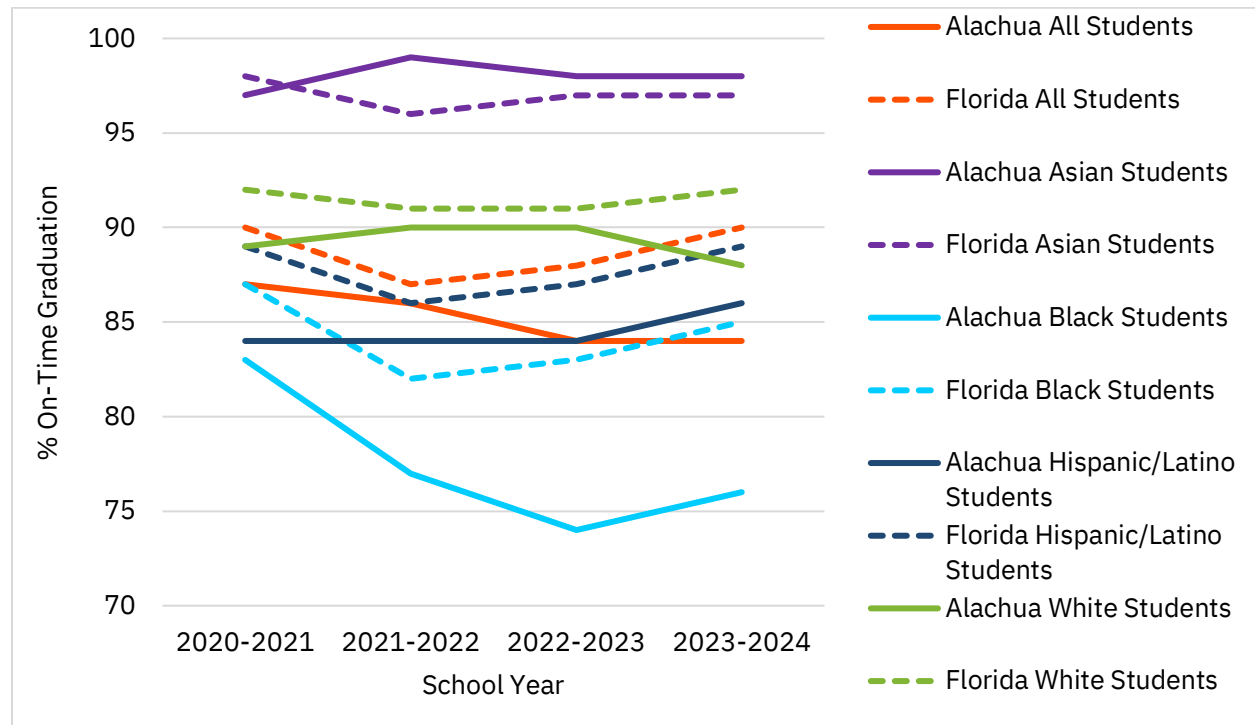
Table 12. *On-Time Twelfth Grade High School Graduation Rates, Alachua and Florida, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024*

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Alachua	87%	86%	84%	84%
Florida	90%	87%	88%	90%

Source: [Florida Department of Education](#)

Except for Asian students, smaller percentages of all Alachua County student subgroups graduated on time compared to similar subgroups across Florida (see Figure 16). On-time graduation rates across student subgroups have declined since the 2020-2021 school year, with a sharp decline for Black students in recent years.

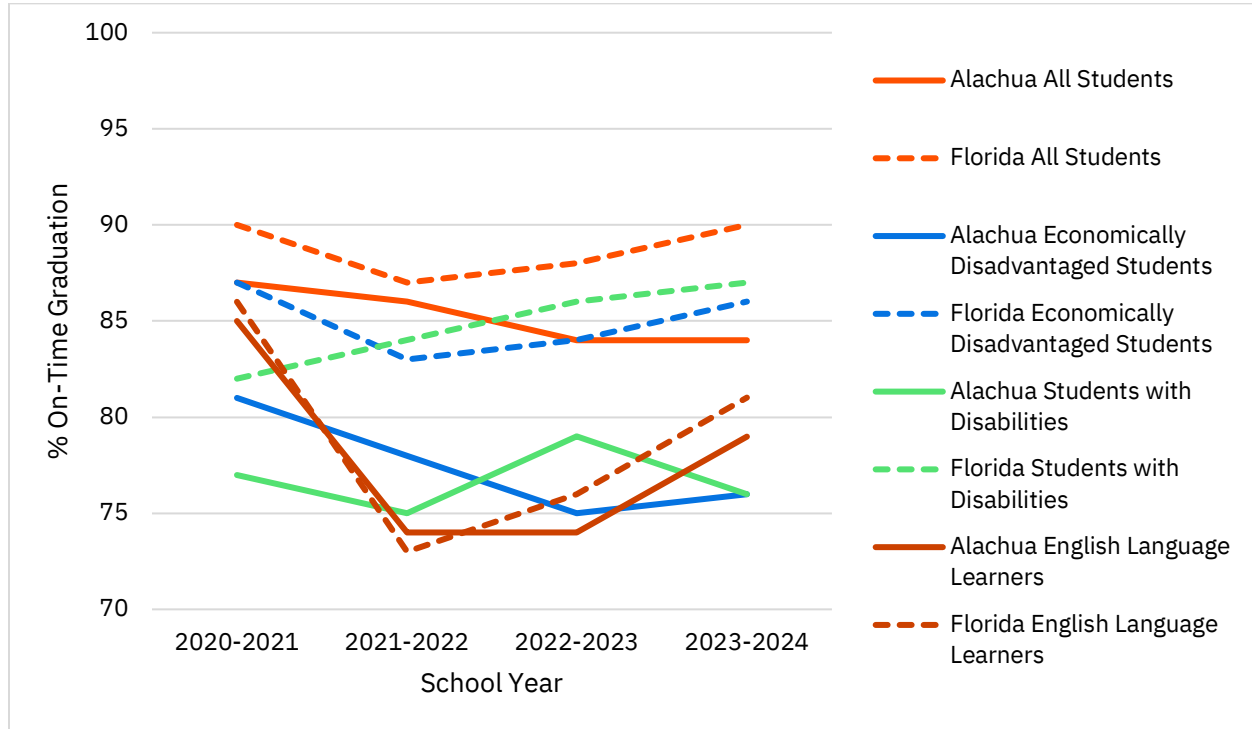
Figure 16. *Percent of On-Time Twelfth Grade High School Graduation by Race/Ethnicity, Alachua and Florida, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024*



Source: [Florida Department of Education](https://fldoe.org/data/assessment/graduation-rates/)

Smaller percentages of Alachua County students who are classified as economically disadvantaged, English learners, and students with disabilities graduate on time when compared with similar subgroups across the state (see Figure 17). Percentages of students graduating on time decreased across the state from 2020-2021 to 2021-2022. Yet, the state averages are roughly similar to or better than pre-pandemic levels, whereas Alachua County's on-time graduation rate continues to lag behind state averages for the above subgroups. Increases occurred for most subgroups in 2023-2024.

Figure 17. *Percent of On-Time Twelfth Grade High School Graduation by Student English Learner, Economic Disadvantage, and Disability Status, Alachua and Florida, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024*



Source: [Florida Department of Education](https://fldoe.org/data/assessment/graduation/)



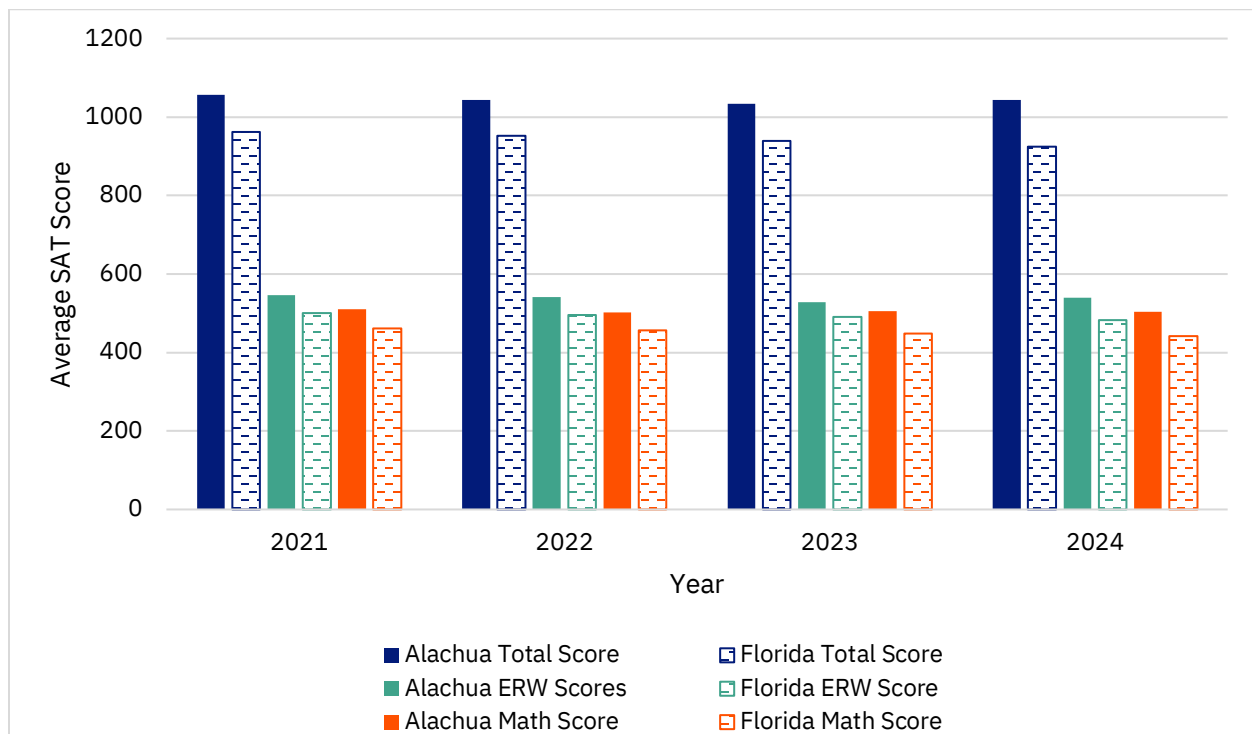
College and Workforce Readiness

College entrance exams serve as critical tools for assessing workforce readiness by measuring essential academic, technical, and problem-solving skills of individuals 16 and older. These assessments help determine preparedness for higher education and career pathways and align individuals with roles that match their competencies. College entrance exams measure reading comprehension and written communication skills and ensure candidates can analyze information and articulate ideas effectively in academic and professional environments. The exams help students identify academic strengths and guide career choices based on their performance in different subject areas (Allen & Radunzel, 2017; College Board, 2025). The exams establish a standardized framework to evaluate communication, numerical reasoning, and logical problem-solving skills—core competencies for many professional roles. College entrance exams serve as indicators of readiness for both academic and vocational training.

The most common college entrance exams in the United States are the SAT, published by the College Board, and the ACT, published by ACT, Inc.

The College Board has investigated the connection between SAT scores and college course grades and early career success. They found that students with an Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (ERW) score of at least 480 and a Math score of at least 530 are likely to be successful in pursuing post-secondary education or joining the workforce (The College Board, n.d.). On average, Alachua County Public School students exceed the ERW benchmark of 480 but not the Math benchmark of 530 (see Figure 18).

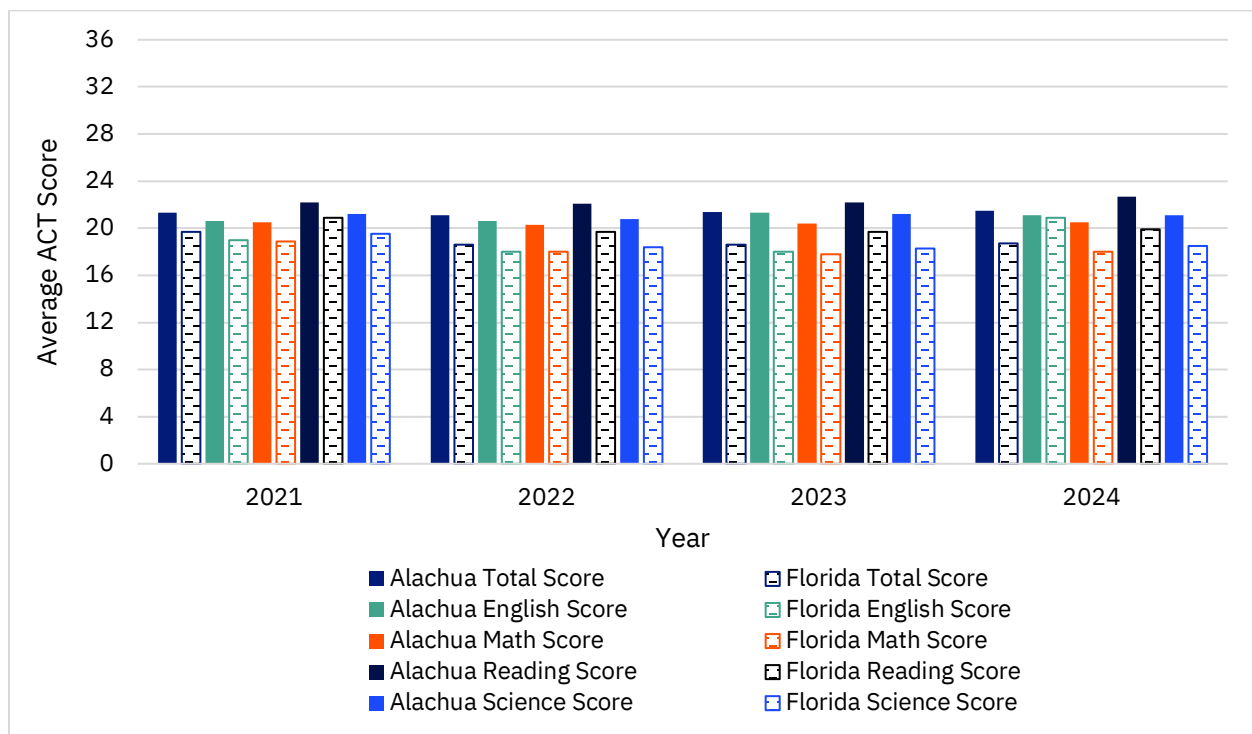
Figure 18. Average SAT Section Score Compared to College and Career Readiness Benchmarks, Alachua and Florida, 2021-2024



Note: Data in this chart reflects the highest SAT score of all students who took the SAT in the given year, including high school graduates. Data provided on request by Florida Department of Education. Max Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (ERW)/Math score = 800. Max total score = 1600.

ACT, Inc. has also published college readiness benchmarks which, if met, indicate that a student is likely to be successful with a typical first-year college student course load. The college readiness benchmarks for each ACT section are as follows: English, 18; Math, 22; Reading, 22; Science, 23 (ACT Inc., 2017). According to the Florida Department of Education, in 2024, 31% of ACPS students met all four of the ACT College Readiness benchmarks, compared to 15% across all of Florida. 63% of ACPS students met the English benchmark and 52% met the Reading benchmark. This is consistent with the percentage of students meeting ACT English and Reading benchmarks for the previous three years. However, the average ACT English and Reading scores in Alachua County are below the readiness benchmarks (see Figure 19). This indicates that 40-50% of students who are not meeting the benchmark are scoring low enough to reduce the district's average score.

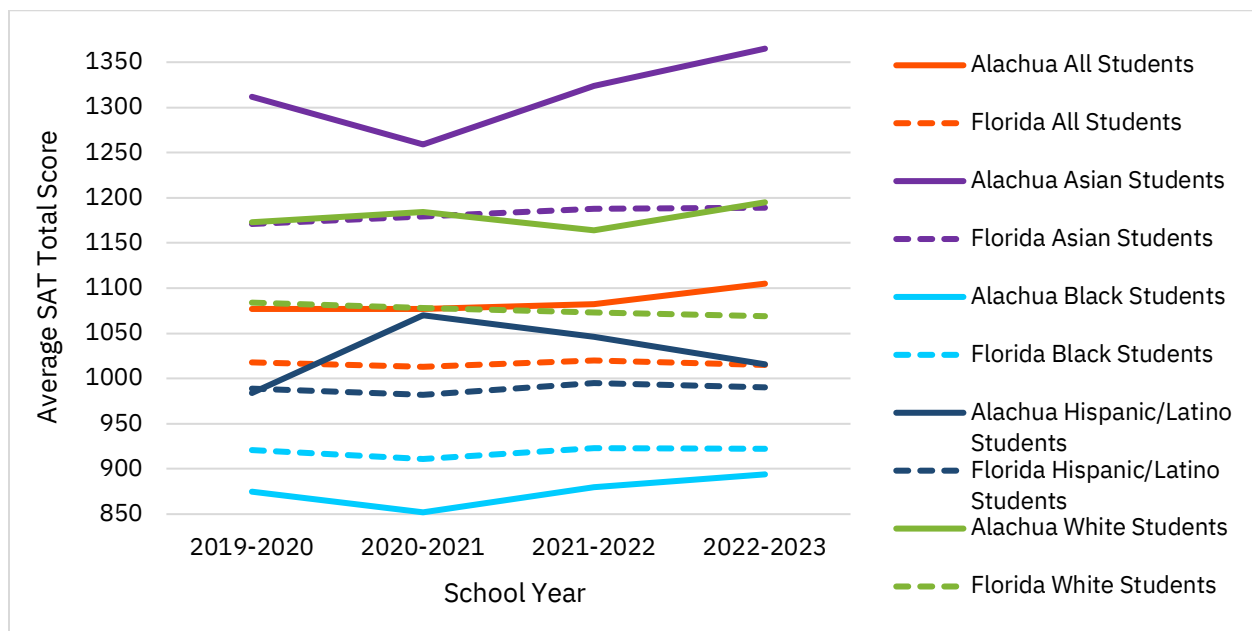
Figure 19. Average ACT Section Score Compared to College Readiness Benchmarks, Alachua and Florida, 2021-2024



Note: Data in this chart reflects the highest ACT score of all students who took the ACT in the given year, including high school graduates. Data provided on request by Florida Department of Education. Max section score = 36. Max total score = 36, or the rounded average of the four section scores.

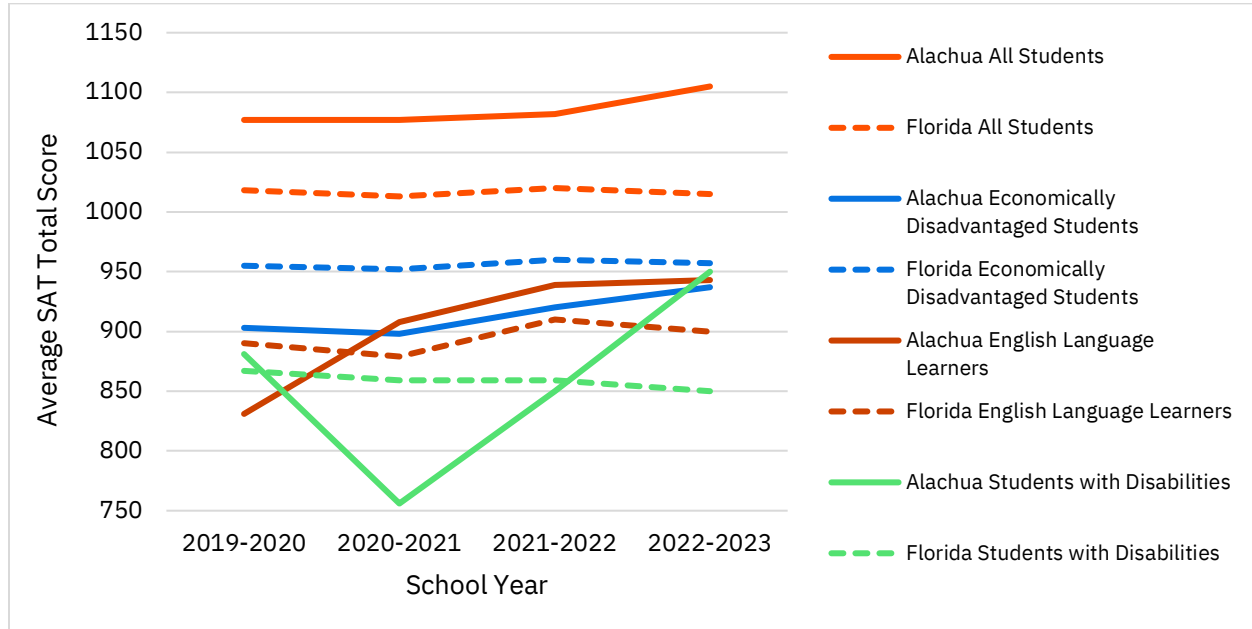
SAT and ACT composite scores were examined in further detail by student subgroups (see Figures 20–23). Black students on averaged score below the district average and below the average reported for Black students across the state. Hispanic/Latino students in Alachua performed just under the district average but higher than the state average. Economically disadvantaged students in Alachua scored lower than their statewide counterparts. English language learners performed better in Alachua County compared to the rest of the state.

Figure 20. *High School Graduate Average SAT Total Score by Race/Ethnicity, Alachua and Florida, 2019-2020 through 2022-2023*



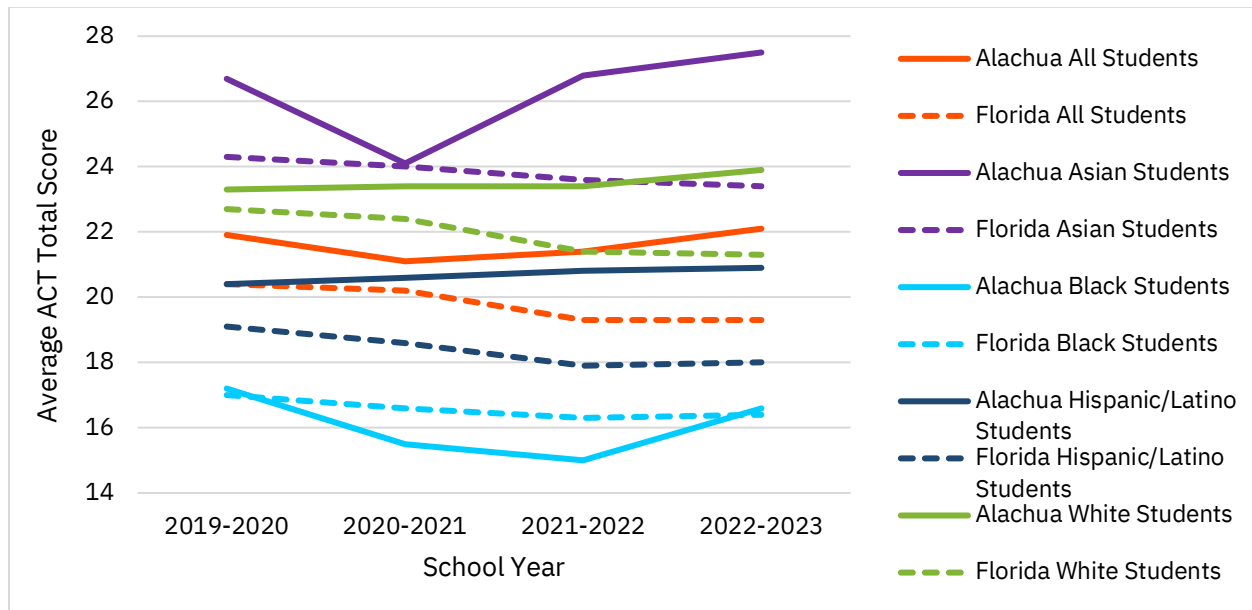
Source: [Alachua School District Report Card](#); Note: Max total score = 1600.

Figure 21. High School Graduate Average SAT Composite Score by Student English Learner, Economic Disadvantage, and Disability Status, Alachua and Florida, 2019-2020 through 2022-2023



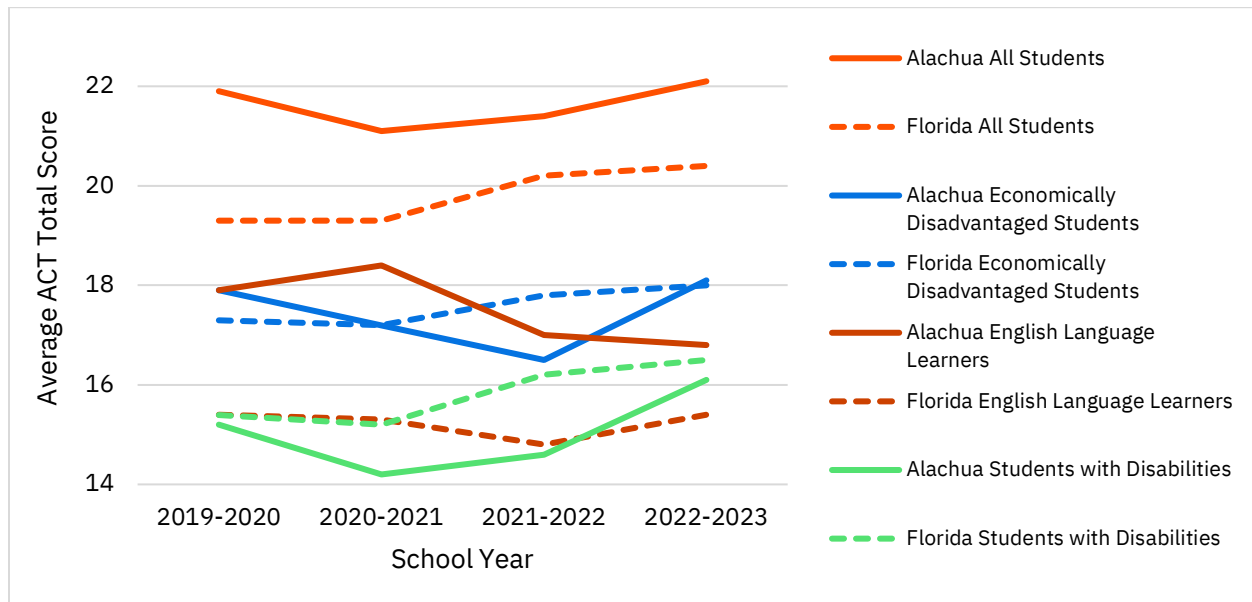
Source: [Alachua School District Report Card](#); Note: Max total score = 1600.

Figure 22. High School Graduate Average ACT Total Score by Race/Ethnicity, Alachua and Florida, 2019-2020 through 2022-2023



Source: [Alachua School District Report Card](#); Note: Max total score = 36.

Figure 23. High School Graduate Average ACT Total Score by Student English Learner, Economic Disadvantage, and Disability Status, Alachua and Florida, 2019-2020 through 2022-2023



Source: [Alachua School District Report Card](#); Note: Max total score = 36.



Adult Education

Adult learners are individuals aged 16 and older who did not complete their K-12 education, or who possess a high school diploma or equivalent but nevertheless have gaps in basic skills such as reading, math, or spoken English. Nearly 20 million U.S. adults have limited English proficiency, and English instruction is an essential part of adult education (National Coalition for Literacy, n.d.).

Most adult learners (64%) are employed and are parents or primary caregivers of school-aged children. Many adults are motivated to return to school because they want to help their children succeed in school. Most adults who lack high school diplomas or have gaps in basic academic skills earn low wages and lack the preparation to succeed in postsecondary education and most training programs (National Coalition for Literacy, n.d.).

For adults, literacy plays a critical role in determining professional and economic mobility. Adults with literacy competencies can pursue a broad range of career opportunities that may contribute to both their financial well-being and overall workforce productivity. However, those lacking literacy skills often experience severe employment limitations, which often reinforce cycles of poverty and underemployment.

Beyond personal outcomes, adult literacy is a critical factor in shaping labor market outcomes and overall economic resilience. Programs designed to improve literacy skills provide individuals with better employment prospects, enhance business performance, and stimulate economic progress at all levels of society. Allocating resources toward literacy development ensures long-term social and financial benefits.

A growing number of adults in the United States are struggling with literacy. Recent data from the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2024) reveals a troubling rise in the percentage of adults in the United States scoring at the lowest levels of literacy proficiency (Level 1 or below). Between 2017 and 2023, this figure climbed from 19% to 28%. This trend presents challenges for workforce development and economic growth and underscores the urgency of implementing policies and programs aimed at improving adult literacy rates nationwide.

In Florida, estimates from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) suggest that between 24% and 26% of adults experience difficulties with literacy tasks (Lunardini, 2024). According to data from the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), approximately 19% of adults in Alachua County are functionally illiterate. This figure is slightly below the statewide rate of 24% and the national rate of 20% (Lunardini, 2024; NCES, 2024). These figures highlight the urgent need for continued literacy interventions and accessible learning opportunities.

Organizations Serving Adults in Alachua County

In response to this challenge, various educational institutions and community organizations are working collaboratively to improve adult literacy through adult education programs. These efforts focus on equipping individuals with the necessary skills for personal, academic, and professional advancement, while also fostering civic engagement and social mobility.

Adult education serves as a vital component of workforce and community development. For many, it is a pathway for continued skill, knowledge, and competency development beyond what is offered through traditional primary and secondary schooling. The programs range from literacy and vocational training to

continuing education and lifelong learning initiatives. With flexible learning formats (e.g., in-person instruction, online courses, and self-directed study) and a focus on real-world application, adult education caters to the needs of learners, enhances workforce readiness, and strengthens economic mobility.

In Alachua County, community colleges, universities, training centers, nonprofit organizations, and Alachua County Public Schools (ACPS) play a key role in delivering accessible and impactful adult education programs. Programs target different demographics, including adult English language learners, GED candidates, individuals with intellectual disabilities, and out-of-school youth.

At the state level, the Florida Literacy Coalition (FLC) is a statewide initiative that enhances literacy development efforts, including those in Alachua County. The organization plays a critical role in promoting, supporting, and advocating for the effective delivery of adult and family literacy services across Florida. By working with over 300 literacy and adult education providers, the FLC strengthens the capacity of organizations engaged in improving literacy. As part of its outreach efforts, the FLC provides free, structured learning opportunities for Florida residents. One of its key initiatives includes intermediate-level English classes, which help learners enhance their language proficiency while gaining insights into life in the United States. The eight-week Zoom courses offer a flexible and accessible learning environment for adult participants seeking to develop their English skills.

At the county level, a key institution supporting adult literacy is the Alachua County Library District (ACLD), which offers a broad range of free literacy services. Through its Adult Literacy Program, ACLD provides one-on-one tutoring, small group instruction, access to English conversation clubs, General Educational Development (GED) preparation, and job skills workshops (Alachua County Library District, n.d.). These services are designed to meet the diverse learning needs of the community. In 2024, ACLD services included the following:

- One-on-one and small group tutoring for both basic education and English language instruction: 88 unique learners
- GED preparation: 40 unique learners
- Digital literacy assistance (Northstar Digital Literacy): 57 unique learners
- Virtual and in-person English conversation opportunities: averaged 36 participants per week

In addition to the library system, the Adult Education Program provided by ACPS plays a significant role in supporting adult learners. The program offers Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Educational Development (GED) preparation, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses, all of which aim to enhance foundational academic skills and English proficiency among adults (Alachua County Public Schools, n.d.). ACPS also provides GED tests, adult high school, adult basic education, literacy training, and Division of Blind services classes. Populations served include adults, young adults, seniors, people in jail, people with disabilities, people who did not complete high school, and people with limited English. Classes are provided at various times and locations throughout the county.

At the university level, UF's English Language Institute (ELI) offers structured English as a Second Language (ESL) education for individuals preparing for academic study in the US. The Intensive English Program (IEP) serves F1 and J1 visa holders, as well as tourists and prospective students, through a rigorous curriculum that includes Reading/Writing, Grammar, and Listening/Speaking courses across six proficiency levels. This full-time program provides 23 hours of instruction per week and equips learners with the advanced English skills necessary for academic success.

At the college level, Santa Fe College's Blount Center contributes to adult education efforts by providing ABE (people whose entry skills are below the 9th grade level but who often wish to pass their GED test) and GED preparation programs (people whose entry skills are above the 9th grade level and who are trying to pass their GED test), along with ESOL instruction (people who are non-native English speakers).

Student Access and INclusion Together (Project SAINT) is a comprehensive post-secondary transition program for students with intellectual disabilities. Project SAINT is tailored to students' skills and interests. Students can enter two specialized programs: Horticulture Agriculture Pathway (HAP) or Artist Entrepreneur Pathway (AEP). Project SAINT students receive the part-time support of Santa Fe student mentors whether in classes, on internships, or participating in campus activities. Santa Fe College Adult Education assists adults with developing basic skills to obtain employment and enable success in college, the community, and the workplace. Santa Fe College Adult Education provides the following programs (see Table 13).

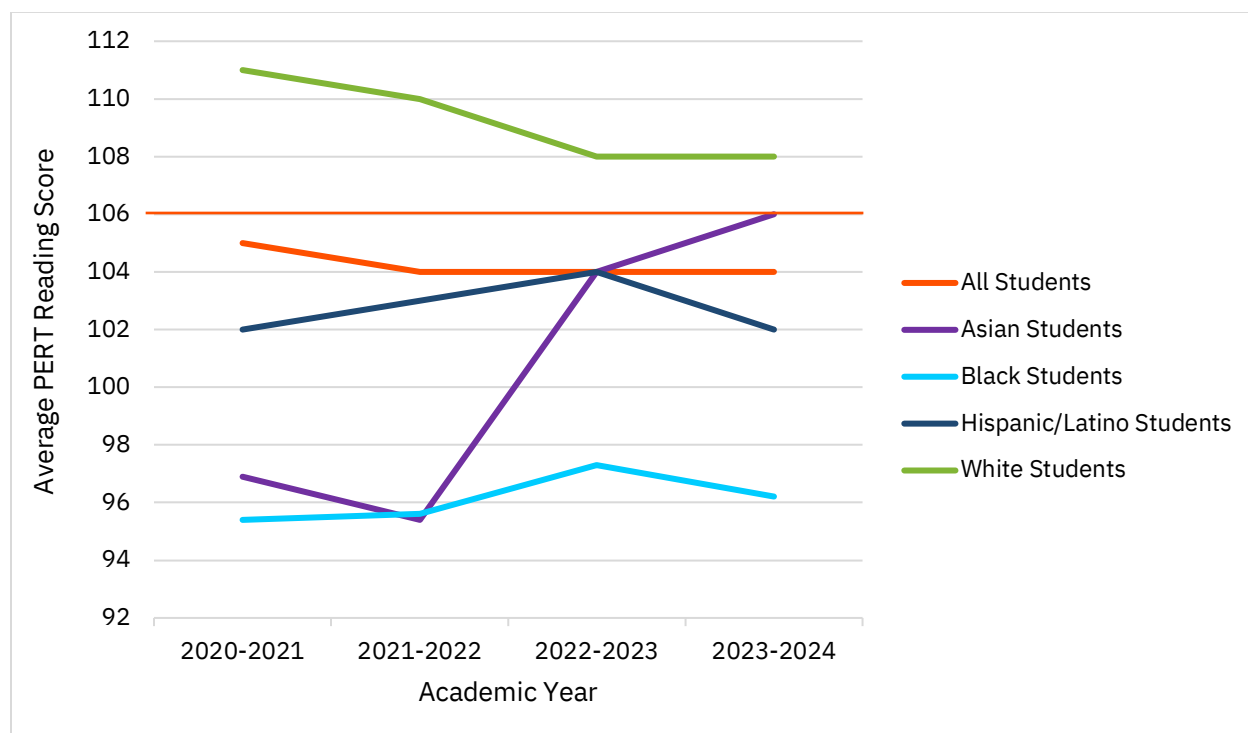
Table 13. Santa Fe College Adult Education Program Enrollment and Outcomes, 2022-2023 and 2023-2024

2022-2023		2023-2024	
Program	Enrollment Numbers	Program	Enrollment Numbers
Adult Basic Education (ABE)	294	Adult Basic Education (ABE)	307
ABE participants who entered without a high school diploma	244	ABE participants who entered without a high school diploma	156
GED Preparation	1	GED Preparation	3
ESOL	370	ESOL	460
Project SAINT	15	Project SAINT	15
Total Enrollment	680	Total Enrollment	785
Outcomes	Outcome Numbers	Outcomes	Outcome Numbers
Learning Gains	242	Learning Gains	261
GED's Earned	80	GED's Earned	72
Not Employed at Entry	261	Not Employed at Entry	191
Employed 2nd Quarter After Exit	N/A	Employed 2nd Quarter After Exit	207
Applied or enrolled in Santa Fe College during program or after exit (2022 and 2023)	150	Applied or enrolled in Santa Fe College during program or after exit (2024; more to enroll Fall 2025)	51
Total Outcomes	472	Total Outcomes	591

Sources: Enrollment, Learning Gains, GED's Earned: Santa Fe Adult Education Data. Employed 2nd Quarter After Exit: National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS) data (note: not available for 2022-2023 Report). Applied or enrolled in Santa Fe College: Santa Fe College Transition Report.

Santa Fe College uses testing benchmarks to help match students with appropriately leveled courses. Many Adult Basic Education (ABE) and ESOL students are placed according to their Florida Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT) scores. The benchmarks to enroll in college-level courses based on PERT are a Reading score of 106 or higher and a Writing score of 103 or higher (Santa Fe College, n.d.). On average, adult students from Alachua County scored below the college-level benchmark in PERT Reading and slightly above the benchmark in PERT Writing (see Figures 24 and 25, with benchmarks indicated by the horizontal orange lines). Black students from Alachua County averaged the lowest scores on both tests.

Figure 24. Average Santa Fe College PERT Reading Test Scores for Alachua County Residents for Academic Years 2020-2021 through 2023-2024 by Race and Ethnicity



Source: Data request to Santa Fe Office of Institutional Research.

All Students (N 2020 = 454, N 2021 = 524, N 2022 = 542, N 2023 = 606)

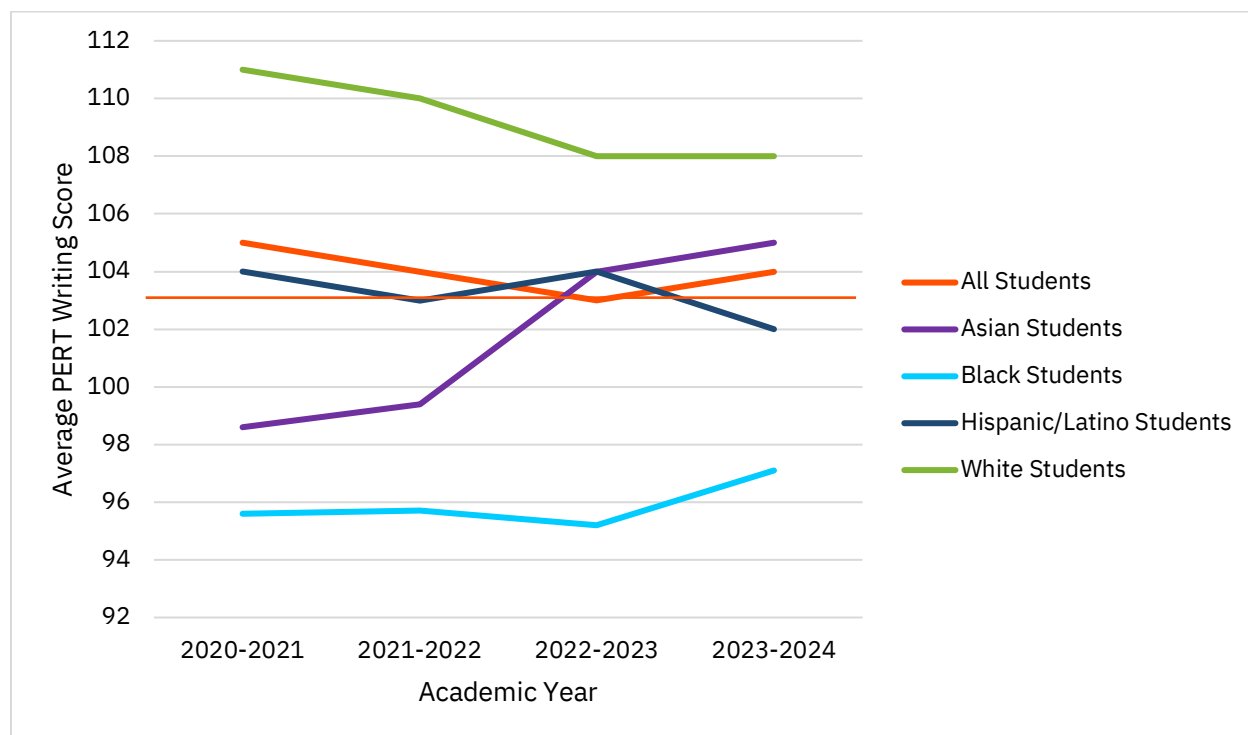
Asian Students (N 2020 = 23, N 2021 = 18, N 2022 = 30, N 2023 = 34)

Black Students (N 2020 = 96, N 2021 = 120, N 2022 = 148, N 2023 = 145)

Hispanic/Latino Students (N 2020 = 96, N 2021 = 110, N 2022 = 120, N 2023 = 116)

White Students (N 2020 = 196, N 2021 = 215, N 2022 = 202, N 2023 = 244)

Figure 25. Average Santa Fe College PERT Writing Test Scores for Alachua County Residents for Academic Years 2020-2021 through 2023-2024 by Race and Ethnicity



Source: Data request to Santa Fe Office of Institutional Research.

All Students (N 2020 = 445, N 2021 = 504, N 2022 = 530, N 2023 = 580)

Asian Students (N 2020 = 24, N 2021 = 18, N 2022 = 29, N 2023 = 32)

Black Students (N 2020 = 94, N 2021 = 116, N 2022 = 150, N 2023 = 146)

Hispanic/Latino Students (N 2020 = 90, N 2021 = 106, N 2022 = 121, N 2023 = 107)

White Students (N 2020 = 194, N 2021 = 208, N 2022 = 187, N 2023 = 227)

Santa Fe College students go on to be successful in their ABE and ESOL courses, with an over 80% passing rate in all courses offered between 2020 and 2024. Additionally, the increasing number of students taking the PERT test over time supports the narrative that many adult education service providers said about adults in Alachua County are actively seeking out and utilizing ESOL and ABE programs.

Faith-based organizations play a significant role in addressing literacy gaps by offering accessible language education and support services to non-native English speakers. These programs provide essential resources, such as English instruction, citizenship education, and cultural integration assistance, and help individuals navigate their communities more effectively. One such initiative is the International Learning Center

at Parkview Baptist Church, which offers ESOL classes, citizenship education, and childcare services to support linguistic and cultural adaptation.

Several religious-based organizations facilitate literacy development programs that are tailored to the diverse learning needs of local communities. For example, Catholic Charities operates the English Language Literacy Program which features small, personalized classrooms and certified ESL instructors. Similarly, the Emmanuel Mennonite Church provides free weekend ESL courses and serves Spanish speakers, Haitian-Creole speakers, and community members who speak additional languages.

Other organizations focus on individualized learning support. For instance, the University City Church of Christ's English Partners Program offers free one-on-one tutoring and customized study materials based on participants' language proficiency, academic goals, or job-related needs. The Williams Temple Church of God in Christ provides an English language outreach initiative that focuses on conversational English practice in a relaxed environment, including free intermediate and advanced ESOL classes via Zoom. Similarly, UF's Christian Campus House provides literacy support through their English Corner program, a student-led initiative that provides an informal space for individuals of all ages to practice spoken English.

Several community-based organizations integrate literacy development into broader educational, career, and health equity initiatives, ensuring that language barriers do not hinder access to essential services. The Community Health Equity Institute addresses disparities in education and healthcare by providing English language instruction for underserved communities. By offering tailored resources, the program helps individuals improve their communication skills and ultimately reduces obstacles to healthcare access and educational opportunities.

Other programs embed literacy education within comprehensive workforce and academic development frameworks. Education Equalizer and Project Youth Build incorporate language learning into career training and educational advancement initiatives, making literacy resources more accessible to diverse populations. Additionally, the Impacto Program, a recently launched initiative in Alachua County, focuses on English language instruction for adult learners. Staffed primarily by UF student volunteers, the program responds to the increasing demand for accessible and

effective ESL education, with a particular focus on supporting Hispanic/Latino immigrant communities as they integrate into the United States.

CareerSource North Florida also contributes to literacy advancement by acting as a referral and funding agency and linking job seekers with literacy training and workforce development programs. Through literacy readiness assessments and resource facilitation, CareerSource ensures that individuals receive the support necessary for successful workforce entry and career progression.

Through advocacy and programmatic support, these programs collectively contribute to enhancing literacy, expanding educational and career opportunities, and fostering community integration. By leveraging institutional and volunteer-driven resources, these initiatives help bridge language gaps and support more equitable access to literacy education for diverse populations.

However, despite the availability of these educational resources, adult literacy challenges persist. Alachua County's current adult literacy landscape is shaped by the collaborative efforts of libraries, public schools, higher education institutions, and community organizations. And while considerable progress has been made, continued investment in adult education remains essential to ensure literacy accessibility and workforce readiness for all residents.



Findings: Results from Data Collected During the Literacy Needs Assessment

This section details results from data collected during the literacy needs assessment. These findings are organized into the following sections: Survey Results and Open-Ended Survey Responses, Focus Groups, and Interviews.

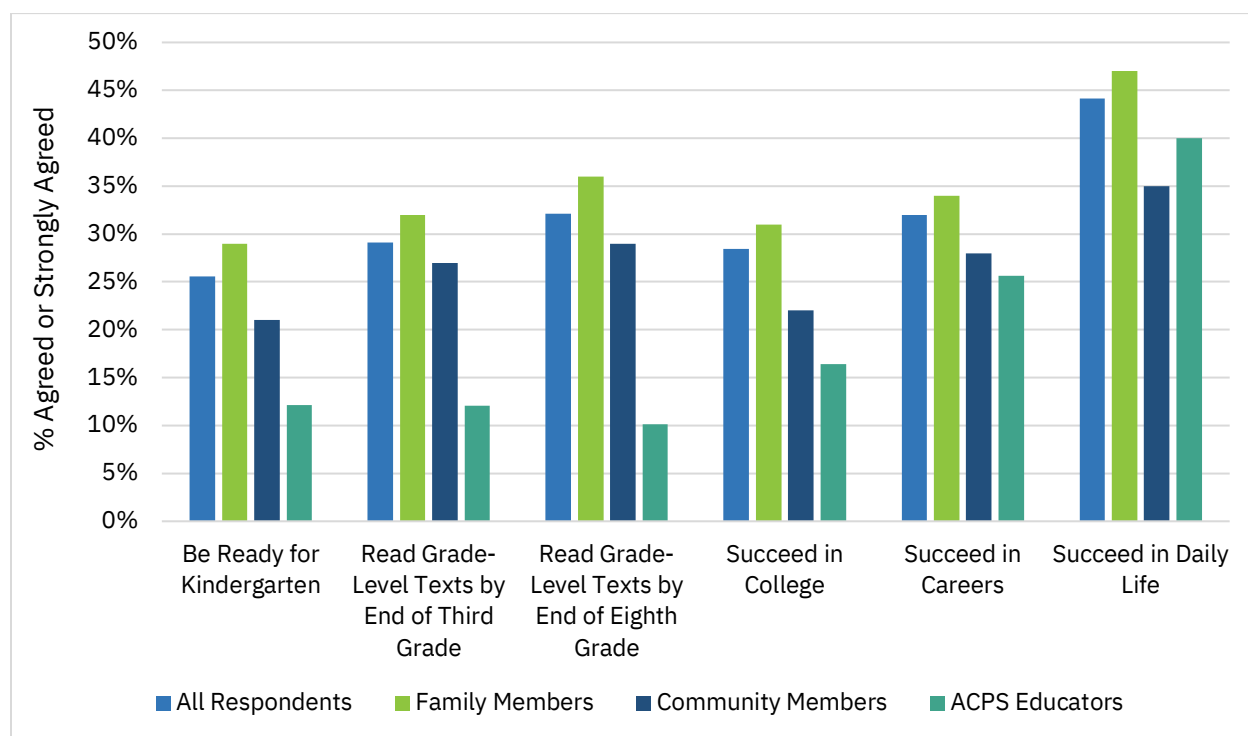
Results from Surveys

Family members, community members, and Alachua County Public School (ACPS) educators (but not students, who received a shorter survey) were asked to respond to items about how much they agreed that the following statements were true for children and youth in Alachua County:

1. **Children** have the early literacy skills they need to be **ready for kindergarten**.
2. **Children** can read age-appropriate and grade-level texts by the **end of third grade**.
3. **Children** can read age-appropriate and grade-level texts, including non-fiction text, by the **end of eighth grade**.
4. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed academically in **college**.
5. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed in a **variety of careers**.
6. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed in **daily life**.

Across all respondents, ACPS educators ($N = 198$) expressed less confidence than family and community members on these items (see Figure 26). Overall, educators were not confident that students were ready for kindergarten (only 12% agreed), could read grade-level texts at the end of third grade (12% agreed) or eighth grade (10% agreed). Family members ($N = 965$) expressed the most confidence across all items, ranging from 29% to 47%. All respondents ($N = 1,334$) were most likely to agree with the item about having necessary literacy skills to succeed in daily life, ranging from 35% of community members who agreed to 47% of family members who agreed.

Figure 26. *Percent of Respondents, by Respondent Type, Who “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” About **Children and Youth** Having Necessary Literacy Skills To:*



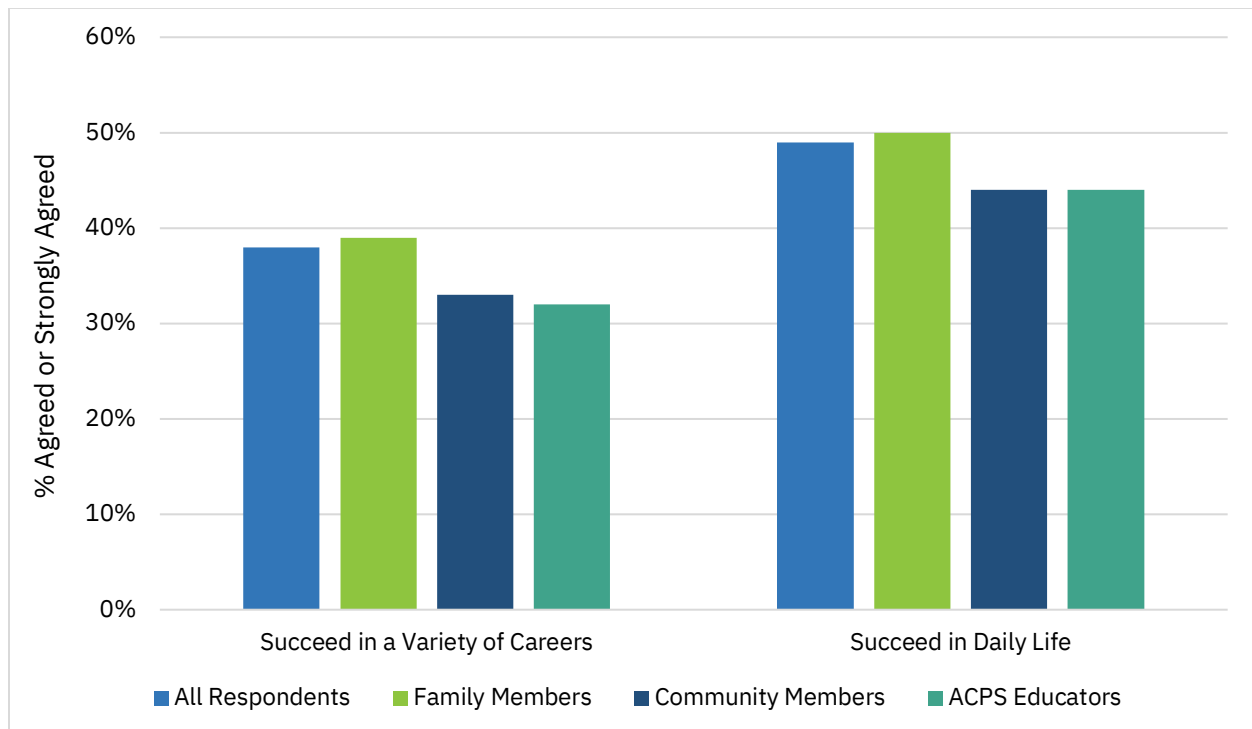
Note: Numbers reported for “Be Ready for Kindergarten” item; N’s dropped by approximately 6% across items. N All Respondents = 1,334; N Family Members = 965; N Community Members = 228; N ACPS Educators = 198.

Respondents were also asked to respond to similar questions, but about adults in the county:

1. **Adults** have the literacy skills they need to succeed in a **variety of careers**.
2. **Adults** have the literacy skills they need to succeed in **daily life**.

About 50% of respondents ($N = 1,239$) agreed or strongly agreed that adults in Alachua County have the literacy skills needed to succeed in daily life, but less than 40% from all respondent types agreed or strongly agreed that adults are adequately prepared for careers (see Figure 27).

Figure 27. *Percent of Respondents, by Respondent Type, Who “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” About **Adults** Having Necessary Literacy Skills To:*

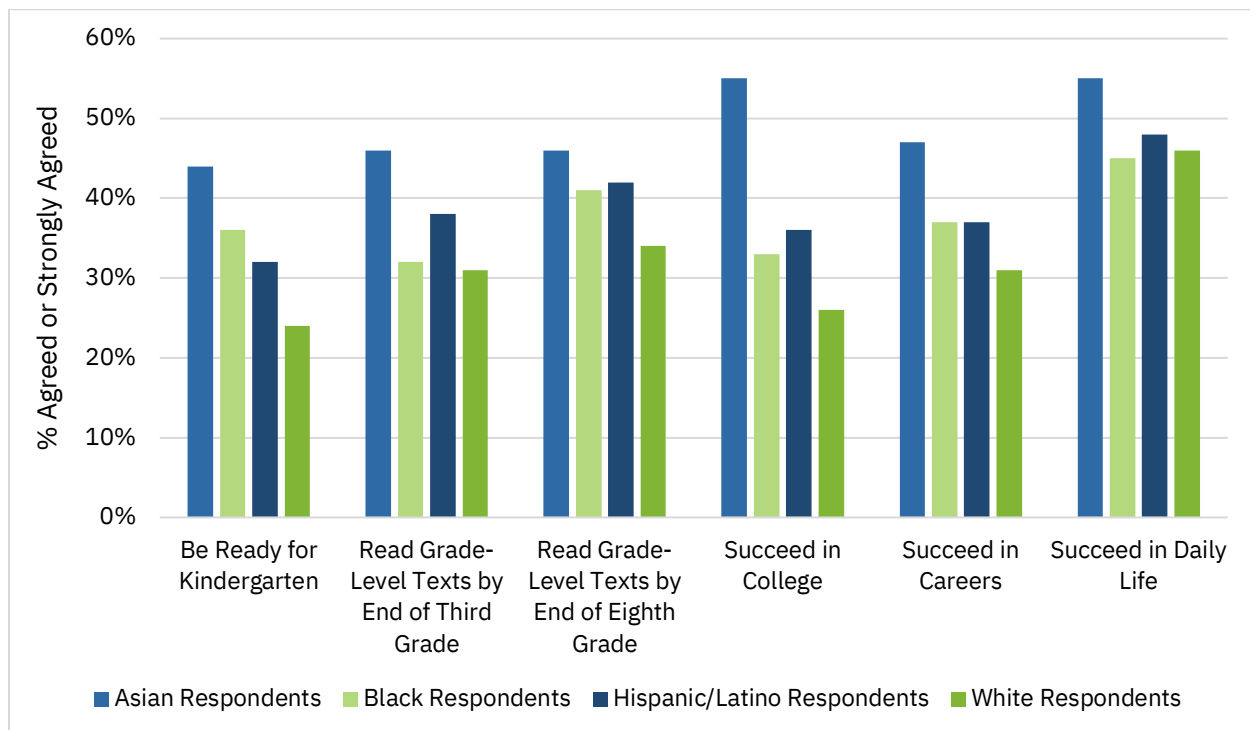


Note: N's were equal for both items (variety of careers and daily life). N All Respondents = 1,239; N Family Members = 887; N Community Members = 214; N ACPS Educators = 192.

Family and Community Members

Differences in survey responses based on family and community members' identified race/ethnicity were examined (see Figure 28). Asian respondents ($N = 39$) more often agreed that children and youth in Alachua County have necessary literacy skills from kindergarten through adulthood (44-55%, depending on category) whereas White respondents ($N = 453$) agreed the least often (24-46%). Black respondents ($N = 199$) and Hispanic/Latino respondents ($N = 118$) had similar agreement about students' readiness (32-48%). Overall, regardless of race and ethnicity, respondents had the least confidence that children were ready for kindergarten (22-44%). The largest agreement on any item was only 55%, indicating that Alachua respondents were not confident that children and youth have the literacy skills they need to succeed.

Figure 28. *Percent of Family and Community Members, by Race/Ethnicity of Respondents, Who “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” That Children and Youth in Alachua County Have Necessary Literacy Skills To:*



Note: N Asian = 39; N Black = 199; N Hispanic/Latino = 118; N White = 453.

The same items were examined by differences by respondents' income level (see Figure 29). Family and community members with higher reported incomes (above \$75,000, $N = 402$) were generally the least likely to agree that children and youth in Alachua County have the literacy skills they need to succeed, except on the item about success in daily life. Across all income levels and on all items, less than 50% of respondents agreed that children had the necessary literacy skills. This indicates a low level of confidence in literacy learning in the county.

Figure 29. *Percent of Family and Community Members, by Income of Respondents Who “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” That Children and Youth in Alachua County Have Necessary Literacy Skills To:*



Note: N <\$25,000 = 86; N \$25,000-\$75,000 = 229; N >\$75,000 = 402.

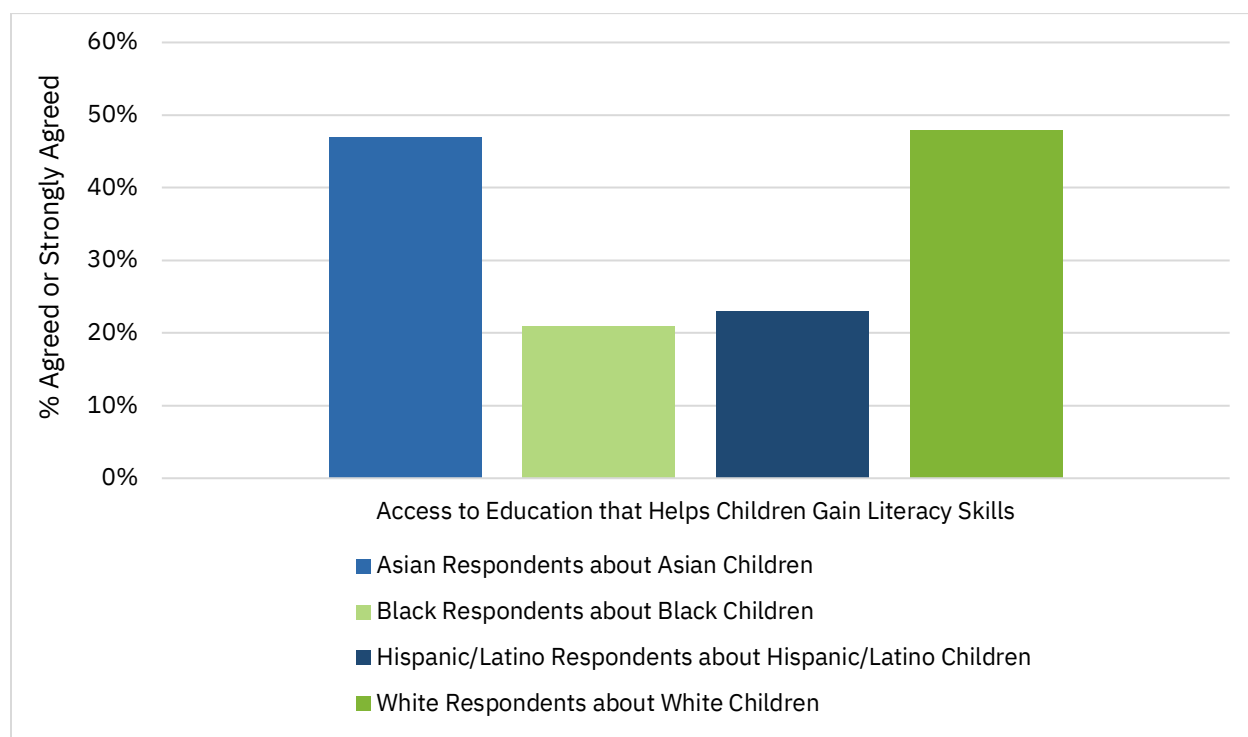
An additional set of survey questions asked about whether respondents agreed or disagreed that in Alachua County these groups of children have access to education that helps them gain literacy skills (language, reading, writing):

1. Children with disabilities
2. Children learning English
3. American Indian and Alaska Native children
4. Asian children

5. Black or African American children
6. Hispanic or Latino children
7. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander children
8. White children

Additional analyses examined how respondents reported on educational access for students of their same race/ethnicity (see Figure 30). That is, Asian respondents reported about Asian students, Black respondents reported about Black students, Hispanic/Latino respondents reported about Hispanic/Latino students, and White respondents reported about White students. Black respondents ($N = 193$) and Hispanic/Latino respondents ($N = 110$) expressed low levels of confidence, with just over 20% of respondents in each group agreeing that Black and Hispanic/Latino students are accessing the education they need to successfully read and write.

Figure 30. *Percent of Family and Community Members Who “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” that Students of their Race/Ethnicity Have Access to Education in Alachua County that Helps Them Gain Literacy Skills*

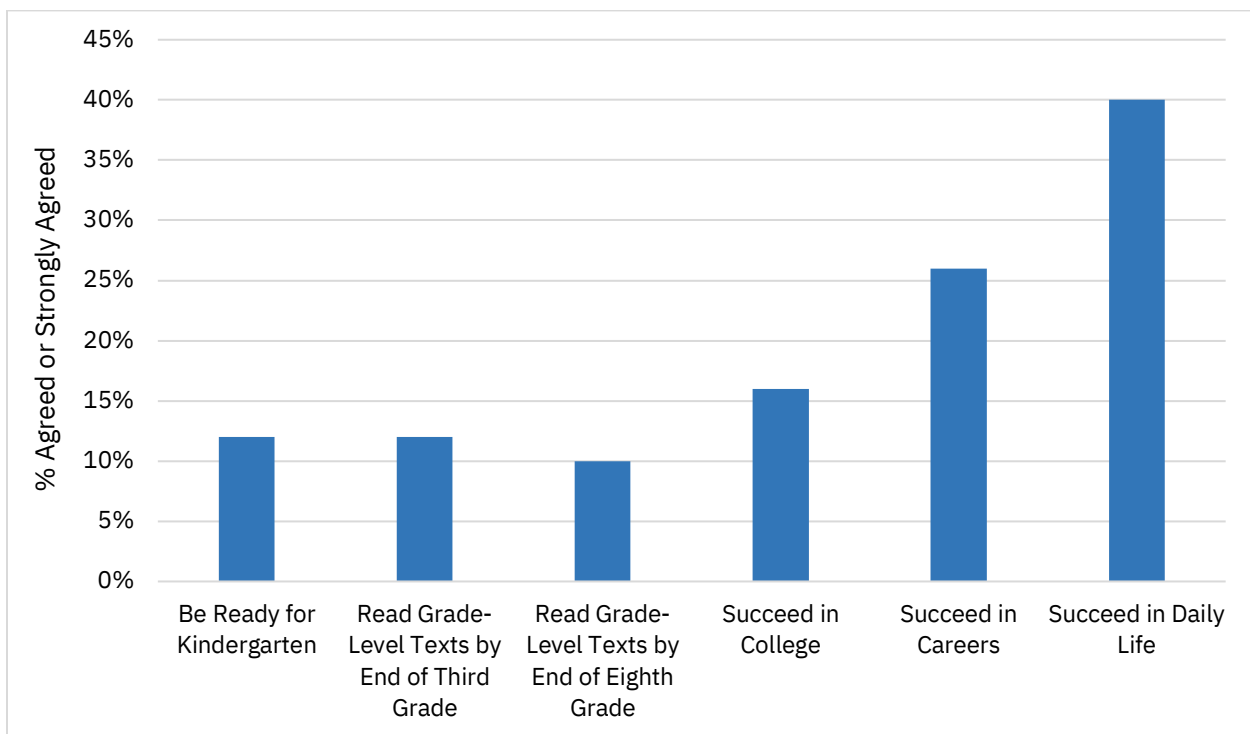


Note: N Asian = 38; N Black = 193; N Hispanic/Latino = 110; N White = 416.

Alachua County Public School (ACPS) Educators and District Staff

Alachua County Public School (ACPS) educators answered many of the same questions as family and community members. When looking at what was reported just by ACPS educators, of all items, they were most likely to agree that children and youth had the skills they needed to succeed in daily life (40%) (see Figure 31).

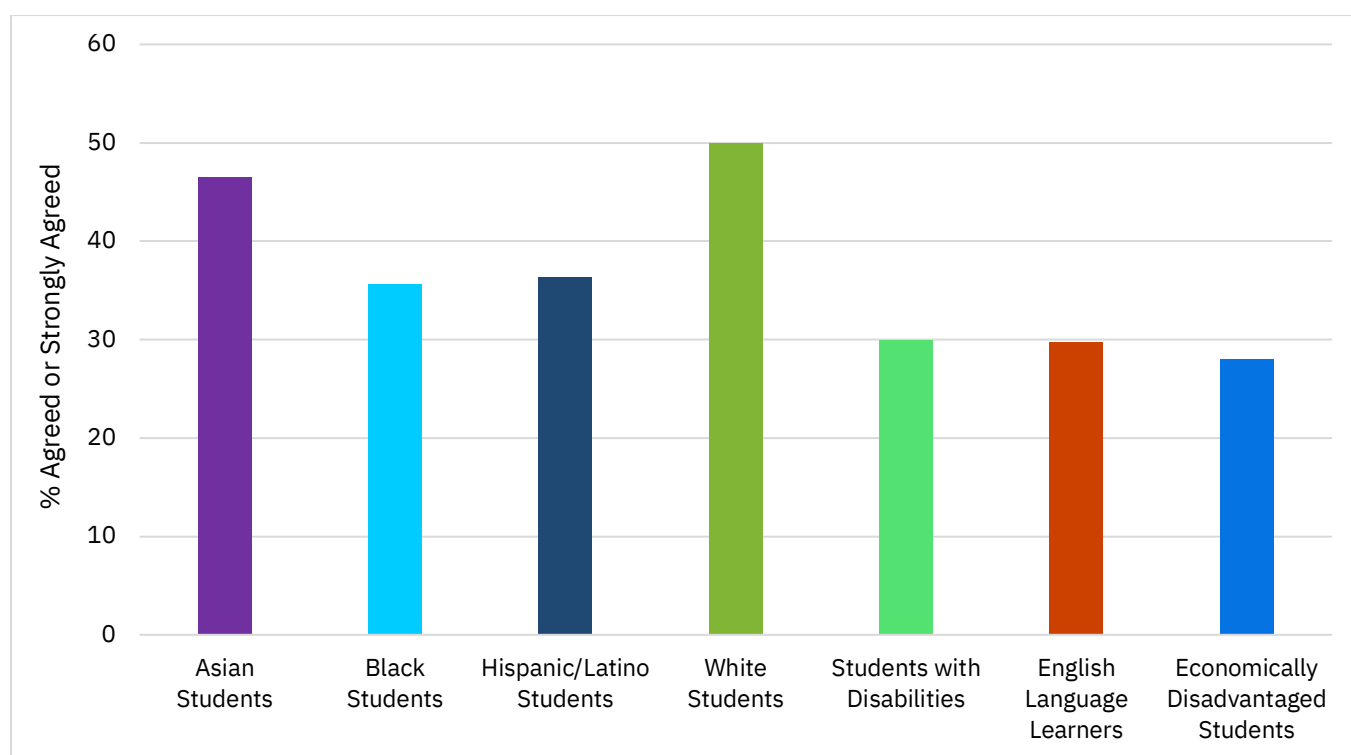
Figure 31. *Percent of ACPS Educators Who “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” That Children and Youth in Alachua County Have Necessary Literacy Skills To:*



Note: N ACPS Educators = 195.

ACPS educators who responded to the survey ($N = 188$) were also not confident that different groups of students had access to education that benefits literacy skills (see Figure 32). ACPS educators were most likely to agree that White students had strongest access to educational opportunities (50%), followed by Asian students (47%), Hispanic/Latino students (36%), and Black students (36%). ACPS educators were most concerned that students with disabilities had limited access to educational opportunities (30%), along with English learners (30%).

Figure 32. *Percent of ACPS Educators Who “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” that Students in Alachua County Have Access to Education that Helps Them Gain Literacy Skills, by Student Race/Ethnicity, Disability Status, and English Learner Status*

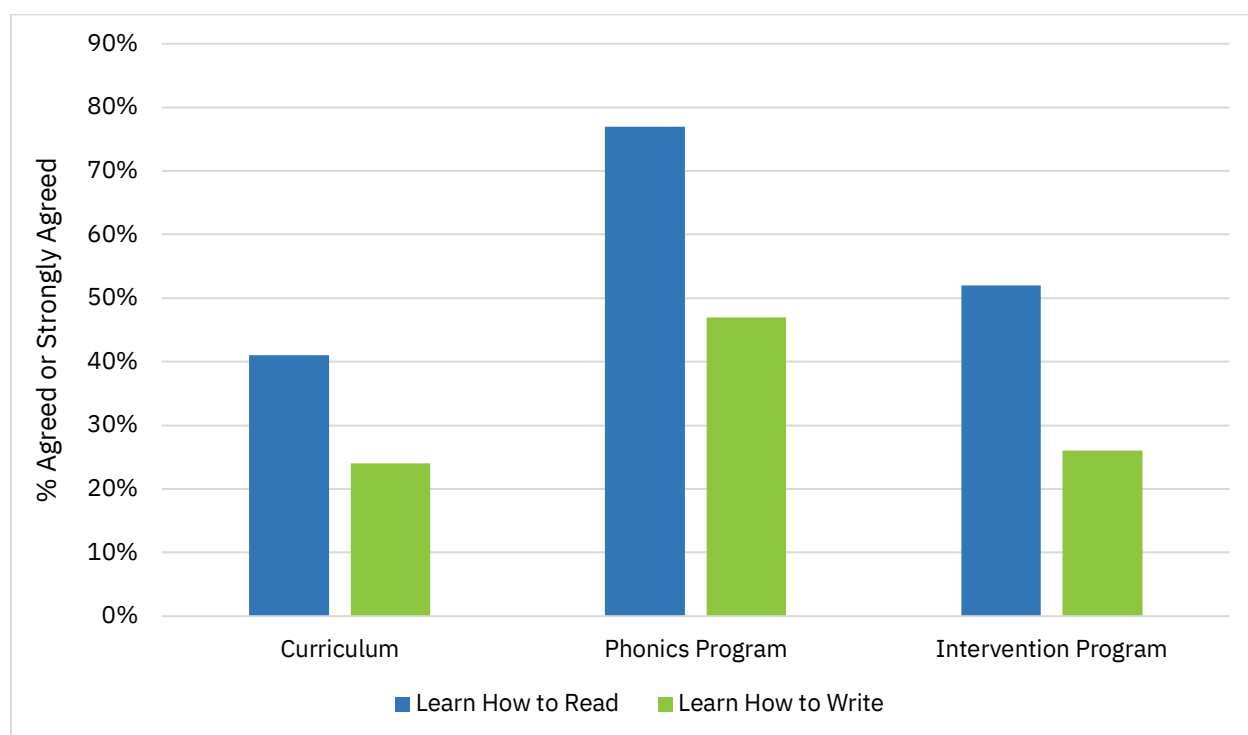


Note: N ACPS Educators = 188.

High-quality reading instruction, delivered through effective implementation of evidence-based programs, can greatly improve children’s reading outcomes. ACPS elementary educators ($N = 91$) described how programs they use help children read and write (see Figure 33). They expressed the most confidence that the phonics program they use (primarily UFLI), helps children learn how to read (77% agreed, see also p. 76 for more information from educators about UFLI). They indicated the least

confidence that the curriculum they use, Benchmark Advance (Benchmark Education, 2022), helps children learn how to read (41% agreed, see also pp. 80-81 for more information from educators about Benchmark Advance). However, educators were not confident that the curriculum, phonics program, or intervention programs helped children learn how to write (24%, 47%, 26% agreement in the effectiveness of these programs, respectively).

Figure 33. *Percent of ACPS Elementary Educators Who “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” That Their School’s Literacy Programs Helps Students Learn How to Read or Write*



Note: N ACPS Elementary Educators = 91.

Community Organizations

The UF Lastinger Center interviewed and/or surveyed one or more staff members at over 50 organizations in Alachua County. Appendix A provides a list of organizations by [age group served](#) and [alphabetical order](#). Additional information about these organizations will be shared with Children’s Trust and the entities engaging in the next steps following this report.



Results from Open-Ended Survey Items, Focus Groups, and Interviews

This section presents findings drawn from open-ended survey responses, focus groups, and interviews conducted across Alachua County. The analysis is organized by the following groups: families and community members, ACPS educators, community organizations, K-12 students, and elected officials. The thoughts shared by each group of participants include current practices that support literacy development and potential challenges that prevent efforts to improve literacy.

Family and Community Members

What's Working

The findings highlight a range of effective literacy initiatives, resources, and support systems that benefit families in fostering children's literacy development. Home literacy practices, such as reading routines and interactive learning, serve as foundational elements in strengthening reading and writing skills. Families also rely on educational tools to personalize learning and sustain engagement. School-based programs play a vital role in identifying literacy challenges and providing targeted interventions, whereas community literacy resources offer additional learning opportunities through workshops and programs. Together, these approaches show the

positive impact and importance of a multi-faceted support system that integrates home, school, and community efforts to enhance literacy development.

Home Literacy Practices. Family and community members described how consistent home literacy practices significantly boost their children’s interest in reading and writing, help children develop comprehension skills, and provide a supportive learning environment outside of school. These efforts included reading regularly, reading aloud, using educational materials, discussing books, practicing writing, incorporating literacy into daily routines, and using educational games to make learning more engaging.

“We read signs while we're driving, and we try to implement reading throughout the day, whether it's reading things like menus or even putting the TV on with closed captions.”

– Focus Group Member

“Reading together daily, identifying letters and sounds in titles early on, and having books with a variety of topics helps...We also use journals, workbooks, and interactive writing exercises.”

– Focus Group Member

Home Educational Tools and Resources. Families also found educational tools and resources to be highly effective in keeping their children engaged in learning, providing additional practice opportunities, and helping to address specific literacy issues. These tools included activity and reading books, flash cards, interactive digital apps, learning games, and book delivery services. Many families indicated that they regularly seek and use such resources because they are or can be tailored to meet the individual needs of their children.

“We use phonics-based flashcards and workbooks to strengthen reading skills at home.”

– Focus Group Member

“Audiobooks have been a fantastic tool to help my child follow along with text and build comprehension.”

– Focus Group Member

School-Based Programs and Support. Families further emphasized the importance of school-based support in accurately identifying and addressing literacy challenges, providing necessary interventions, and reinforcing literacy skills through structured programs. Families mentioned utilizing resources and services assessments when available, such as specialized support for children with learning disabilities and access to evidence-based curricula and trained educators to develop essential reading and writing skills.

“Our school’s guided reading program has significantly improved my child's comprehension.”

– Focus Group Member

“The school’s literacy intervention program has been beneficial for my child.”

– Focus Group Member

Community Literacy Resources. In discussions about community resources, families indicated they frequently attend workshops and literacy programs offered by schools, libraries, and other community organizations to gain better insights, resources, and tools for supporting their children’s literacy development. Participants noted that community literacy initiatives supplement their own efforts to improve their family’s literacy skills by providing additional resources, creating opportunities for social learning, and fostering a supportive environment that values literacy development.

“Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library has provided my child with books that we otherwise couldn’t afford.”

– Focus Group Member

“Library tutoring programs have given my child the extra support they need to improve literacy skills.”

– Focus Group Member

Challenges and Needed Improvements

Families face multiple challenges with accessing and utilizing literacy resources. Limited awareness of available programs due to fragmented communication systems prevents families from fully engaging with literacy resources. Financial and logistical constraints further restrict access to essential educational materials and interventions. Additionally, many parents feel unequipped to provide home-based literacy support, pointing to a need for better instructional guidance. These findings underscore the importance of enhancing communication, expanding resource accessibility, and equipping families with the necessary tools to actively support their children's literacy growth.

Communications and Resource Visibility. Focus group participants frequently reported the lack of a coordinated communication system that provides greater access to and understanding of available literacy resources and programs. Limited availability of clear, up-to-date, and consistent communication about existing resources prevents families from taking advantage of all that Alachua County and the state of Florida has to offer.

“It’s essential that teachers and parents are continually made aware of the resources at their disposal.”

– Focus Group Member

Accessible Literacy Resources. Participants often spoke of limited access to literacy resources. Families talked about a shortage of age-appropriate books, educational tools, technology, and updated learning materials that reflect current literacy practices. More importantly, families and community members said they lacked financial resources to access literacy programs and materials. Financial constraints limit their ability to access high-quality educational materials and effective literacy interventions. The cost of assessments, transportation, and participation fees put resources out of reach for many families, particularly those experiencing poverty. Families also regularly mentioned more practical issues associated with work schedules and limited transportation options, which make it hard to participate in community programs, even those available through Alachua County Public School (ACPS).

“Language barriers prevent some families from accessing resources.”

– Focus Group Member

“Access to reading materials is a challenge, especially in rural communities.”

– Focus Group Member

“We have great library programs, but I meet parents who struggle to even catch the bus to attend them.”

– Focus Group Member

Parental Guidance on Home Instruction and Supplementary Materials. Many family members also expressed frustration over inadequate knowledge or guidance on how to effectively support their children’s literacy at home. They described feeling unprepared to help with reading and writing activities, resulting in missed opportunities for their children to reinforce important skills outside the classroom.

““I didn’t grow up with strong literacy skills myself, so teaching reading feels overwhelming.”

– Focus Group Member

“Parents want to help, but they need accessible and practical guidance on supporting their children’s reading development.”

– Focus Group Member

ACPS Educators and District Staff

ACPS educators and district staff provided input through surveys and focus groups. Their perception of effective literacy support, drawn from open-ended survey responses, are disaggregated by grade level to reflect instructional differences. However, their open-ended survey and focus group responses regarding literacy challenges are consolidated across all grade levels and summarized in the following section.

What's Working

The following information summarizes the input of ACPS educators and district staff in response to survey items and focus group questions about what they believe is working well for them and their students. This information should not be interpreted as an endorsement of the practices as evidence-based for all populations of students.

Educators from elementary, middle, and high schools emphasized the effectiveness of structured literacy interventions, digital tools, and interactive teaching strategies in improving student reading and writing outcomes. Elementary educators highlighted the impact of phonics-based curricula, literacy assessments, and small-group interventions, whereas secondary educators advocated for student-centered literacy activities, writing exercises, and vocabulary-building techniques. Additionally, educators stressed the role of community engagement and parental involvement in reinforcing literacy skills outside the classroom. These findings demonstrate the importance of a well-integrated approach that combines direct instruction, technology, and external support systems to enhance literacy development at all grade levels.

Elementary Educators

In focus groups and on surveys, elementary educators noted several reading curricula, programs, and technology tools as being useful to help improve student literacy outcomes.

Phonics Program. One of the most frequently mentioned and positively reviewed curriculum resources was the University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI)

Foundations program (Lane & Contessa, 2022). Educators across multiple focus groups praised its systematic approach to phonics, its consistency in instruction, and its effectiveness in improving decoding skills for early readers. Many experienced noteworthy progress in their students' abilities to recognize letter sounds, blend phonemes, and read fluently. Unlike other curricula, UFLI provides a structured, research-based approach to phonics that has shown measurable improvement in foundational literacy skills.

“UFLI has been a game-changer for at-risk students. I see real benefits in encoding and decoding, especially for students who have had little literacy exposure.”

– ACPS Educator

Digital Literacy Tools. Opinions regarding the effectiveness of digital literacy tools among educators were mixed. Some educators expressed positive views on various technology-based tools, highlighting their adaptability, engagement, and capacity to personalize learning experiences for students. These tools were particularly praised for their ability to cater to students with diverse learning needs and to promote student-centered instruction. However, other educators voiced concerns about the over-reliance on digital tools, as well as the lack of adequate district-level support and professional development for their effective implementation.

Among the most frequently mentioned digital tools were iReady (Curriculum Associates, 2025), Amira (Amira Learning, 2025), and Reading Plus (Dreambox Learning, 2023). Educators identified these platforms as effective in tracking student progress and supporting literacy development. Educators noted that these tools facilitated differentiated instruction which enabled them to better address the individual needs of students while reinforcing foundational literacy skills.

Assessment Systems. Elementary educators recognized the value of Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS, University of Oregon, 2025) as an effective tool for identifying readers needing foundational support and monitoring their responses to intervention, which has research support (Paleologos & Brabham, 2011). Effective assessments provide valuable insights into students' reading progress and allow for accurate and timely decision making.

“The combination of DIBELS assessment and structured interventions ensures we’re addressing literacy gaps early.”

– ACPS Educator

Intervention Programs. The value of instructional tools such as Great Leaps (n.d.), Systematic, Explicit Decoding Instruction (SIPPS, Center for the Collaborative Classroom, 2025), and UFLI Foundations (Lane & Contessa, 2022) were widely recognized by educators as essential in intervening with struggling readers at the elementary school level. These programs were particularly praised for their capacity to offer targeted, small-group instruction tailored to the needs of individual learners. Educators emphasized that small-group instruction, coupled with structured phonics-based interventions, is critical for addressing literacy challenges and promoting reading success among struggling students.

Classroom-Based Strategies. Educators shared a variety of literacy strategies that have been particularly effective for building engagement. These include close reading techniques, student choice in reading materials, and books aligned with student interest to boost engagement and literacy development.

“Graphic novels and real-world texts have been particularly useful in helping struggling readers develop a stronger interest in literacy.”

– ACPS Educator

Community and Family Involvement. Many educators emphasized the importance of community partnerships and parent/caregiver involvement in supporting literacy outside the classroom. Programs that provide structured resources to families have been beneficial in reinforcing reading skills at home.

“Library partnerships offering free books and reading events have been great for encouraging literacy beyond the classroom.”

– ACPS Educator

“Structured literacy nights involving both parents and students have had strong attendance and impact.”

– ACPS Educator

Middle and High School Educators

Literacy Development Activities. Several educators at middle and high schools noted that children actively engage in literacy activities that enhance their reading and comprehension skills. Survey respondents reported several effective ways that students can build vocabulary, comprehension, and critical thinking abilities:

- “Students who journal regularly improve their writing and comprehension.”
- “Encouraging children to create their own stories develops creativity and literacy.”
- “Word-based games help reinforce spelling and vocabulary skills.”
- “Students who keep a reading log develop stronger accountability in literacy habits.”
- “Graphic novels and comics have been effective in encouraging reluctant readers.”
- “Allowing students to choose their books fosters a deeper interest in reading.”
- “Storytelling activities help children develop sequencing and communication skills.”

Teacher-Guided Instruction. Educators described their contributions to literacy development through structured interventions and curriculum planning. Respondents cited teacher-led read alouds, phonics instruction, and interactive classroom strategies as impactful techniques in improving literacy outcomes. Many also noted the

importance of scaffolding and differentiated instruction for diverse learning needs, including the following:

- “Read-aloud sessions help students understand complex texts and develop comprehension.”
- “Phonics-based instruction is crucial for struggling readers in early grades.”
- “Differentiated instruction ensures that all students receive the help they need.”
- “Interactive literacy activities make reading more engaging for students.”
- “Explicit vocabulary instruction improves reading comprehension significantly.”
- “Incorporating literacy skills across subjects helps students reinforce their learning.”

Home Literacy Practices. Many educators of older students noted the importance and impact of families engaging in regular literacy activities such as reading aloud with children, setting daily reading routines, and having regular discussions about books. The following actions were frequently noted as foundational for early literacy development and long-term academic success:

- “I encourage parents to read with their children every night and discuss the stories.”
- “Families that establish consistent bedtime reading routines see better literacy growth.”
- “I recommend parents ask open-ended questions about books to engage their children.”
- “A family reading challenge keeps everyone motivated to read more.”
- “Encouraging children to read aloud to their parents builds their confidence.”

Community Resources and Involvement. Community-driven initiatives and family engagement programs were commonly mentioned as essential for literacy success. Respondents discussed mentorship programs, volunteer-led reading sessions, and local literacy events as some of the impactful ways to foster literacy skills:

- “Our community reading group provides a space for children to develop literacy skills.”
- “Local volunteers host reading sessions for children who need extra support.”
- “Community literacy programs make reading a social and engaging activity.”
- “Public storytelling events help children develop listening and comprehension skills.”
- “Community book drives provide books to families who may not afford them.”

Digital Literacy Tools and Resources. Educators also frequently mentioned technology-based tools as valuable resources for literacy development. Educators cited the use of digital reading programs, educational apps, and interactive software that help children improve their reading and comprehension skills by providing personalized learning experiences, making reading more engaging and accessible:

- “Children enjoy reading apps that turn stories into interactive experiences.”
- “Online literacy programs have been a great supplement to schoolwork.”
- “We use digital storybooks to make reading more fun and accessible.”
- “Interactive educational software helps reinforce literacy skills at home.”
- “Technology has allowed [students] to practice reading at their own pace.”
- “Using audiobooks alongside print books has improved ... comprehension skills.”
- “Adaptive learning platforms provide personalized literacy instruction.”

The literacy programs, tools, and strategies outlined above were deemed most effective among the educators participating in the literacy needs assessment. From their perspective, consistent phonics instruction, adaptive digital resources, targeted interventions, engaging classroom strategies, and strong community support have led to measurable improvements in student literacy outcomes. Continued investment in these areas, along with professional development for educators, may be critical in sustaining literacy growth in Alachua County.

Challenges and Needed Improvements

The focus group discussions with educators revealed several recurring themes that highlight challenges in curriculum implementation, student literacy development, assessment practices, and professional support. These themes reflect common experiences and concerns across different grade levels and schools, providing valuable insights for improving educational practices and outcomes.

Curriculum Effectiveness and Challenges. One of the most frequently discussed topics was the usability of, and support for, the district’s curricula, particularly Benchmark Advance (Benchmark Education, 2022). Educators noted that while the curriculum provides structure, it often lacks alignment with students’ developmental needs and does not contain sufficient guidance on how to provide the necessary scaffolds for struggling readers. Further, a consensus among participants is that they did not have access to the necessary training and ongoing support to effectively implement Benchmark Advance. Additionally, educators found several challenges with the writing component of the program, notably the lack of alignment between the reading and writing components. Educators’ key concerns included the following:

- Lack of guidance or scaffolds for accessing complex text for students with reading difficulties.
- Lack of access to training and implementation support for teachers.

Reading and Writing Struggles. A major challenge highlighted by educators was the proportion of students with literacy difficulties in many classes. Educators expressed frustration with associated trends such as declining reading habits, limited student engagement with books, and hesitance to engage with writing assignments. Many students, including those in secondary grades, reportedly lack fundamental skills in understanding sentence structure, using punctuation and other writing conventions, decoding, and comprehension monitoring, making it difficult for them to succeed in higher-level coursework. Educators’ key concerns included the following:

- Declining independent reading and writing habits.
- Insufficient emphasis on explicit writing instruction in the early grades, leading to foundational writing difficulties later.
- Students struggle with foundational reading skills, including decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension skills.

Student Engagement and Motivation. Educators consistently reported that student engagement in literacy was a challenge. Educators indicated that many students consider reading and writing as tedious tasks rather than enjoyable learning experiences. Educators highlighted the importance of integrating student choice into reading assignments, incorporating interactive materials, and finding creative ways to make literacy instruction engaging. Educators' key concerns included the following:

- Educators feel they must compete with students' phones for their attention and engagement.
- Instructional materials are perceived as dry or uninteresting.
- Early literacy difficulties tend to compound over time as students disengage with reading and writing causing difficulties with complex text.

“We need more choice in what they read to keep them engaged.”

– ACPS Educator

Professional Support and Training. Another recurring theme was the need for stronger professional development, ongoing training, and access to effective literacy coaching for educators across the grade levels. Many educators felt ill-equipped to navigate new curricula, digital tools, and assessment methods due to a lack of structured training and implementation support. The absence of ongoing professional learning opportunities made it challenging for educators to effectively implement literacy programs. Educators' key concerns included the following:

- Inadequate training on new curriculum tools and assessment platforms, especially for new teachers.
- Lack of professional development on effective teaching practices, curricula, and practical tools teachers are expected to implement.
- Need for mentorship and peer collaboration.

“Many teachers are left to figure out instructional strategies on their own, which isn't sustainable.”

– ACPS Educator

Family Involvement in Literacy Development. Educators emphasized the key role of parent/caregiver involvement in students' literacy success. However, many educators noted a decline in family engagement, with family members struggling to support their children's reading and writing at home. The lack of structured resources for parents and caregivers further amplified this issue. Educators' key concerns included the following:

- Parents and caregivers feel overwhelmed and unsure how to help.
- More structured resources for families are needed.
- Community partnerships could provide additional literacy support.

“If we provided parents with parent-friendly literacy resources, we could make a difference.”

– ACPS Educator

Testing and Assessment Challenges. The use of standardized testing as a measure of student literacy was another area of concern. Elementary educators reported that computerized assessments often failed to accurately reflect young students' abilities. In the older grades, there is often a disconnect between the content that students are taught and the passages in the beginning, middle, and end of year benchmark assessments. An emphasis on high-stakes outcome assessments can cause schools to focus on teaching skills that many students lack the prerequisite knowledge for. Educators' key concerns included the following:

- Computer-based assessments do not always reflect actual learning.
- Students struggle with digital test formats.
- Misalignment between instruction and standardized testing.

“High-stakes testing puts undue pressure on students and doesn't capture their full learning potential. We need better alignment between instruction and assessment methods.”

– ACPS Educator

Staffing and Resource Limitations. Many educators cited staffing shortages and resource constraints as major challenges to providing effective literacy instruction. Educators need additional staffing and instructional support in classrooms. The loss of interventionists, limited access to instructional support, and funding cuts have made it increasingly difficult to meet the wide-ranging needs of students. Many educators reported that there were fewer than necessary assistants, interventionists, special education teachers, and other personnel to provide the targeted interventions that large groups of struggling students require. Educators also highlighted the lack of adequate time to meet students' differing literacy needs, citing the heavy workload and limited instructional hours. Educators also identified the need for more planning time, reduced administrative burdens, and access to high-quality, literacy-focused professional development. Educators' key concerns included the following:

- The loss of interventionists has reduced individualized support.
- Lack of compensation for before and after-hours professional learning.
- Class sizes are too large to provide targeted literacy interventions.
- More funding is needed for additional instructional staff.

“We need staffing. The district always says they want to see gains, but without proper staffing, that’s never going to happen.”

– ACPS Educator

“Small groups are crucial, but time constraints mean we barely see one group a day. More staff would change that.”

– ACPS Educator

“We are expected to do more with fewer resources, and it’s not sustainable.”

– ACPS Educator

Technology and Learning Tools. Technology has the potential to enhance and supplement literacy instruction, but some educators expressed concerns about its limitations. Many students lack digital literacy skills, and frequent technical issues can disrupt learning. Educators emphasized the need for structured training on how to effectively integrate technology into literacy instruction without supplanting the role of the teacher. Educators' key concerns included the following:

- Digital assessments are challenging for younger learners.
- Students lack basic digital literacy skills.
- Training is needed to effectively integrate technology in instruction without supplanting the role of the teacher.

“Technology should be a support tool, not a replacement for direct instruction. Many students struggle to navigate digital reading tools effectively.”

– ACPS Educator

The educator focus group discussions underscored the urgent need for targeted improvements in literacy instruction, curriculum alignment, professional support, and student engagement strategies. Addressing these challenges will require a comprehensive approach that strengthens curriculum alignment, expands teacher training, and enhances resource allocation to ensure literacy success for students across all grade levels.

Community Organizations

What's Working

Discussions with community organizations revealed a network of community-driven solutions that support literacy improvement. Organizations integrate one-on-one tutoring, accessible literacy tools, and staff development to create responsive and inclusive literacy environments. These efforts are enhanced through strategic partnerships that extend programming into families and neighborhoods and increase awareness and participation. However, the sustainability and growth of these strategies continue to depend heavily on access to stable funding.

One-on-One Tutoring & Mentorship. One-on-one tutoring and mentorship emerged as a critical strategy for improving literacy outcomes. Respondents highlighted the effectiveness of personalized instruction, which allows tutors and mentors to address specific learning challenges faced by individuals. This approach fosters strong relationships between learners and mentors and creates a supportive environment that builds confidence and motivation. Tailoring instruction to individual needs ensures that learners receive targeted interventions and makes literacy development more effective.

“One-on-one tutoring has proved successful. Tailoring it to the specific needs of the learner is really important.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

“Pairing a struggling reader with a trained mentor has shown consistent improvement in reading levels.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

Literacy Tools and Resources. Many organizations and programs utilize specific literacy-related tools and resources to support reading and writing development. These include access to a variety of books, educational software, interactive e-books, digital apps, and multimedia resources that cater to different learning styles. Organization staff who were interviewed highlighted the importance of having varied current instructional materials and technology in keeping students engaged and

providing tailored learning experiences. Even when organizations indicated that they do not have dedicated literacy programs, they find ways to integrate literacy activities within their existing programs.

“Interactive educational software fosters literacy growth in early learners.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

“Audiobooks have helped reluctant readers engage with literature in new ways.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

Training and Staff Development. The organizations who participated in the literacy needs assessment emphasized the importance of training for staff and volunteers to improve their ability to identify and address literacy issues among students. Most reported providing internal training for full-time, part-time, and volunteer staff whenever possible. This typically includes workshops, certification courses, and on-the-job training sessions designed to enhance their skills and knowledge.

“Staff development is crucial, continuing education helps ensure that literacy instruction remains impactful.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

“Providing access to professional learning helps staff feel better equipped to address literacy challenges.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

Community Partnerships. Organization staff members further reported that they often collaborate with community partners and find ways to involve parents, caregivers, and family members. Participants noted that collaboration fosters a supportive network, enhances resource availability, and promotes the sharing of best practices and effective instructional methods. Their staff and student development collaborations include joint training sessions, collaborative projects, and shared access to educational materials. Their broader community engagement initiatives have involved organizing public reading events, literacy fairs, community/family workshops,

and volunteer programs aimed at promoting literacy both within and outside the school environment.

“Our partnerships with community centers help us expand access to literacy programming.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

“When the entire community is involved in literacy efforts, we see much stronger outcomes.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

Financial Resources and Support. Organizations noted that financial support is critical for sustaining high-quality literacy programs and ensuring that necessary resources are available to both educators and students. To limit costs for public participation, many organizations regularly employ cost-cutting and cost-sharing strategies and seek financial support to fund their literacy programs. This includes securing grants, budgeting for educational materials, and streamlining funds for staffing and professional development.

“We benefit from grants and funding which allow us to purchase high-quality literacy programs and materials.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

“We all work closely with who’s funding who and working to see if there is overlap, and how can we work together.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

“We fund all different types of nonprofits in our community... many provide one-on-one literacy support.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

Challenges and Needed Improvements

Interviews with community organizations uncovered clear opportunities for improvement. Limited financial resources, a lack of dedicated literacy programming, and insufficient tools for early screening were frequently cited as challenges. Many organizations also reported that staffing limitations and underdeveloped parental engagement strategies further constrain the reach and impact of literacy efforts. However, the findings also revealed that organizations are eager to expand their capacity and that strengthening partnerships, professional development, and targeted support systems could lead to measurable improvements in literacy outcomes.

Limited Financial Resources. Staff from community organizations reported that the lack of financial resources restricts the scope and scale of literacy initiatives and limits the ability to purchase educational materials, hire specialized staff, and implement targeted literacy interventions. Among the challenges is the limited availability of essential educational resources such as books, digital tools, and other instructional materials. This scarcity of resources means that many organizations struggle to provide students with the necessary tools to enhance their reading and writing skills. A lack of technology, in particular, was described as hindering their ability to incorporate interactive and engaging methods of literacy instruction.

“More funding would allow us to expand our literacy initiatives and offer high-quality resources to our students.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

“Better resource allocation can help us address the specific literacy needs of our students more effectively.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

Literacy-Specific Programming. Many of the literacy-oriented community organizations in Alachua County face challenges due to the lack of a specific focus on providing evidence-based literacy instruction and related supports. Although literacy may be a part of broader educational programs, it is not always targeted directly, which dilutes the impact of literacy initiatives. Many programs are designed to develop a range of skills, with literacy being an incidental benefit rather than a primary focus.

This lack of dedicated literacy initiatives means that literacy leaders cannot allocate sufficient resources or create specialized strategies to tackle literacy issues directly. As a result, students may not receive the consistent, targeted support they need to develop essential literacy skills effectively.

“Our organization focuses on holistic development, but without a targeted literacy agenda, some students fall through the cracks.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

Early Screenings and Intervention. Several staff members at community organizations emphasized the importance of early screening and evaluation to identify children at risk of falling behind. Early identification and assessment of literacy challenges are critical for timely intervention, yet many organizations trying to effectively serve children need stronger screening and identification of children’s needs. Without early and accurate identification, students with learning disabilities or those at risk of falling behind in literacy may not receive the necessary support early enough to make a significant difference.

“Recognizing literacy problems at an early stage can dramatically change outcomes, but it’s something we currently struggle with...”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

Staffing and Training and Development. Staff members at Alachua County community organizations commented that the effectiveness of literacy programs is highly dependent on the availability, skills and knowledge of the staff they employ. Insufficient training and professional development opportunities for their staff remain a significant challenge. Continuous training is necessary to familiarize staff with the latest literacy teaching strategies and tools. Without ongoing professional development, staff may be ill-equipped to handle diverse literacy challenges, which can hinder the overall effectiveness of literacy initiatives.

“Our staff requires more frequent and updated training to keep up with the evolving challenges in literacy education.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

“We need more staff and volunteers to meet the demand for literacy support.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

Parental Engagement. Staff members at Alachua County community organizations highlighted the difficulty in engaging the parents and caregivers, which is crucial for reinforcing literacy development outside structured school or literacy program events. They highlighted the importance of building partnerships with local entities and ensuring sufficient resources to sustain literacy initiatives. Organizations often faced challenges in garnering sufficient backing from local stakeholders, including parents/caregivers, businesses, and government agencies. Additionally, they mentioned the lack of necessary resources, such as books, technology, and funding, to support comprehensive literacy efforts.

Community Engagement and Partnerships. Building strong community partnerships and securing adequate resources are essential to overcoming challenges and ensuring that literacy programs can operate effectively. Respondents noted that effective literacy programs actively engage families and encourage parents and caregivers to take an active role in their children’s learning. Community events, outreach programs, and collaborations with local organizations help raise awareness about literacy resources.

“Community engagement is essential, but without enough funding, it’s hard to maintain effective literacy initiatives.”

– Staff at an Alachua Community Organization

K-12 Students

Because youth participants were asked a separate set of questions, their feedback is structured differently from that of other groups. This analysis describes two sections of student feedback: (1) the activities and strategies that educators and schools can implement to improve literacy skills and (2) how families can support literacy. The student data is derived solely from survey responses, as students did not participate in focus groups or interviews. The recommendations are disaggregated by student grade level. Some student responses were based on feedback from less than 10 students, and therefore, findings are not representative of all K-12 students.

Combined, the student survey responses revealed a strong collective emphasis on the importance of reading, writing, family involvement, and engaging literacy activities. These themes highlighted their belief that literacy development requires a collaborative effort between schools and families, integrating both structured and informal methods to support student success. By implementing these insights, educators and families can work together to create a more effective and enjoyable literacy learning experience.

How Educators and Schools Can Support Literacy

Students across different grade levels identified key areas where educators can better support literacy development. Young learners perceived benefits from increased reading opportunities and individualized teacher support, whereas upper elementary students reported thriving from interactive learning and structured writing practice. Middle school students emphasized the importance of consistent literacy exercises, and high school students advocate for analytical writing assignments and tutoring support. These findings highlight the necessity of grade-specific developmentally appropriate literacy strategies that equip students with the skills needed for academic achievement and lifelong learning.

Early Elementary (Grades 1-3)

Increased Reading Time and Access to Books. Students in early elementary grades suggested that having more time to read books at school and having access to books they find engaging—such as graphic novels and illustrated books—would help improve their reading skills. This is aligned with research that indicates that greater exposure to

books promotes early literacy development, comprehension, and engagement. Student choice in reading materials also fosters a lifelong love of reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

“Have more books I like to read like graphic novels. They are engaging because of the pictures.”

– Third Grade Student

One-on-One Support from Teachers. Students expressed the need for more individualized attention to help them improve reading and writing skills. Individualized reading instruction is linked to improved literacy outcomes and is particularly beneficial for readers who need to build foundational skills (Connor et al., 2007).

Upper Elementary (Grades 4-5)

Interactive and Engaging Literacy Activities. Students suggested incorporating fun and engaging literacy activities, such as phonics games, group discussions, and storytelling. Interactive literacy activities support phonemic awareness, comprehension, and vocabulary development (National Reading Panel, 2000).

“Practicar la fonética con actividades divertidas. Invitar a los niños a imaginar ‘películas mentales’ para facilitar que recordemos la historia. La lectura tiene que ser divertida.” [Practice phonics with fun activities. Invite children to imagine ‘mental movies’ to help us remember the story. Reading should be fun.]

– Fifth Grade Student

Structured Writing Support. Some students mentioned that writing practice should be included more regularly in the classroom, with clear guidance on new vocabulary words and structured writing exercises. Regular writing practice strengthens literacy fluency, comprehension, and critical thinking skills (Graham & Perin, 2007).

Middle School (Grades 6-8)

Consistent Practice and Reading Logs. Students in middle school highlighted the importance of consistent practice in reading and writing, with structured assignments such as reading logs and summaries. Tracking reading progress and summarizing content improves comprehension, retention, and critical analysis skills (Graham & Hebert, 2011).

“Provide small daily/weekly reading logs where children read an amount of chapters in their desired novel and write a paragraph-long summary on what they’ve read.”

– Eighth Grade Student

High School (Grades 9-12)

Writing Assignments and Analytical Skills Development. High school students suggested that teachers should assign more structured writing exercises, including in-class writing, take-home assignments, and exams with open-ended questions. Regular writing improves literacy proficiency, academic performance, and college readiness (Graham & Perin, 2007).

“Regularly assign brief writing exercises in your classes. Some mixture of in-class writing, outside writing assignments, and exams with open-ended questions will give students the practice they need to improve their skills.”

– Twelfth Grade Student

Additional Tutoring and English Language Support. Students in higher grade levels highlighted the need for tutoring services and improved English language programs, particularly for those who struggle with reading and writing in English. Personalized literacy instruction through tutoring and small-group interventions has been shown to be highly effective for struggling readers (August & Shanahan, 2006).

How Families Can Support Literacy

Students identified various ways families can contribute to literacy development, including direct support, structured reading routines, and interactive learning experiences. Early elementary students expressed benefits from shared reading and encouragement, whereas upper elementary students suggested expanding literacy beyond the home to museum visits and library trips. Middle and high school students emphasized the need for dedicated reading spaces, daily literacy engagement, and parental involvement in academic tasks. These findings underscore the need for families to foster a literacy-friendly environment that reinforces reading and writing skills through consistent engagement and meaningful literacy activities.

Early Elementary (Grades 1-3)

One-on-One Support at Home. Young students highlighted the importance of direct support from their families when learning to read and write. They expressed the need for individual attention, encouragement, and structured help with literacy activities at home. Research suggests that family involvement in literacy activities improves reading fluency, comprehension, and language development (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002).

Reading Together and Using Literacy Games. Students in early elementary grades mentioned that reading with their families and engaging in literacy-related games makes reading fun and engaging. Interactive reading activities help build vocabulary, comprehension, and early literacy skills (Mol et al., 2008).

Upper Elementary (Grades 4-5)

Encouragement of Daily Reading Habits. Students recognized the importance of regular reading routines at home to improve literacy skills. Some noted that their parent or caregivers assign reading time or encourage consistent reading habits. Regular exposure to reading improves comprehension, fluency, and academic success (Clark & Rumbold, 2006).

“Keep reading with me and making me write.”

– Fifth Grade Student

Expansion of Literacy Beyond the Home. Some students suggested that family visits to museums, historical sites, or other literacy-rich environments would support reading comprehension and engagement. Exposure to literacy-rich environments enhances vocabulary, critical thinking, and contextual understanding of language (Neuman & Celano, 2012).

“Going with family to museums or historical places and read the briefs about everything.”

– Fifth Grade Student

Middle School (Grades 6-8)

Dedicated Reading Space at Home. Some students suggested that having a quiet, comfortable space for reading at home would help improve focus and literacy engagement. A structured reading environment fosters better concentration and motivation for independent reading (Gambrell, 2011).

Daily Reading and Writing Practice. Students suggested that parents or caregivers should encourage daily reading and writing habits, such as reading a set number of chapters or making lists. Daily literacy engagement strengthens comprehension, writing fluency, and vocabulary retention (Graham & Hebert, 2011).

High School (Grades 9-12)

Assistance with Studying and Literacy-Related Tasks. High school students indicated that family support with studying, reviewing reading materials, and helping with writing assignments would enhance their literacy skills. Involvement of parents or caregivers in academic support correlates with higher academic achievement and improved literacy outcomes (Patall et al., 2008).

Family Literacy Activities and Library Visits. Students suggested that making library visits part of a family routine and integrating literacy into daily activities—such as grocery lists and note-writing—would strengthen literacy skills. Family literacy activities increase reading frequency, engagement, and real-world literacy application (Morrow, 2015).



Feedback from Alachua County Elected Officials

Insights from Elected Officials on What Works

Elected officials were asked to identify strategies that are making a measurable impact on literacy improvement in the county, and they indicated early childhood literacy programs, community and school partnerships, and targeted literacy interventions for high-need students. Their perspectives underscore the importance of early exposure to literacy-rich environments, collaborative efforts across institutions, and data-driven interventions.

Early Childhood Education

Elected officials consistently identified emergent literacy development as a key factor in improving overall literacy rates. Community-supported early literacy programs deliver interventions that help build student skills prior to school entry. These programs also provide literacy-rich environments that enhance vocabulary and reading readiness, reducing gaps among students starting school. Elected officials stressed the importance of ensuring children enter kindergarten with foundational literacy skills.

“The things we can do for our community from zero to five will have the greatest impact so that children are ready for kindergarten.”

– Alachua County Elected Official

“If we don’t address literacy early, we’ll be playing catch-up for years.”

– Alachua County Elected Official

Community and School Partnerships

Collaboration between schools, local governments, and community organizations has proven to be an effective strategy for improving literacy rates. Elected officials emphasized continuing to leverage community-based resources to support literacy initiatives. Community organizations provide mentorship and supplemental reading programs. Libraries, businesses, and nonprofit groups serve as literacy hubs.

- “The Children’s Trust has been a game-changer in coordinating literacy resources.”
- “Partnerships with UF and Santa Fe College could bring in much-needed research-backed literacy practices.”
- “After-school programs supported by the city and county provide valuable literacy interventions.”
- “Churches, nonprofits, and businesses have stepped up to support literacy efforts.”

Targeted Literacy Interventions for High-Needs Students

Elected officials often said that implementation of targeted literacy interventions was needed for students who struggle the most. Specialized programs tailored to students’ needs and tiered intervention strategies help close literacy gaps, including for students with disabilities. Schools that use student data to provide targeted one-on-one or small-group reading instruction see significant improvement. Some of the elected officials’ comments highlight other workable solutions:

- “We need a system-wide approach to track and support struggling readers.”
- “A data-driven approach helps us identify students who need additional reading support.”
- “High-quality tutoring and intervention programs can turn literacy trajectories around.”

Efforts to improve literacy in Alachua County must be sustained, expanded, and coordinated more effectively to achieve lasting impact. Investing in early childhood literacy, strengthening community partnerships, increasing parent/caregiver engagement, improving teacher training, and expanding targeted interventions will help address literacy challenges and create a brighter future for all students.

Challenges and Needed Improvements from the Perspective of Elected Officials

Close Literacy Gaps During Early Childhood

Alachua County elected officials agreed that early childhood literacy gaps are increased by limited access to structured early learning programs, limited family awareness about literacy development, and disparities in pre-kindergarten educational opportunities. Elected officials agreed that reading proficiency by third grade is a crucial benchmark, as students who are not reading at grade level by this point are more likely to struggle throughout their academic careers. Addressing this challenge requires targeted interventions, community-supported early learning initiatives, and enhanced parent/caregiver engagement to foster early literacy habits at home.

“Investing in early literacy will ultimately save money by reducing the need for later remediation.”

– Alachua County Elected Official

Reduce the Impact of Poverty

Elected officials recognized the stark divide in literacy outcomes between children from higher-income and lower-income backgrounds. The cycle of generational poverty contributes to this issue. Without intervention, income-based disparities persist and widen over time, leading to lower academic achievement and limited career opportunities. Interviewed elected officials stressed the importance of directing literacy funding and resources toward communities with lower incomes to reduce disparities and provide all children with an equal opportunity to succeed.

“The cycle of generational poverty is fueled by lack of access to literacy resources.”

– Alachua County Elected Official

Provide Family Support and Education

Parent/caregiver involvement is a critical factor in a child’s literacy development. Parents and caregivers need more time, resources, and literacy skills to effectively support their children. Elected officials highlighted the challenge of parents or caregivers who may have dropped out of school themselves or who work multiple jobs, leaving limited knowledge or time to assist their children with reading and homework.

Elected officials highlighted that parents and caregivers may be unaware that their children are reading below grade level and may not know how to access intervention programs. Schools must improve communication with parents and caregivers, provide accessible literacy workshops, and offer structured guidance on how to create a literacy-rich home environment. Expanding parent/caregiver education initiatives would empower families to play a more active role in their children’s academic success.

“Teaching parents to support literacy at home is just as important as teaching students.”

– Alachua County Elected Official

Increase Teacher Training and Retention

Several elected officials cited a shortage of trained literacy educators as a major impediment to literacy improvement. Schools often rely on teachers with temporary or alternative certifications who may not have the specialized training needed to teach literacy effectively. High turnover rates and inadequate professional development further compound this issue.

Experts recommended stronger teacher training programs focused on evidence-based literacy instruction, particularly for new teachers. Additionally, offering incentives to retain experienced teachers in schools with large numbers of students lacking

foundational reading skills would help ensure continuity in literacy instruction and improve student outcomes.

“We need more investment in training teachers in evidence-based literacy instruction.”

– Alachua County Elected Official

Implement High-Quality Literacy Programs and Strategies

A lack of uniformity in literacy instruction across schools was another key challenge identified in the interviews with elected officials. Some schools effectively use evidence-based literacy programs, while others do not, leading to disparities in student outcomes. Without a comprehensive, district-wide literacy strategy, individual schools and teachers are left to determine their own approaches, resulting in inconsistent implementation of best practices.

Elected officials stressed the need for clear guidance, accountability, and a standardized literacy curriculum to ensure all students receive high-quality literacy instruction. Schools that have successfully implemented programs such as UFLI should serve as models for other institutions.

“A lack of accountability means that some schools do not fully implement literacy initiatives.”

– Alachua County Elected Official

“We need a standardized approach to literacy instruction to ensure all students receive adequate support.”

– Alachua County Elected Official

The findings from the interviews with elected officials indicate that literacy challenges in Alachua County are complex, stemming from early childhood education gaps, limited parent/caregiver involvement due to generational poverty, teacher shortages, and inconsistent literacy strategies.



Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The findings above support a multifaceted approach to improve literacy in Alachua County. Expanding early childhood literacy initiatives, strengthening community partnerships, enhancing teacher training, implementing targeted interventions, and increasing parent/caregiver engagement are all critical steps in addressing literacy challenges. Addressing these challenges will require a collaborative effort involving schools, parents/caregivers, policymakers, and community organizations to ensure that Alachua County can make significant progress in improving literacy outcomes for all residents.

The open-ended responses on surveys and feedback from interviews and focus groups were analyzed to create recommendations. Three overarching themes emerged during the analysis process: (1) Enhanced Awareness and Communication, (2) Focused Support, and (3) Expanded Professional Learning. Each larger theme is comprised of additional subthemes, which indicate possible next steps for an action plan that would benefit Alachua County children, youth, and adults. UF Lastinger Center, Children's Trust, and the committee supporting this work had multiple opportunities to review and refine the recommendations. Recommendations were prioritized based on their evidence base or research support, perceived importance, and practicality. It is not expected that all recommendations will be completed during the next stages of literacy improvement efforts.

Following the literacy needs assessment, the recommendations listed below should be further investigated for feasibility and then prioritized by importance into an action plan. Resources will need to be allocated to engage in the prioritization process and then to support the action plan.

1. Enhanced Awareness and Communication

The first category of recommendations, Enhanced Awareness and Communication, refers to the need to coordinate existing resources, engage in efforts to widely advertise those resources, and promote additional literacy engagement strategies (see Figure 34). This could be done by understanding how existing organizations meet the needs of Alachua County residents, identifying where gaps still exist, and recommending how resources could be even better allocated. Given the large number of existing resources, this category also includes recommendations about how to help Alachua County residents learn about existing resources so they could be better utilized. Finally, this category includes several suggestions for engaging the community and families in literacy enrichment experiences.

Figure 34. *Enhanced Awareness and Communication*



A. Increase Inter-Organization Alignment

- a. **Map how the organizations listed in [Appendix A](#) serve Alachua County:** As shown in Appendix A, dozens of organizations currently serve children, youth, and adults in Alachua County. Yet, these efforts should be intentionally coordinated by a centralized organization (most likely the Children's Trust) to (1) understand which communities within Alachua County need the highest concentration of resources and (2) use coordinated strategies to meet those needs. The coordination effort would also help current organizations develop an awareness of each other's services so that if organizations serve an Alachua County resident but can't meet a particular need, they can recommend other possible resources.
- b. **Allocate existing resources effectively:** Require organizations and initiatives that receive funding from publicly-sourced dollars to provide evidence of impact (e.g., participant literacy gains). Require every organization that receives funding to have a well-developed logic model, which visually represents key program components. On an annual basis, each organization should be able to describe the tools it uses to measure who was served, how participants were served, and the outcomes that were attained.
- c. **Create or identify Community Advisory Boards:** Establish or identify existing advisory boards comprised of representatives from local businesses and organizations. Advisory boards should work with the centralized coordinating organization to provide insights and support for literacy initiatives, fostering community investment.

B. Create a Centralized Resource Hub

- a. **Develop a website and corresponding physical resource guide:** A centralized resource hub should be created to help Alachua County residents understand the resources provided in the county. The hub would contain information about available literacy programs, workshops, resources, and events. Examples of information that should be shared include book distribution programs (Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, New Worlds Reading); free book and audiobook resources (Libby, Hoopla offered through Alachua County School District); and the organizations serving children, youth, and adults in Alachua County. Both online and physical versions of the resource guide should be easily accessible to Alachua County residents with

variation in literacy skills and technology access. Ensure the hub is accessible to families who speak languages other than English (at minimum, offer resources in Spanish).

- b. Develop an awareness campaign by promoting the hub through multiple channels:** Many websites like the proposed hub already exist in Alachua County (e.g., calendar of events on county, city, ACPS, and Chamber of Commerce websites). However, these sources were not frequently reported to be utilized by participants in the literacy needs assessment. The hub can provide a centralized location for information, which would be strengthened by an awareness campaign utilizing healthcare professionals, home-based and center-based childcare programs, school communication channels (such as emails, texts, and newsletters), afterschool programs, libraries, community events, social media, public transportation (RTS), and local news outlets.
- c. Promote and expand access to existing literacy resources, such as mobile libraries and book delivery programs:** Expand access to books and resources in various areas through mobile library services. Library services highlighted the need for more funding to expand outreach to rural areas. In addition, Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library (administered by Gainesville Thrives) and New Worlds Reading (administered by UF Lastinger Center) are two free book delivery programs, but not all families know about these valuable resources.

C. Strengthen Community Engagement

- a. Establish collaborations with local businesses:** Engage businesses, such as bookstores and others, in sponsoring literacy events for various age groups. One elected official suggested, “More collaboration between schools and local businesses could help fund literacy initiatives.”
- b. Strengthen relationships with libraries:** Partner with libraries to offer joint programs, share resources, and promote literacy initiatives.
- c. Collaborate with community centers:** Work with community centers to provide literacy programs, access to resources, and support for families. One of the interviewed elected officials said, “Libraries, after-school programs, and community centers should be better integrated into the literacy strategy.”

- d. Connect with faith-based organizations:** Partner with churches, synagogues, mosques, and other faith-based organizations to reach families and provide literacy support. Encourage churches to maintain a lending library in their public space, supplemented by donations from other organizations when possible.
- e. Promote intergenerational literacy:** Host events where grandparents can read to children or share their personal stories. Create additional opportunities for older adults to volunteer in schools or community programs.

D. Promote Reading Engagement

- a. Organize public reading events:** Focus group participants discussed how they enjoy many of the free and engaging events in Alachua County. However, most expressed a desire for more education-focused events so that they and their children can learn *and* play. For example, host reading festivals, book fairs, or author visits to promote literacy and create a love of reading. Bring together authors, illustrators, storytellers, musicians, and other artists to celebrate the power of language and literature.
- b. Promote reading in public spaces:** Create “Reading Corners” or “Literacy Walls” in libraries, community centers, and public parks. Books can be distributed to offices through book drives. Books can also be purchased cheaply at Friends of the Library sales.
- c. Host family literacy nights at schools, faith-based organizations, and community organizations:** Organize events where families can participate in literacy activities together, such as reading aloud, storytelling, and craft activities.
- d. Hold book awards or reading contests:** Numerous people who participated in focus groups fondly remembered the [Book It!](#) program from when they were in school. People spoke about the need to incentivize reading and make it more fun for children and youth. School- or community-based book awards or reading contests would recognize students and community members who have achieved reading milestones.

2. Focused Support

The second recommendation, Focused Support, provides recommendations for specific groups of Alachua County residents (see Figure 35). These groups (children ages 0-5; English language learners; Black children, youth, and families; and adult learners) were included in this section based on the data presented and collected during the literacy needs assessment. This category also includes tutoring and family workshops as possible effective ways to meet existing needs.

Figure 35. *Focused Support*



A. Support Early Learning and Intervention

- a. Invest more resources in early childhood literacy:** Early intervention before age six substantially reduces reading difficulties and improves long-term reading success (Snowling & Hume, 2011). Families need increased access to early childhood literacy assessments, speech and language screenings, and specialized interventions for children at risk for reading difficulties. New and existing programs, such as Help Me Grow, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY; Payne et al., 2020), North Central Florida Healthy Start, and NewboRN Home Visiting provide evidence-based and research-supported literacy strategies to support

parents and caregivers of young children in their homes. However, most programs have limited funding. Providing increased funding to these programs could support additional families and would have long-term impacts for Alachua County families and promote school readiness.

- b. Increase educator and parent/caregiver knowledge about early screening:** Early screening is vital to identify if children need additional support to gain needed language and literacy skills. Programs like Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) and the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County (ELCAC) provide much-needed screening for young children. Coordinated efforts by the health department, FDLRS, ELCAC, pediatrician offices, and ACPS could improve the number of children who are screened and are identified as eligible to receive early intervention. Organizations that provide early screening should communicate clearly with families the purpose of the screening, review the results, and discuss collaborative action steps to connect families to needed resources.
- c. Develop additional resources for families:** Resources, like UF's North Central Early Steps program, are needed to help families navigate early intervention programs and therapeutic services, including how families can request referrals from pediatricians, find in-network providers, submit claims to insurance, and develop the skills to serve as an advocate for their child or children.

B. Support English Language Learners

- a. Build proactive, asset-based relationships with families of English language learners:** Educators and staff in public and community organizations should use an assets-based approach to collaborating with families that values students' backgrounds and languages (U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, 2021).
- b. Develop materials and resources in multiple languages:** Make sure resources, learning materials, assessments, and communication tools are available in multiple languages.
- c. Provide ongoing training on second language acquisition:** Ensure that educators and staff in public and community organizations understand the unique needs and challenges of English language learners.

C. Support Black Students

a. **Allocate resources to provide systematic and explicit reading instruction and support to Black students:**

In Alachua County, Black students would benefit from rigorous support to improve their reading success. Research over the past several decades indicates that nearly all children, no matter their race or other demographic factors, can meet grade-level reading expectations through systematic and explicit reading instruction during school and in outside-of-school programs, such as afterschool tutoring (Foorman et al., 2016; National Reading Panel, 2000). Aspects of explicit instruction that are beneficial using a gradual release of responsibility model and direct instruction of core literacy skills such as reading comprehension strategies, vocabulary, decoding, and sentence structure.

b. **Provide ongoing training in asset-based and strength-based approaches:**

Professionals in healthcare, education, and community organizations serving Black children and families should receive ongoing training that centers strengths-based perspectives, fosters high expectations, and recognizes the need to build strong relationships with and provide wrap-around supports for Black children and youth (Gatlin-Nash et al., 2021; Washington, 2021; Washington & Seidenberg, 2021).

c. **Use materials that represent the lived experiences of Black children, youth, and adults:**

Instructional materials, assignments, and books that reflect Black students' backgrounds and experiences are critical to engagement and motivation for reading (Tatum, 2006). Using materials that enable students to see themselves and developing and incorporating a deep understanding of students' background into instruction are just two suggestions (Washington, 2021).

d. **Focus on meaningful efforts to improve school attendance for Black children and youth:**

Engage in a listening tour with Black students and families to understand impediments to school attendance. Create a multifaceted plan to improve attendance based on the expressed needs of families and students (Freeman et al., 2018; Lindstrom Johnson et al., 2024).

D. Support Adult Learners

- a. **Advertise programs for adults with low literacy:** Local organizations currently provide literacy workshops, classes, and resources specifically designed for adults who need to improve their reading and writing skills. Examples include Alachua County Library District Literacy Program and Family Literacy Program, Santa Fe College, Community Health Equity Institute English Classes, Impact Program, Alachua County Adult Education (offered by ACPS), and Catholic Charities.
- b. **Use evidence-based instruction for adults with reading difficulties:** Adult reading education courses should be aware of, and adopt, evidence-based instructional strategies. Key considerations include the following:
Conducting pre-instruction assessments to create profiles of learners' reading strengths and weaknesses; providing instruction in basic reading skills, such as phonemic awareness and decoding, when appropriate based on assessment results; and incorporating targeted instruction in fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension strategies to address learners' specific needs (Kruidenier, 2002).
- c. **Provide and advertise computer skills programs for adults:** Adults need basic computer skills to complete internet searches, fill out forms online, and upload documents, among other necessary daily tasks. Computer skills and digital literacy are important for families who want to help children complete online homework or use digital literacy resources at home.
- d. **Offer additional English language support for adults:** Provide classes, tutoring, and resources to help English language learners improve their literacy skills. These classes should be focused on practical skills and communication, such job interviews, health appointments, and talking to their child's teacher.

E. Support Access to Free or Low-Cost Tutoring

- a. **Offer additional tutoring options:** High-dosage tutoring that is provided on school campuses before, during, or after the school day by well-trained staff has been shown to be the most effective form of tutoring (Nickow et al., 2024). Tutoring services can be offered at schools by trained paraprofessionals or certified teachers earning stipends. ACPS can utilize external funding sources, including Florida Tutoring Advantage, Titles I-IV,

AmeriCorps, or other community partners, to enhance existing tutoring services.

- b. Support existing organizations providing tutoring:** Identify organizations that are already providing tutoring but need extra resources. Recruit and train volunteers to provide literacy support to students. Volunteers can be effective in teaching foundational literacy skills, correcting reading errors, and fostering deep discussions about books when they are provided with high-quality training and structured lesson plans (Vadasy et al., 1997; Vadasy & Sanders, 2010). Additional volunteers may be recruited from student populations at the University of Florida or Santa Fe College.

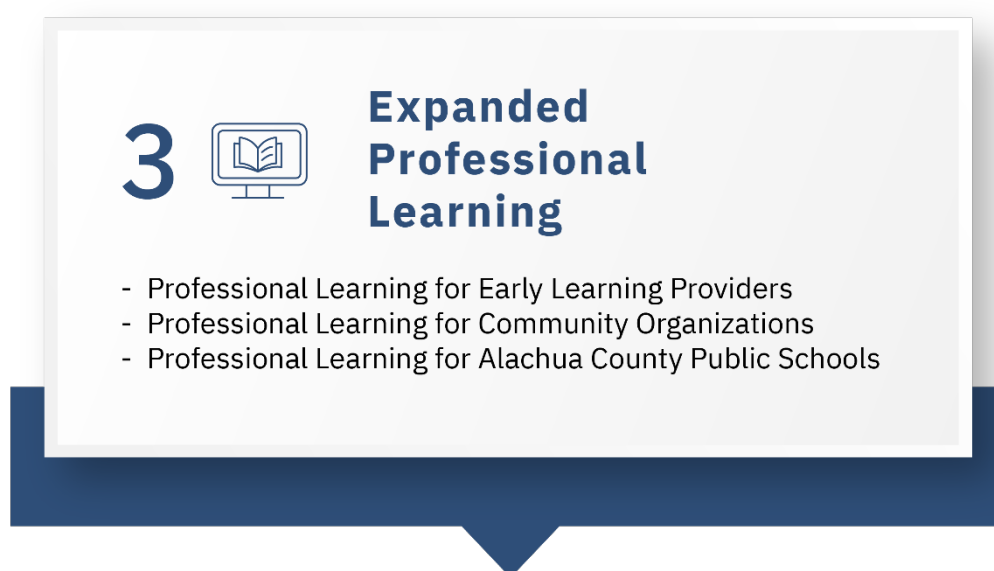
F. Support Families through Workshops

- a. Build families' knowledge about supporting literacy learning at home:** Provide families with information and resources on how to support their child's literacy development at home. Healthcare providers can share resources with parents and caregivers and include early literacy in the programming for any prenatal and/or parenting groups they host. Early learning organizations and programs can host literacy workshops, offer at-home reading incentives, and provide access to literacy resources in multiple languages. ACPS can provide accurate examples of grade-level reading and writing goals at the beginning of each school year and host at least two workshops per school year to teach families about the literacy curriculum at each school and how they can help their child at home (e.g., teach parents/caregivers about UFLI so that when they help their children with homework, it is consistent with the methods learned at school).

3. Expanded Professional Learning

The third recommendation, Expanded Professional Learning, includes numerous recommendations for enhancing teaching experiences for and data-based decision making by early learning providers, community organization staff, and ACPS educators (see Figure 36).

Figure 36. *Expanded Professional Learning*



Professional Learning for Early Learning Providers

A. Expand Professional Learning for Early Learning Educators

a. Increase access to evidence-based professional learning opportunities:

Provide more opportunities to ongoing professional learning opportunities on how to use effective practices to support emergent literacy development for children ages birth to five.

- b. Increase access to coaching:** Provide increased opportunities for early learning educators to receive literacy coaching and mentoring to support curriculum implementation and effective practices. High-quality professional learning with coaching support improves teacher effectiveness, leading to stronger reading outcomes (Piasta et al., 2009).

- c. **Increase access to job-embedded professional learning:** Provide job-embedded literacy workshops with opportunities to plan, implement, and reflect on language and literacy support provided to young children (Neuman & Cunningham, 2009).

B. Develop a Culture of Data-Driven Decision Making

- a. **Create a coordinated vision for using early learning data:** Create and clearly articulate a vision for data use across Alachua County early learning providers and set goals based on developmentally appropriate practices that will lead to kindergarten readiness. Collaborate with ACPS in setting kindergarten readiness goals.
- b. **Use data to improve VPK enrollment:** VPK students appear to enter kindergarten with higher school readiness skills as compared to students who were not in VPK (see Figure 8), but VPK enrollment numbers remain low in Alachua County (see Figure 6). Examine existing data to create targeted strategies to increase availability and enrollment of VPK.

Professional Learning for Community Organizations

A. Provide Professional Learning for Community Providers

- a. **Increase access to evidence-based professional learning opportunities:** Train staff and volunteers of literacy resource organizations (including library staff) in how to use effective and relevant strategies for teaching reading or providing literacy-related support.
- b. **Increase knowledge about how to measure impacts:** Provide training for staff and volunteers of literacy resource organizations in how to measure outcomes, use assessment results to inform their programming, and tailor their approach to individual needs of the people they serve.

B. Develop a Culture of Data-Driven Decision Making

- a. **Create a coordinated vision for using organization data:** Create and clearly articulate a vision for data use for organizations across Alachua County. Collaborate with early learning providers and ACPS in setting up short and long-term literacy achievement goals.

Professional Learning for Alachua County Public Schools

A. Develop a Culture of Data-Driven Decision Making

- a. Create a coordinated vision for using student data:** Clearly articulate a vision for data use across ACPS. Provide funding and procedures for reporting literacy outcome data by schools and student subgroups. Use the data for improvement efforts.
- b. Promote cross-departmental collaboration:** Create a culture of collaboration between ACPS departments that are responsible for professional learning, curriculum implementation, and student data analysis.

B. Improve Professional Learning Opportunities for School and District Leaders

- a. Encourage school leaders to be reading instructional leaders:** Ensure school leaders (i.e., principals and assistant principals) at all grade bands have the necessary knowledge of evidence-based literacy practices to provide support and technical assistance to teachers. Provide ongoing professional learning in a variety of modalities to support school leaders' busy schedules.
- b. Promote district use of data-based decision making:** Educators, school leaders, and district leaders indicated there were gaps in district support for data-based decision making and sustaining a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). Provide ongoing professional learning on MTSS and implementation science for district and school leaders. Collaborate with entities like the [Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project](#) to engage in professional learning and provide technical assistance to schools.

C. Improve Professional Learning Opportunities for K-5 Educators

- a. Improve small group instruction:** Elementary students need increased exposure to reading connected text, not just word-level activities, during small group instruction (Foorman et al., 2016). Engage in available professional learning opportunities that enhance teachers' delivery of small group instruction using high-impact activities that build multiple domains of students' literacy knowledge, including fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension.
- b. Improve implementation of UFLI Foundations:** Provide regular, ongoing centralized professional learning for new teachers and those requiring

additional implementation support in how to best use UFLI Foundations (Lane & Contessa, 2022). Incentivize attendance of professional learning sessions. Identify schools and classrooms with high proportions of students with foundational skill difficulties and use literacy coaches and implementation specialists to improve the quality and consistency of UFLI Foundations implementation. Model lessons for teachers and provide ongoing coaching cycles. Create and/or use cross-district pacing and alignment guides to ensure that students at early grade levels have exposure to UFLI Foundations lessons that are appropriate for their grade and not repeated across grade levels.

- c. **Improve implementation of Benchmark Advance:** A lack of professional learning opportunities on the structure and implementation of Benchmark Advance (Benchmark Education, 2022) is contributing to perception and implementation difficulties for this core curriculum. Provide regular, ongoing centralized professional learning and job-embedded coaching for new teachers and those requiring additional implementation support. Emphasize key levers including the use of high-quality complex text, the importance of connecting reading with writing, differentiated instruction, and explicit and systematic teaching.
- d. **Clarify the role of intervention coaches:** Participating educators indicated a variety of experiences with Instructional Intervention Coaches, ranging from helpful coaching cycles to an absence of direct support for teachers. District leadership should emphasize to school leaders that the role of the Instructional Intervention Coach is primarily providing direct coaching cycles with teachers.
- e. **Employ additional certified reading specialists:** Low literacy rates among K-12 students indicate a need for more certified reading specialists to address high literacy needs.

D. Improve Professional Learning Opportunities for 6-12 Educators

- a. **Improve implementation of English Language Arts curricula and programs:** Prioritize consistent district-wide professional learning in evidence-based instructional strategies for English Language Arts and content area teachers. Create and execute a comprehensive professional learning plan that emphasizes evidence-based systems for improving literacy instruction for all teachers (e.g., [Strategic Instructional Model](#)). Ensure all teachers across the district participate in both professional

learning sessions and follow up and incentivize participation in professional learning. Provide job-embedded coaching and implementation support. Finally, ensure that explicit vocabulary and reading comprehension instruction is integrated regularly into content area teaching.

E. Promote Collaboration and Peer Learning

- a. Provide ongoing support for effective grade level and departmental planning:** Participating educators and school leaders felt that they lacked district support for implementing consistent and effective grade level and departmental planning meetings. Although any single planning and data-based problem-solving protocol has not been established as the most effective, it would be beneficial for schools to have access to centralized training, ongoing support, and evidence-based resources for structured planning.
- b. Ensure consistency of new teacher mentor activities:** Participating educators reported a variety of mentorship experiences, ranging from absent mentors to high-quality experiences. ACPS offers a Beginning Teacher Program, but mentor/mentee experiences appear to vary depending on the school. Through initial training, communicate that the role of the mentor should entail: Establishing relationships with mentees using student data, conducting observations, and providing feedback to establish mentee's areas of growth (Hudson, 2016). Develop mentees' content knowledge and pedagogical skills.
- c. Ensure that educators have access to a combination of online and in-person literacy professional learning opportunities:** Provide training options that accommodate their schedules and preferences. Utilize resources offered by the state of Florida.
- d. Provide incentives for participation:** Offer stipends, release time, or other incentives to encourage educators to participate in professional development opportunities.
- e. Create partnerships with experts:** Collaborate with universities and literacy experts to provide advanced training and consultation. Bringing in external expertise can enhance the quality of professional development and keep staff updated on the latest evidence-based practices.

- f. **Develop a system for collecting and sharing feedback:** Gather input from teachers to identify areas for improvement and adjust professional development offerings accordingly.

F. Train Educators in Effective Strategies for Supporting Students with Disabilities

- a. **Provide professional learning on evidence-based practices for teaching students with differing needs:** Participating ESE teachers and service providers expressed the lack of dedicated professional learning offerings about specially designed instruction, IEP goal setting and monitoring, targeting curriculum/instruction to identified areas of weakness, grouping of students, and caseload management. The ESE department should ensure that ESE teachers have access to ongoing professional learning in these key topics. Include principles of explicit instruction, data-informed individualization, and selection of appropriate interventions in professional learning.
- c. **Attract ESE teachers:** Offer financial incentives to incoming teachers who are certified to instruct students with disabilities. Incentives can also be provided for existing teachers to become ESE certified.
- d. **Retain current ESE teachers:** The Alachua County Department of Exceptional Student Education, in conjunction with other departments, should collect data on teacher caseloads, schedules, and working conditions to develop a comprehensive long-term plan to address teacher retention. This plan should include initial intensive, job-embedded supports for new teachers and professional learning opportunities that encourage general education and exceptional student education teachers to work collaboratively to design and implement a continuum of instruction.

Conclusions and Next Steps

This literacy needs assessment provides a data-informed, community-centered analysis of literacy challenges and opportunities across Alachua County. With quantitative data from standardized assessments, attendance records, and survey responses; qualitative insights from focus groups, interviews, and community engagements; and a review of evidence-based and research-supported practices, this literacy needs assessment presents a holistic picture of literacy development from early childhood to adulthood.

Findings reveal both strengths and persistent disparities. Despite significant community engagement and the presence of evidence-based instructional practices, literacy proficiency remains below desired levels, particularly among Black students, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged learners. Although targeted interventions have demonstrated promise, challenges such as curriculum misalignment and teacher professional development gaps hinder progress.

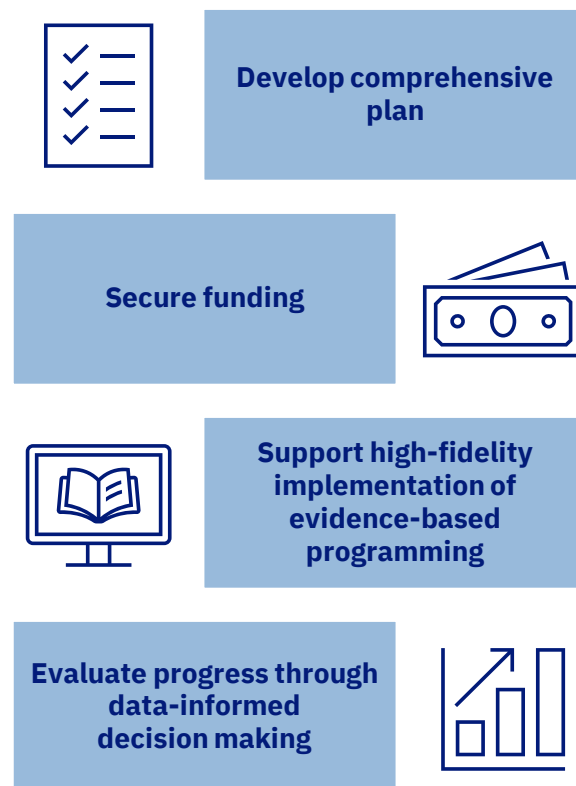
The key challenges that were identified include limited access to high-quality literacy resources, financial constraints, teacher retention issues, and inadequate instructional support for learners below grade level. Additionally, chronic absenteeism disproportionately affects certain student populations, magnifying literacy disparities. These findings align with existing research on disparities in literacy achievement.

This study underscores the importance of integrating qualitative insights with quantitative measures to inform targeted, community-centered literacy initiatives. The recommendations emphasize a three-pronged approach:

1. **Enhancing awareness and communication** through improved collaboration among stakeholders and a centralized literacy resource hub.
2. **Providing focused support** via increased funding for early literacy programs, expanded tutoring interventions, and targeted literacy efforts for ALL groups.
3. **Expanding professional learning opportunities** for educators, particularly in areas of differentiated instruction and literacy intervention strategies.

Moving forward, a multi-sector approach involving schools, community organizations, policymakers, and families will be crucial to ensuring long-term literacy improvements. The next steps include developing a comprehensive plan, securing funding, supporting high fidelity implementation of evidence-based literacy programs, and continually evaluating progress through data-informed decision-making (see Figure 37). By building stronger early literacy foundations, ensuring equal access to quality instruction, expanding adult learning opportunities, and advocating for policy-driven change, Alachua County can significantly improve literacy rates and educational success for all residents.

Figure 37. *Next Steps for Alachua County Literacy Improvements*



Appendix A

Organization List by Age Group

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
<u>Alachua County Public Schools HIPPY</u>	ACPS Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) is an international evidence-based home visiting early childhood intervention program focused on parent-involved learning for preschoolers. The HIPPY model includes 3 years of home-based curriculum 30 weeks (about 7 months) a year, professional coordinator, staff of home visitors, role play instructional technique and home visits and group meetings. The curriculum includes letter knowledge, rhyming, phonemic awareness, comprehension skills and vocabulary development.	Early Learning
<u>Alachua County Public Schools VPK</u>	ACPS VPK provides early childhood education to students that live in Alachua County and are 4 years old.	Early Learning
<u>Cade Museum</u>	Cade Museum in Gainesville has a mission to transform communities by inspiring and equipping future inventors, entrepreneurs, and visionaries. For literacy education, the museum offers Little Sparks Program on site and has outreach classes at Episcopal Community Services (ECS) Head Start in Alachua County.	Early Learning

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
<u>Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County</u>	The Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County (ELCAC) serves as a resource to families and childcare providers.	Early Learning
<u>Episcopal Children's Services (ECS4Kids)</u>	ECS4Kids helps children in Northeast and Central Florida succeed in school and beyond. Through early childhood education programs like VPK, Head Start, and School Readiness, ECS4Kids offers crucial support and guidance to families seeking high-quality care and educational opportunities. For over 50 years, the mission of ECS4Kids has been to build a strong foundation for each child, ensuring they are prepared for lifelong learning and success.	Early Learning
<u>Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS)</u>	The Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS) serves Marion, Alachua, Citrus, Dixie, Gilchrist, Levy, and UF Lab School. FDLRS provides diagnostic, instructional, and technology support services to district exceptional education programs and families of students with disabilities.	Early Learning
<u>Florida Healthy Start Parents as Teachers</u>	The Florida Healthy Start program provides education, support and proven interventions to expecting and new families who are at risk of a poor birth outcome or delay in development.	Early Learning

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
<u>Gainesville Thrives</u>	Gainesville Thrives works to promote tutoring and mentoring for kindergarten through high school students, as well as other services for expectant parents, parents and their infants, toddlers, and preschool children.	Early Learning
<u>NewboRN Home Visiting</u>	NewboRN Home Visiting is a free program offered to all Alachua County women who give birth in the county. Within a week after baby is born, a registered nurse visits the family at home to see how they are doing, share information and connect them to services and resources.	Early Learning
<u>University of Florida North Central Early Steps</u>	UF North Central Early Steps provides early intervention services for families of children ages birth to three years old who have or are at risk for a developmental delay. No income requirement is necessary to qualify for the program. Participation is voluntary.	Early Learning
<u>United Way of North Central Florida – Alachua County Campaign for Grade Level Reading</u>	The Campaign for Grade Level Reading collaborates with schools, libraries, non-profits, and other community organizations to create a network of support for literacy. This includes working with local educators to align efforts and share resources aimed at improving literacy rates.	Early Learning, K-2

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
Alachua County Library District Story Time, Summer Reading	<p>The Alachua County Library District offers a range of literacy programs and services, including preliteracy programming (Baby Time, Story Time, and Music and Movement) to help young children develop early reading skills through reading, writing, singing, talking, and playing. Summer Reading Program for all ages promotes lifelong learning and combats summer slide.</p>	<p>Early Learning, K-12</p>
Healthy Families Florida – Healthy Families Alachua	<p>Healthy Families Florida is a nationally accredited home visiting program for expectant parents and parents of newborns experiencing stressful life situations. The program improves childhood outcomes and increases family self-sufficiency by empowering parents through education and community support.</p>	<p>Early Learning, Adults</p>
AskMeno	<p>AskMeno is a supplement to core curriculum (ELA, Social Studies) that reinforces learning and provides engaging practice and application in various skills.</p>	<p>PK-2</p>
University of Florida Lastinger Center – New Worlds Reading	<p>New Worlds Reading is Florida’s free at-home literacy program designed to help eligible VPK through 5th grade students in Florida bolster literacy skills, build reading confidence, and foster a lifelong love of reading. Each month, eligible kids receive a free book tailored to their interests with resources and activities for caregivers and</p>	<p>PK-5</p>

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
	children to use together. New Worlds Reading was created by the Florida Legislature and is administered by the UF Lastinger Center for Learning. Book titles are selected in partnership with the Florida Department of Education and Scholastic. Books and materials are available in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, and braille.	
<u>United Way of North Central Florida – Reading Pals Program</u>	ReadingPals is a volunteer-based literacy mentorship program that provides early intervention for children in low-to moderate-income communities. The program pairs trained volunteers with young students to build foundational literacy skills, foster a love of reading, and promote social-emotional development through one-on-one mentorship.	PK-3
<u>Kids Count – Afterschool Program</u>	Kids Count supports foundational literacy skills by offering over 48 hours of 1-on-1 literacy tutoring using the UFLI curriculum, delivered by trained volunteers or staff. Text-rich learning environments, class libraries, and take-home books encourage students to read and build home libraries.	K-5
<u>Rotary Club Reading Safari</u>	The Rotary Club provides funding for the Santa Fe College Zoo’s Reading Safari program.	K-5

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
<u>University of Florida IFAS, Lastinger Center – Books and Cooks</u>	Books and Cooks is a free literacy and nutrition program that is a partnership with the New Worlds Reading Initiative. Parents and children learn alongside other families in 7 weekly sessions. Families are supported through the learning of simple, at-home strategies that can be easily added to daily routines.	K-5
<u>University of Florida Lastinger Center – Florida Tutoring Advantage</u>	Florida Tutoring Advantage will provide Science of Reading and math tutoring best practices to school districts developing school-based K-5 tutoring services, offer free consultation, and distribute funding to augment tutoring programs. During the inaugural year of implementation, UF Lastinger Center will adopt a Plan, Prepare, Pilot model to inform the scaling up of the program.	K-5
<u>North Central FL YMCA – Youth and Teen Enrichment Center</u>	The Youth & Teen Center is a collaboration of youth-serving agencies (Motiv8U and the City of Gainesville) providing students with educational, cultural, and recreational activities. The Center is a special space at the Y dedicated to youth and teens’ comfort and interests. It acts as a place for students to get homework done, hang out with friends, work on community service projects, engage in STEM-related activities, and more.	G5-11

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
<u>Dream On Purpose</u>	Dream on Purpose is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering youth with a specific focus on young ladies between the ages of 11 to 18 to dream and to actualize their dreams.	G4-12
<u>Education Equalizer Workshops</u>	Education Equalizer works with middle through high school students and their families to demystify the college admittance process and provide scholars with the necessary tools to graduate. They provide ACT/SAT prep, college admission advice, FAFSA clinics, and more.	G6-12
<u>Big Brothers Big Sisters of Alachua County</u>	Big Brothers Big Sisters is the nation's largest donor- and volunteer-supported mentoring network. The organization makes meaningful, monitored matches between adult volunteers ("Bigs") and children ("Littles"), ages 5 through young adulthood in communities across the country.	K-12
<u>Cuscowilla Nature and Retreat Center</u>	The Cuscowilla Nature and Retreat Center aims to provide free camp experiences that encourage the academic and physical health of children at no cost to them. Their emphasis is on providing opportunities for low income, youth in Alachua County to attend camp.	K-12
<u>IGB Education</u>	IGB Education provides mentoring programming for students in 5th-12th grade and	K-12

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
	Enrichment programming for students K-5th grade.	
<u>MOTIV8U of North Central Florida</u>	MOTIV8U is a nonprofit training organization. provide life skills and social-emotional skills to agencies throughout the county and state that work with youth.	K-12
<u>New Tech Now – Mobile MakerSpace STE2AM Engine</u>	New Tech Now provides access to 3D equipment and training necessary to acquire new emerging tech skills in STEM fields emphasizing literacy and art.	K-12
<u>Peak Literacy</u>	Over the past five years, PEAK Literacy has built a successful model that identifies children who are behind in their reading development and pairs them with trained, nurturing volunteer tutors for one-to-one reading lessons that are short, focused, and effective. These high dosage tutoring lessons take place virtually or in person for 15 minutes a day, 3-5 days a week. Using the digital Great Leaps literacy software, attendance and progress are tracked to ensure fidelity and reading fluency growth.	K-12
<u>The Education Foundation of Alachua County – Catalyst for Change Teacher Grant Program</u>	Through Catalyst for Change, teachers are encouraged to apply for literacy grants that promote improving teaching instruction and access to resources to increase reading achievement scores and overall improve the learning experience for students.	K-12

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
<u>University of Florida Multi-disciplinary Diagnostic & Training Program (MDTP)</u>	UF MDTP serves K-12 children and youth who are at-risk for or identified as having complex medical, educational, socioemotional, and/or behavioral problems and are struggling academically.	K-12
<u>William A. Stokes Community Center</u>	The William A. Stokes Community Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit social service agency providing services to Micanopy, Alachua County, and surrounding areas.	K-12
<u>Career Source</u>	CareerSource North Central Florida provides career and business services with hundreds of employment opportunities.	K-12, Adults
<u>Hands on Gainesville – Science Outreach Programs</u>	Hands On Gainesville encourages a student as apprentice approach to learning, with the belief that learning by doing leads to better understanding. Students are encouraged to see science everywhere in the world and especially in their community.	K-12, Adults
<u>University of Florida, Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences – UF Reading Program</u>	The UF Reading Program provides evaluation services to diagnose reading disabilities throughout the year. During the summer, the program also provides reading intervention for students who have dyslexia.	K-12, Adults
<u>Alachua County Library District</u>	Alachua County Library District is an independent special district and the sole provider of public library services to citizens in Alachua County, serving urban and rural communities through 12 branch locations, two	Lifespan

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
	bookmobiles, and multiple deposit collections.	
<u>Alachua County Library District Library Partnership Branch</u>	The Library Partnership Branch offers literacy programs for all ages, including weekly Preschool Story Time, bi-monthly Music and Movement Story Time, and passive activities like puzzles for elementary students. Early learning stations with touchscreen computers support preschool to 3rd-grade learners. STEAM programs for middle schoolers and teens integrate literacy, while the branch also serves as a tutoring center.	Lifespan
One Community Family Resource Center	A resource center in East Gainesville provides wrap-around services to meet the needs of those in the community.	Lifespan
<u>Rural Women's Health Project</u>	This program provides health education through community health workers; in-house referral line; community ID provision; case management. All services are provided to the Spanish speaking population.	Lifespan
<u>SW Advocacy Group (SWAG)</u>	SWAG's mission is to address the needs of the community by connecting individuals and families to services and resources through partnerships with agencies and community partners. SWAG serves eight neighborhoods in SW Gainesville: Majestic Oaks, Holly Heights, Harbor Cove, Pine Meadows, Hidden Oaks Mobile	Lifespan

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
	Home Park, Gordon Manor, Tower Oaks/Tower Oaks Glen, and Linton Oaks. Literacy-related services include the following: early care and education; homework help for elementary and middle/high school students; and daily computer & Internet access.	
<u>Alachua County Library District Adult Literacy Program</u>	The Adult Literacy Program offers one-on-one tutoring for basic education learners as well as English Language Learners. The program is volunteer driven and offers other programming when available.	Adults
<u>Catholic Charities</u>	Catholic Charities offers an English Language Literacy Program designed to help anyone who is looking to learn or improve their skills in English comprehension and usage. The small and personal classroom environment is designed to meet multi-level needs and understanding of the English language. The twice weekly classes are taught by Certified ESL instructors with over twelve years of experience.	Adults
<u>Community Health Equity Institute</u>	Community Health Equity Institute provides English classes to help bridge the disparities that exist in the community and health sector. The organization aims to achieve this goal by providing resources that help reduce barriers to health and education in underserved communities.	Adults

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
<u>Emmanuel Mennonite Church</u>	Emmanuel Mennonite Church offers free ESL courses on Saturday afternoon, serving member shows up Spanish speakers Haitian, Creole speakers, and speakers of other languages.	Adults
<u>Impacto UF</u>	Impacto UF is a student-led organization that seeks to recruit and train Spanish-speaking UF students to teach basic English to the non-English-speaking Hispanic/Latino community in Gainesville.	Adults
<u>Santa Fe College Adult Basic Education</u>	Santa Fe College provides Adult Basic Education (ABE), GED preparation, and ESOL.	Adults
<u>University City Church of Christ</u>	The University City Church of Christ English Partners program helps immigrants in developing effective communication skills in English. It offers free one-on-one English tutoring and free English study materials for individual language and reading levels, study, or job interests.	Adults
<u>University of Florida Christian Campus House</u>	UF's Christian Campus House's English Corner program is organized by a student group that welcomes people of all ages who want to practice speaking English.	Adults
<u>University of Florida English Language Institute</u>	UF's English Language Institute program primarily serves F1 and J1 and tourists and students who intend to study at US universities or colleges.	Adults

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
<u>University of Florida Lastinger Center – Adult Professional Learning Programs</u>	The University of Florida Lastinger Center is an innovation hub designed to equip educators of children birth through twelfth grade with evidence-based, practical support and professional development resources to enhance reading instruction; connect school districts to customized professional development, coaching, and instructional support; and engage students with innovative programs and initiatives that promote reading proficiency.	Adults
<u>Williams Temple Church of God in Christ</u>	Williams Temple COGIC - Offers an English language program to fulfill a practical community need. The lessons are designed to teach conversational English and provide opportunities for learners to practice speaking English in a relaxed environment. The program offers free intermediate/advanced English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes for adults on Zoom	Adults
<u>Community Foundation of North Central Florida</u>	The mission of Community Foundation of North Central Florida is to promote community transformation through the power of philanthropy.	Not Specified
<u>Gainesville Chamber of Commerce</u>	The activities of the Greater Gainesville Chamber of Commerce are executed around the vision to be a global hub of talent, innovation, and	Not Specified

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
	opportunity in the Greater Gainesville Region.	
<u>University of Florida Center for Autism and Related Disabilities</u>	UF Center for Autism and Related Disabilities focuses on building the capacity of families and professionals to support individuals with autism and related disabilities, including literacy programming.	Not Specified

Organization List by Alphabetical Name

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
<u>Alachua County Library District</u>	Alachua County Library District is an independent special district and the sole provider of public library services to citizens in Alachua County, serving urban and rural communities through 12 branch locations, two bookmobiles, and multiple deposit collections.	Lifespan
<u>Alachua County Library District Story Time, Summer Reading</u>	The Alachua County Library District offers a range of literacy programs and services, including preliteracy programming (Baby Time, Story Time, and Music and Movement) to help young children develop early reading skills through reading, writing, singing, talking, and playing. Summer Reading Program for all ages promotes lifelong learning and combats summer slide.	Early Learning, K-12
<u>Alachua County Library District Adult Literacy Program</u>	The Adult Literacy Program offers one-on-one tutoring for basic education learners as well as English Language Learners. The program is volunteer driven and offers other programming when available.	Adults
<u>Alachua County Library District Library Partnership Branch</u>	The Library Partnership Branch offers literacy programs for all ages, including weekly Preschool Story Time, bi-monthly Music and Movement Story Time, and passive activities like puzzles for elementary students. Early	Lifespan

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
	learning stations with touchscreen computers support preschool to 3rd-grade learners. STEAM programs for middle schoolers and teens integrate literacy, while the branch also serves as a tutoring center.	
<u>Alachua County Public Schools HIPPY</u>	ACPS Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) is an international evidence-based home visiting early childhood intervention program focused on parent-involved learning for preschoolers. The HIPPY model includes 3 years of home-based curriculum 30 weeks (about 7 months) a year, professional coordinator, staff of home visitors, role play instructional technique and home visits and group meetings. The curriculum includes letter knowledge, rhyming, phonemic awareness, comprehension skills and vocabulary development.	Early Learning
<u>Alachua County Public Schools VPK</u>	ACPS VPK provides early childhood education to students that live in Alachua County and are 4 years old.	Early Learning
<u>AskMeno</u>	AskMeno is a supplement to core curriculum (ELA, Social Studies) that reinforces learning and provides engaging practice and application in various skills.	PK-2
<u>Big Brothers Big Sisters of Alachua County</u>	Big Brothers Big Sisters is the nation's largest donor- and volunteer-supported mentoring network. The organization makes meaningful, monitored	K-12

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
	matches between adult volunteers (“Bigs”) and children (“Littles”), ages 5 through young adulthood in communities across the country.	
<u>Cade Museum</u>	Cade Museum in Gainesville has a mission to transform communities by inspiring and equipping future inventors, entrepreneurs, and visionaries. For literacy education, the museum offers Little Sparks Program on site and has outreach classes at Episcopal Community Services (ECS) Head Start in Alachua County.	Early Learning
<u>Career Source</u>	CareerSource North Central Florida provides career and business services with hundreds of employment opportunities.	K-12, Adults
<u>Catholic Charities</u>	Catholic Charities offers an English Language Literacy Program designed to help anyone who is looking to learn or improve their skills in English comprehension and usage. The small and personal classroom environment is designed to meet multi-level needs and understanding of the English language. The twice weekly classes are taught by Certified ESL instructors with over twelve years of experience.	Adults
<u>Community Foundation of North Central Florida</u>	The mission of Community Foundation of North Central Florida is to promote community transformation through the power of philanthropy.	Not Specified

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
<u>Community Health Equity Institute</u>	Community Health Equity Institute provides English classes to help bridge the disparities that exist in the community and health sector. The organization aims to achieve this goal by providing resources that help reduce barriers to health and education in underserved communities.	Adults
<u>Cuscowilla Nature and Retreat Center</u>	The Cuscowilla Nature and Retreat Center aims to provide free camp experiences that encourage the academic and physical health of children at no cost to them. Their emphasis is on providing opportunities for low income, diverse youth in Alachua County to attend camp.	K-12
<u>Dream On Purpose</u>	Dream on Purpose is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering youth with a specific focus on young ladies between the ages of 11 to 18 to dream and to actualize their dreams.	G4-12
<u>Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County</u>	The Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County (ELCAC) serves as a resource to families and childcare providers.	Early Learning
<u>Education Equalizer Workshops</u>	Education Equalizer works with middle through high school students and their families to demystify the college admittance process and provide scholars with the necessary tools to graduate. They provide ACT/SAT prep, college admission advice, FAFSA clinics, and more.	G6-12

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
<u>Emmanuel Mennonite Church</u>	Emmanuel Mennonite Church offers free ESL courses on Saturday afternoon, serving member shows up Spanish speakers Haitian, Creole speakers, and speakers of other languages.	Adults
<u>Episcopal Children's Services (ECS4Kids)</u>	ECS4Kids helps children in Northeast and Central Florida succeed in school and beyond. Through early childhood education programs like VPK, Head Start, and School Readiness, ECS4Kids offers crucial support and guidance to families seeking high-quality care and educational opportunities. For over 50 years, the mission of ECS4Kids has been to build a strong foundation for each child, ensuring they are prepared for lifelong learning and success.	Early Learning
<u>Florida Healthy Start Parents as Teachers</u>	The Florida Healthy Start program provides education, support and proven interventions to expecting and new families who are at risk of a poor birth outcome or delay in development.	Early Learning
<u>Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS)</u>	The Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS) serves Marion, Alachua, Citrus, Dixie, Gilchrist, Levy, and UF Lab School. FDLRS provides diagnostic, instructional, and technology support services to district exceptional education programs and families of students with disabilities.	Early Learning

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
<u>Gainesville Chamber of Commerce</u>	The activities of the Greater Gainesville Chamber of Commerce are executed around the vision to be a global hub of talent, innovation, and opportunity in the Greater Gainesville Region.	Not Specified
<u>Gainesville Thrives</u>	Gainesville Thrives works to promote tutoring and mentoring for kindergarten through high school students, as well as other services for expectant parents, parents and their infants, toddlers, and preschool children.	Early Learning
<u>Hands on Gainesville – Science Outreach Programs</u>	Hands On Gainesville encourages a student as apprentice approach to learning, with the belief that learning by doing leads to better understanding. Students are encouraged to see science everywhere in the world and especially in their community.	K-12, Adults
<u>Healthy Families Florida – Healthy Families Alachua</u>	Healthy Families Florida is a nationally accredited home visiting program for expectant parents and parents of newborns experiencing stressful life situations. The program improves childhood outcomes and increases family self-sufficiency by empowering parents through education and community support.	Early Learning, Adults
<u>IGB Education</u>	IGB Education provides mentoring programming for students in 5th-12th grade and Enrichment programming for students K-5th grade.	K-12

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
<u>Impacto UF</u>	Impacto UF is a student-led organization that seeks to recruit and train Spanish-speaking UF students to teach basic English to the non-English-speaking Hispanic/Latino community in Gainesville.	Adults
<u>Kids Count – Afterschool Program</u>	Kids Count supports foundational literacy skills by offering over 48 hours of 1-on-1 literacy tutoring using the UFLI curriculum, delivered by trained volunteers or staff. Text-rich learning environments, class libraries, and take-home books encourage students to read and build home libraries.	K-5
<u>MOTIV8U of North Central Florida</u>	MOTIV8U is a nonprofit training organization. provide life skills and social-emotional skills to agencies throughout the county and state that work with youth.	G5-11
<u>NewboRN Home Visiting</u>	NewboRN Home Visiting is a free program offered to all Alachua County women who give birth in the county. Within a week after baby is born, a registered nurse visits the family at home to see how they are doing, share information and connect them to services and resources.	Early Learning
<u>New Tech Now – Mobile MakerSpace STE2AM Engine</u>	New Tech Now provides access to 3D equipment and training necessary to acquire new emerging tech skills in STEM fields emphasizing literacy and art.	K-12

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
<u>North Central FL YMCA – Youth and Teen Enrichment Center</u>	The Youth & Teen Center is a collaboration of youth-serving agencies (Motiv8U and the City of Gainesville) providing students with educational, cultural, and recreational activities. The Center is a special space at the Y dedicated to youth and teens’ comfort and interests. It acts as a place for students to get homework done, hang out with friends, work on community service projects, engage in STEM-related activities, and more.	G5-11
One Community Family Resource Center	A resource center in East Gainesville provides wrap-around services to meet the needs of those in the community.	Lifespan
<u>Peak Literacy</u>	Over the past five years, PEAK Literacy has built a successful model that identifies children who are behind in their reading development and pairs them with trained, nurturing volunteer tutors for one-to-one reading lessons that are short, focused, and effective. These high dosage tutoring lessons take place virtually or in person for 15 minutes a day, 3-5 days a week. Using the digital Great Leaps literacy software, attendance and progress are tracked to ensure fidelity and reading fluency growth.	K-12
<u>Rotary Club Reading Safari</u>	The Rotary Club provides funding for the Santa Fe College Zoo’s Reading Safari program.	K-5

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
<u>Rural Women's Health Project</u>	This program provides health education through community health workers; in-house referral line; community ID provision; case management. All services are provided to the Spanish speaking population.	Lifespan
<u>Santa Fe College Adult Basic Education</u>	Santa Fe College provides Adult Basic Education (ABE), GED preparation, and ESOL.	Adults
<u>SW Advocacy Group (SWAG)</u>	SWAG's mission is to address the needs of the community by connecting individuals and families to services and resources through partnerships with agencies and community partners. SWAG serves eight neighborhoods in SW Gainesville: Majestic Oaks, Holly Heights, Harbor Cove, Pine Meadows, Hidden Oaks Mobile Home Park, Gordon Manor, Tower Oaks/Tower Oaks Glen, and Linton Oaks. Literacy-related services include the following: early care and education; homework help for elementary and middle/high school students; and daily computer & Internet access.	Lifespan
<u>The Education Foundation of Alachua County – Catalyst for Change Teacher Grant Program</u>	Through Catalyst for Change, teachers are encouraged to apply for literacy grants that promote improving teaching instruction and access to resources to increase reading achievement scores and overall improve the learning experience for students.	K-12

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
<u>The Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS)</u>	The Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS) serves Marion, Alachua, Citrus, Dixie, Gilchrist, Levy, and UF Lab School. FDLRS provides diagnostic, instructional, and technology support services to district exceptional education programs and families of students with disabilities.	Early Learning
<u>United Way of North Central Florida – Alachua County Campaign for Grade Level Reading</u>	The Campaign for Grade Level Reading collaborates with schools, libraries, non-profits, and other community organizations to create a network of support for literacy. This includes working with local educators to align efforts and share resources aimed at improving literacy rates.	Early Learning, K-2
<u>United Way of North Central Florida – Reading Pals Program</u>	Reading Pals partners with local schools and afterschool programs to provide weekly mentorship, literacy resources, and instruction, fostering students' love for reading and social-emotional skills. Volunteers, including community members and university students, dedicate over 16 hours annually to connect with students, share books, and explore new topics, building a strong foundation for literacy and educational growth.	PK-12
<u>University City Church of Christ</u>	The University City Church of Christ English Partners program helps immigrants in developing effective communication skills in English. It offers free one-on-	Adults

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
	one English tutoring and free English study materials for individual language and reading levels, study, or job interests.	
<u>University of Florida Christian Campus House</u>	UF's Christian Campus House's English Corner program is organized by a student group that welcomes people of all ages who want to practice speaking English.	Adults
<u>University of Florida Center for Autism and Related Disabilities</u>	UF Center for Autism and Related Disabilities focuses on building the capacity of families and professionals to support individuals with autism and related disabilities, including literacy programming.	Not Specified
<u>University of Florida, Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences – UF Reading Program</u>	The UF Reading Program provides evaluation services to diagnose reading disabilities throughout the year. During the summer, the program also provides reading intervention for students who have dyslexia.	K-12, Adults
<u>University of Florida English Language Institute</u>	UF's English Language Institute program primarily serves F1 and J1 and tourists and students who intend to study at US universities or colleges.	Adults
<u>University of Florida IFAS, Lastinger Center – Books and Cooks</u>	Books and Cooks is a free literacy and nutrition program that is a partnership with the New Worlds Reading Initiative. Parents and children learn alongside other families in 7 weekly sessions. Families are supported through the learning of simple, at-home strategies that can be easily added to daily routines.	K-5

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
<u>University of Florida Lastinger Center – Adult Professional Learning Programs</u>	The University of Florida Lastinger Center is an innovation hub designed to equip educators of children birth through twelfth grade with evidence-based, practical support and professional development resources to enhance reading instruction; connect school districts to customized professional development, coaching, and instructional support; and engage students with innovative programs and initiatives that promote reading proficiency.	Adults
<u>University of Florida Lastinger Center – Florida Tutoring Advantage</u>	Florida Tutoring Advantage will provide Science of Reading and math tutoring best practices to school districts developing school-based K-5 tutoring services, offer free consultation, and distribute funding to augment tutoring programs. During the inaugural year of implementation, UF Lastinger Center will adopt a Plan, Prepare, Pilot model to inform the scaling up of the program.	K-5
<u>University of Florida Lastinger Center – New Worlds Reading</u>	New Worlds Reading is Florida’s free at-home literacy program designed to help eligible VPK through 5th grade students in Florida bolster literacy skills, build reading confidence, and foster a lifelong love of reading. Each month, eligible kids receive a free book tailored to their interests with resources and activities for caregivers and	PK-5

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
	children to use together. New Worlds Reading was created by the Florida Legislature and is administered by the UF Lastinger Center for Learning. Book titles are selected in partnership with the Florida Department of Education and Scholastic. Books and materials are available in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, and braille.	
<u>University of Florida North Central Early Steps</u>	UF North Central Early Steps provides early intervention services for families of children ages birth to three years old who have or are at risk for a developmental delay. No income requirement is necessary to qualify for the program. Participation is voluntary.	Early Learning
<u>University of Florida Multi-disciplinary Diagnostic & Training Program (MDTP)</u>	UF MDTP serves K-12 children and youth who are at-risk for or identified as having complex medical, educational, socioemotional, and/or behavioral problems and are struggling academically.	K-12
<u>William A. Stokes Community Center</u>	The William A. Stokes Community Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit social service agency providing services to Micanopy, Alachua County, and surrounding areas.	K-12
<u>Williams Temple Church of God in Christ</u>	Williams Temple COGIC - Offers an English language program to fulfill a practical community need. The lessons are designed to teach conversational English and provide opportunities for	Adults

Organization Name	Program Description	Age Groups
	learners to practice speaking English in a relaxed environment. The program offers free intermediate/advanced English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes for adults on Zoom	

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Alachua County Comprehensive Literacy Needs Assessment

Supplemental materials compiled by the
University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning

in conjunction with

**Children's Trust of Alachua County,
Alachua County Board of County Commissioners,
Alachua County Public Schools, and
Citizens of Alachua County**



CHILDREN'S TRUST
OF ALACHUA COUNTY

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Supplemental Materials

The following materials were assembled to provide critical supporting data, research, and contextual information to inform decision-making in literacy improvement efforts in Alachua County. These materials were compiled in collaboration with key local stakeholders and include committee meeting summaries; relevant web-based resources; early learning and K-12 literacy data; survey, focus group and interview protocols; and expanded findings and recommendations. In addition, supplemental spreadsheets were created that include school-level data from Alachua County Public Schools (ACPS) and survey data from local organizations that provide literacy-related services.

These supplemental materials were also provided to enhance the transparency, depth, and applicability of the findings from the literacy needs assessment conducted by UF Lastinger Center. The data and analysis of early learning and K-12 literacy outcomes provide a foundation for understanding current literacy trends, whereas committee meeting documentation offers insights into stakeholder discussions and strategic planning efforts. The survey, interview, and focus group protocols in this document were used to support broad community engagement and to capture diverse perspectives from educators, organizations, local officials, parents, and students.

Collectively, these materials were designed to further ensure that literacy stakeholders—including policymakers, educators, and community organizations—have access to comprehensive, data-driven insights to guide targeted interventions and improve literacy outcomes across Alachua County.

UF LASTINGER/CTAC/COMMITTEE MEETINGS

As noted in the full report, the Children's Trust and UF Lastinger Center collaborated on a comprehensive literacy needs assessment to improve literacy in Alachua County from birth through adulthood. Key partners who engaged in the literacy needs assessment included the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners, School Board of Alachua County (SBAC), and Alachua County Public Schools (ACPS). Several community organizations provided guidance on this project, serving on the literacy needs assessment committee, including Alachua County Library District, AskMeno, Cuscowilla Nature and Retreat Center, the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County, Episcopal Children's Services, Florida Campaign for Grade Level Reading, Alachua County Campaign for Grade Level Reading, Gainesville Thrives, Greater Gainesville Chamber of Commerce, One Community Health and Wellness Center, Peak Literacy, Sunshine Moss, UF Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies, UF College of Education, UF Literacy Institute, and the United Way of North Central Florida.

Monthly meetings were held with representatives and staff members from the organizations listed above. UF Lastinger Center provided updates using the same format each month: presentation detailing the literacy needs assessment progress to date and break out rooms to have small group discussions about key topics. The slide decks are linked below.

August Committee (small group discussion was to review open-ended survey feedback): <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/19Lrzngvumi6QT0ZTaYnKD3nBeGpfe9qRiPNHWZ4x0UU/edit?usp=sharing>

September Committee (small group discussion was to provide feedback on focus group protocol): <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1KVwV1I6jAiuQ5ZLq1KoR99wDZEku6t0e-zagnzclpEE/edit?usp=sharing>

October Committee (small group discussion was to review focus group and survey data): <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1-1XISfR8DcM4gJTWv7Tdl8hq34Emk4V6Wu7HWO0YFU4/edit?usp=sharing>

November Committee (small group discussion was to review a draft appendix detailing community organizations): https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1qep4nx_gxtkMRAyT6aNco9QzirxvOZ_TCsMIKv4IAfI/edit?usp=sharing

November Slide Deck for Local Officials (this meeting was to share information with local elected officials):

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1_HuXXroBDQcZkwNyqaxYwu3i2zMoI1i0gPzhO4axEkU/edit?usp=sharing

December Committee (small group discussion was to review draft recommendations):

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/10BbNKtDR-B3-RPRCfPThPN--nCMIWsTN0T9S3fM8FH4/edit?usp=sharing>

January Committee (small group discussion was to prioritize draft recommendations, review draft report, and review district data):

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1-tUEsEKvvX7pocIDXU1vXv4EzI4O_kehuEQNep5sN6s/edit?usp=sharing

USEFUL WEBSITES

Publicly-available data are excellent sources of information to build the story of how Alachua County educational entities, organizations, and city/county resources serve residents of the county. The following data sources were accessed by UF Lastinger Center members of the literacy needs assessment. Where possible, data were compiled for the report. However, not all of the possible data were presented in the report because it was not intended to be a lengthy report (and thus hard to read/understand). The following websites should be reviewed at least annually to understand change over time in educational achievement and school characteristics.

Public Sources of Data:

- Florida Department of Education [Advanced Reports](#), [Description of VPK Assessments](#), [Kindergarten Readiness](#), [FAST Star Early Literacy](#), [Assessment and Standards Alignment](#), [Assessment Cut Scores](#)
- Florida Department of Health [Charts](#)
- School Board of Alachua County [BoardDocs](#)
- City of Alachua Education Taskforce [Report](#)
- U.S. Department of Education [Civil Rights Data Collection](#) and [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#)
- U.S. Census Bureau [Alachua County Profile](#) and [2023 Estimates](#)
- Annie E. Casey Foundation [Kids Count Data Book](#)
- Florida Department of Children and Families [Childcare Provider Search](#)
- Head Start [CLASS Scores](#) and [CLASS Requirements](#)
- [Fun 4 Gator Kids](#)
- Previous Alachua Literacy Work Conducted by [Dr. Sunshine Moss](#), [Lectio Institute](#)

When starting the project, UF Lastinger Center wished to include a definition of literacy that was accessible to anyone participating in the project or reading the report. As mentioned in the full report, the definition of literacy was as follows: the ability to read, write, speak, and listen to fully participate in an information-rich society. This definition was gleaned from reviewing several of the websites below that offered perspectives on the concept:

- [UNESCO](#)
- [NCES](#)
- [OECD](#)
- [National Council of Teachers of English](#)
- [Vermont Department of Education](#)
- [Beecher Multiple Perspectives on Literacy](#)

Comprehensive literacy initiatives have occurred across the United States. Studying these initiatives may be useful as part of the next phase of literacy improvement:

- Guilford County, NC: [Ready for School, Ready for Life](#)
- Mecklenburg County, NC: [Read Charlotte](#)
 - A recent [post](#) was written by Read Charlotte's Executive Director, Munro Richardson, about developing unconstrained skills to reduce the opportunity gap
- Sacramento County, CA: [Early Literacy Support Block \(ELSB\) Grant](#)

Website offering suggestions for multi-sector resources to help build literacy:

- Excel in Ed: [Early Literacy Matters](#)
- U.S. Department of Education: [Comprehensive Literacy State Development](#)
- State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices Center (SISEP) and the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN): [Implementation Science Hub](#)

Websites offering reviews of materials or programs:

- EdReports: [Review of K-12 ELA instructional materials](#)
- Evidence for ESSA: [Evidence-based PK-12 programs](#)
- Proven Tutoring: [Clearinghouse for evidence-based tutoring programs](#)

UF Lastinger Center offers numerous programs to support literacy achievement, educator, professional learning, and district-based tutoring:

- [Early learning](#)
- [K-12 literacy](#)
- [Book delivery](#)
- [Tutoring](#)

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING DATA

In the full report, existing data was analyzed and added as tables and figures to help “tell the story” about the need to improve literacy skills in Alachua County, and to create some ideas about how this might be possible. Below, as in the full report, we present data on early learning (children ages 0-5) and K-12. In some cases, these data were presented in the full report as figures to aid interpretation and ease of viewing. Below, these data are presented as tables, which tend to include more information than the figures in the full report.

Early Learning Data

The tables below are largely represented in the full report but are included here to inform how to make improvements in language and literacy for early learning educators and their students.

Table 1. *Child Participation in VPK, Alachua and Florida, 2020 through 2024*

	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Alachua	723	25.4%	177	6.3%	288	10.1%	328	12.2%	379	N/A
Florida	65,570	27.8%	50,403	21.5%	59,045	25.9%	63,304	28.0%	65,729	N/A

Source: [Florida Department of Health](#)

Table 2. *School Readiness at Kindergarten Entry, All Students, Alachua County and Florida*

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Alachua	56.9%	58.4%	54.8%	48.6%	52.5%
Florida	53.4%	56.9%	50.0%	49.2%	51.0%

Source: [Florida Department of Health](#)

Table 3. *School Readiness at Kindergarten Entry, including by VPK, Alachua County, Fall 2022 and Fall 2023*

		Fall 2022		Fall 2023	
		# Test Takers	% “Ready for Kindergarten”	# Test Takers	% “Ready for Kindergarten”
Alachua	Kindergarten Results from BOY FAST	2,047	49%	1,934	53%
	VPK Completers (Attended =>70% VPK)	854	60%	947	63%
	Kindergarten Students Who Did Not Attend VPK/ Unmatched to a VPK Record ¹	977	42%	686	46%
Florida	Kindergarten Results from BOY FAST	188,511	49%	186,417	51%
	VPK Completers (Attended =>70% VPK)	92,794	62%	101,348	64%
	Kindergarten Students Who Did Not Attend VPK/ Unmatched to a VPK Record	79,325	37%	65,520	36%

Source: BOY = beginning of year. [FAST 2022, 2023 data](#). ¹ Children who were not in VPK may have experienced other forms of childcare.

Table 4. *% of Students “Ready for Kindergarten” Based on FAST Scores at Kindergarten Entry, including by VPK, Alachua County, Fall 2022 and Fall 2023*

		Fall 2022	Fall 2023
		% “Ready for Kindergarten”	% “Ready for Kindergarten”
Alachua	All Students	49%	53%
	VPK Completers	60%	63%
	VPK Non-Attendees	42%	46%
Florida	All Students	49%	51%
	VPK Completers	62%	64%
	VPK Non-Attendees	37%	36%

Source: BOY = beginning of year. [FAST 2022, 2023 data](#).

Note: “All Students” refers to all children who took beginning of year (BOY) FAST assessment at the beginning of kindergarten. “VPK Completers” refers to children who attended =>70% of VPK the year before kindergarten. “VPK Non-Attendees” refers to children in kindergarten who did not attend VPK or were unmatched to a VPK record; these children may have experienced home care or other forms of childcare.

Table 5. *Quality by Provider Type, Alachua, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022*

Provider Type	2020-2021			2021-2022		
	Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support	Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support
Child Care Facility	5.65	5.77	3.67	5.53	5.62	3.75
Family Child Care Home	5.17	5.23	3.30	5.35	5.81	3.46
Public School	5.88	6.00	4.71	5.17	5.58	3.63

Source: Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County

Table 6. *Quality by Provider Type, Alachua, 2022-2023 and 2023-2024*

Provider Type	2022-2023			2023-2024		
	Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support	Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support
Child Care Facility	6.01	5.78	3.75	5.80	5.70	3.66
Family Child Care Home	5.81	5.54	2.67	5.82	5.61	3.47
Public School	5.96	5.88	4.10	6.15	5.95	4.11

Source: Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County

K-12 Data from Alachua County Public Schools

As with early learning data, the K-12 data presented below are more detailed than what is in the full report. Please also see the spreadsheet of ACPS data aggregated to the school level.

Table 7. *Percent of Students At or Above Grade-Level Reading Proficiency Rates (score 3 or higher), Alachua and Florida, 2020-21 through 2023-2024*

	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024	
	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua
3rd grade	54%	52%	53%	50%	51%	50%	55%	56%
4th grade	52%	51%	57%	55%	52%	49%	53%	51%
5th grade	54%	50%	55%	51%	50%	51%	55%	51%
6th grade	52%	51%	52%	51%	50%	49%	54%	52%
7th grade	48%	50%	48%	51%	47%	46%	50%	52%
8th grade	52%	58%	49%	52%	48%	48%	51%	50%
9th grade	50%	56%	51%	57%	48%	51%	53%	54%
10th grade	51%	59%	48%	51%	47%	50%	53%	52%

Source: [Florida Department of Education](#)

Table 8. *Third Grade Reading (At or Above Grade Level) by Student Subgroups, Alachua and Florida, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024*

	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024	
	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua
Total % of students	54%	52%	53%	50%	51%	50%	55%	56%
Race/ethnicity								
American Indian	52%	*	49%	*	47%	*	53%	*
Asian	75%	76%	75%	75%	74%	77%	76%	78%
Black	37%	29%	37%	27%	37%	26%	42%	33%
Hispanic/Latino	51%	54%	49%	49%	47%	50%	50%	58%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	52%	-	55%	-	49%	-	59%	*
White	67%	70%	65%	67%	63%	65%	67%	74%
Two or more races	59%	51%	58%	51%	59%	63%	62%	62%
Not reported race	33%	23%	24 %	*	25%	21%	26%	37%
Economically disadvantaged	44%	34%	43%	32%	42%	35%	47%	42%
Students with disabilities	29%	23%	29%	21%	28%	26%	32%	27%
Current English Language Learner	22%	21%	24%	23%	21%	19%	24%	30%

Source: [Florida Department of Education](#)

Note: When the number of students is less than 10, data are suppressed and noted by an asterisk (*).
When the number of students is not provided, data are noted by a minus sign (-).

Table 9. *Student Enrollment and Attendance, Alachua and Florida, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024*

	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024	
	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua
Total Enrollment	3,140,340	32,244	3,212,177	32,639	3,235,479	32,781	3,153,549	31,516
% Students Absent =>21 Days	17%	16%	21%	19%	19%	19%	20%	20%
% Students Absent =>10%	25%	24%	32%	30%	31%	30%	31%	32%

Source: [Florida Department of Education](#)

Table 10. *On-Time Twelfth Grade High School Graduation Rates, Alachua and Florida, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024*

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Alachua	87%	86%	84%	84%
Florida	90%	87%	88%	90%

Source: [Florida Department of Health](#)

Table 11. *On-Time Twelfth Grade High School Graduation Rates by Student Subgroups, Alachua and Florida, 2020-2021 through 2023-2024*

	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024	
	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua	Florida	Alachua
Total % of students	90%	87%	87%	86%	88%	84%	89.7%	84%
Race/ethnicity								
American Indian	89%	*	86%	*	85%	*	87%	*
Asian	98%	97%	96%	99%	97%	98%	97%	98%
Black	87%	83%	82%	77%	83%	74%	85%	76%
Hispanic/Latino/a	89%	84%	86%	84%	87%	84%	89%	86%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	90%	*	87%	*	87%	*	92%	*
White	92%	89%	91%	90%	91%	90%	92%	88%
Two or more races	90%	84%	88%	88%	88%	86%	90%	82%
Economically disadvantaged	87%	81%	83%	78%	84%	75%	86%	76%
Students with disabilities	82%	77%	84%	75%	86%	79%	87%	76%
Current English Language Learner	86%	85%	73%	74%	76%	74%	81%	79%

Source: [Florida Department of Education](#)

Note: When the number of students is less than 10, data are suppressed and noted by an asterisk (*).

When the number of students is not provided, data are noted by a minus sign (-).

FOCUS GROUP, INTERVIEW & OPEN-ENDED SURVEY DATA

The following data has been systematically compiled, analyzed, and categorized to offer a more comprehensive understanding of literacy needs and opportunities in Alachua County. While it is not a complete representation of the entire needs assessment data set, it provides a meaningful overview of the county-wide literacy landscape and highlights key challenges, growth opportunities, and potential strategies for improvement.

Data Analyses

The data analysis for this project involved a systematic examination of qualitative data collected from various stakeholders, including community participants, organizations, educators, and students. Open-ended survey responses were compiled into Excel spreadsheets, while detailed notes and transcripts were generated from virtual and in-person focus groups and interviews. To facilitate a structured and comprehensive analysis, generative AI tools provided by the University of Florida (UF), specifically UF's GPT-4 model, were utilized to identify patterns, categorize responses, and generate thematic summaries.

The analysis process began with the de-identification of transcripts and survey data to ensure participant confidentiality. These datasets were then organized by data type (open-ended survey responses, focus groups, and interviews) and by respondent group, which included families and community members, ACPS teachers and district staff, students, committee and community organization staff members, and elected officials. Files were uploaded into the AI tools in their respective categories, and tailored prompts were used to extract key insights. The prompts directed the AI to analyze responses, identify strengths and challenges, and summarize recommendations for improving literacy skills. The following text is an example of a prompt used in the analysis:

"The attached files contain interview [or 'focus group'] transcripts [or 'a spreadsheet of survey responses']. Analyze the text of each file, categorize and summarize what is working, what challenges exist, and what solutions are recommended to improve literacy. The analysis should focus exclusively on the provided transcripts [or 'responses']. For each category, list direct quotes from respondents separately. The analysis should be based on a cross-examination of all transcripts [or 'responses']."

Using this approach, the AI tool generated reports that categorized the data into key themes based on recurring patterns. The reports included direct quotes from survey responses, interviews, and focus groups to substantiate the themes that were identified.

What's Working to Improve Literacy

What Works for Families and Community Members

Children's Independent Literacy Activities – Children's independent engagement with literacy is another key factor in literacy development. Survey participants highlighted activities such as independent reading, creative writing, storytelling, and educational games. These activities help strengthen comprehension, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"My child enjoys writing their own short stories and sharing them with us."*
2. *"My son does the UFLI pages. He reads a passage on one side, and on the other side, it asks him to tell about the beginning of the story, the middle of the story, or the end of the story."*
3. *"They play word games that reinforce spelling and vocabulary skills."*
4. *"Independent reading has helped my child build confidence in literacy."*
5. *"Journaling every day has improved my child's ability to express thoughts clearly."*
6. *"My child enjoys using reading apps that turn stories into interactive experiences."*
7. *"We encourage book discussions where they summarize what they read."*
8. *"He has little notebooks where he can trace the letters to learn how to write them correctly. He also has dry-erase boards."*
9. *"Using apps that turn reading into interactive activities keeps my child engaged."*
10. *"Storytelling with their siblings has enhanced their imagination and language skills."*
11. *"Reading graphic novels has made reading more enjoyable for my child."*

Community Library Support – Community libraries provide essential support for literacy development by offering structured learning opportunities, access to reading materials, and community engagement. Participants identified public library programs and events as critical resources that enhance children's reading skills and cultivate a culture of literacy by offering free book access, organizing reading initiatives, and fostering reading habits among children.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"Library reading programs have been instrumental in my child's literacy growth."*
2. *"The Literacy Department at Millhopper Library has volunteers team up with adults who need literacy help for one-on-one tutoring appointments."*
3. *"Our local library offers free books and interactive reading sessions for young readers."*
4. *"The library has different challenges that kids can do. Before my six-year-old started kindergarten, she completed the 'A Thousand Books Before Kindergarten' challenge. I'm working on my four-year-old to complete that."*
5. *"We visit the library weekly to borrow books and participate in reading events."*

6. *"Our local library's story time sessions have helped my child develop an interest in books."*
7. *"Being able to borrow books for free from the library has been a game-changer."*
8. *"Access to diverse reading materials through the library has expanded my child's vocabulary."*
9. *"My child enjoys picking out their own books at the library, which encourages independence in reading."*
10. *"Summer reading programs at the library help keep children engaged in literacy activities."*
11. *"The library has resources like story-time programs and book-loaning services."*
12. *"Public libraries offer events and initiatives to support literacy."*
13. *"The library partnership had a summer reading program."*
14. *"Library tutoring programs have given my child the extra support they need to improve literacy skills."*
15. *"The Alachua Library District..."I've seen an offering of a virtual tutor to help your child with reading, math, science, history, and it has time blocks."*

Community-Based Literacy Programs and Support – Participants also reported that programs such as HIPYPY and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library contributed to children's early literacy development by providing free books and interactive Storytime sessions that engage young readers. In addition, community-based literacy initiatives—including public reading events, literacy workshops, and school-supported programs—were highlighted as valuable tools for parents seeking to support their children's literacy development. Participants expressed that these initiatives not only provide critical resources but also reinforce the importance of reading and writing in daily life.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"Community reading groups make literacy a fun and social experience."*
2. *"Mentorship programs help struggling readers get the support they need."*
3. *"Free book distribution programs ensure every child has access to books."*
4. *"Volunteers reading with children in after-school programs makes a big impact."*
5. *"Public storytelling events help children develop listening and comprehension skills."*
6. *"Summer slide camps, free of charge or summer school, and early testing for dyslexia and gifted students."*
7. *"My child attends a literacy-focused tutoring program twice a week, and we've seen major improvements."*
8. *"Extra tutoring support outside of school has made a noticeable difference in my child's reading confidence."*
9. *"Family reading nights help reinforce literacy as a shared activity."*
10. *"Local volunteers host reading sessions for children who need extra support."*
11. *"Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has provided my child with books that we otherwise couldn't afford."*

12. *"Community book drives provide books to families who may not afford them."*
13. *"We participate in library reading challenges that keep my child motivated to read more."*
14. *"Community book drives and free literacy events have been instrumental in encouraging reading at home."*
15. *"Aces in Motion provides students with structured academic support."*
16. *"Peak Literacy provides 20-minute sessions 3-5 days a week to help students improve their reading levels."*
17. *"Healthy Families provided resources for families to support literacy development."*
18. *"Big Brothers Big Sisters provides mentorship and support."*
19. *"Peak Literacy offers digital tutoring sessions."*
20. *"The New World Reading program involves my six-year-old, and my four-year-old uses the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Both of these programs encourage them to read because they get something in the mail, and they're excited to see what it is about."*
21. *"Girls Place after school. It's a specialized aftercare program that Children's Trust funds. They provide a reading mentor who meets with her for 30 minutes every week to read."*
22. *"The Books and Cooks program that just started."*
23. *"SWAG Resource Center... they help with everything, from after-school programs for the children to food assistance, rental and utility assistance, and they have a clothing closet."*
24. *"Beyond the Bell tutoring was probably the best support I saw so far."*
25. *"Social Security has better resources. For instance, next Thursday, he has speech therapy outside of school."*
26. *"My 2-year-old is enrolled in the HIPPY program through the school board, which involves activities and books."*
27. *"[Naming community programs and organizations they used] Take Stock in Children, which I started in 7th grade, Kids Count program, and Girls Who Code club at Eastside."*
28. *"My son goes to the Boys and Girls Club after Terwilliger, and there's tutoring available there too."*
29. *"The community center offers programs, homework help, and a library where I have access to books for free."*
30. *"New World's Reading program sends out a shipment of 4 or 5 books for free every school year."*
31. *"Dolly Parton's Imagination Library sends books for kids monthly."*
32. *"Read with the Dog program at the library helps create a stress-free environment for kids to learn how to read."*
33. *"United Way's Reading Pals program teams up adults and kids to be reading buddies."*
34. *"We use the New Worlds Reading program where they send books and items through the mail."*
35. *"Humana provided tutoring over the phone, which didn't help. Phone calls are not effective for a kid."*

Digital and Online Literacy Tools – Technology-based tools were frequently mentioned as valuable resources for literacy development. Parents and educators cited the use of digital reading programs, educational apps, and interactive software that help children improve their reading and comprehension skills. Participants noted that such resources are critical in sustaining their children’s motivation and in reinforcing literacy skills outside of school settings. These tools provide personalized learning experiences which make reading more engaging and accessible.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“We also use ABC Mouse, which helps with sight words for my six-year-old and with my four-year-old learning letters and sounds.”*
2. *“I also signed him up for ABC Mouse to try and make learning more engaging.”*
3. *“We started with Hooked on Phonics before he started school.”*
4. *“We used ABC Mouse and Starfall, doing lots of alphabet and learning games and starting off with Bob Books.”*
5. *“My son does the UFLI pages. He reads a passage on one side, and on the other side, it asks him to tell about the beginning of the story, the middle of the story, or the end of the story.”*
6. *“They’ve also used some reading apps, such as iReady.”*
7. *“His teacher pushes for them to get on a program, I think it’s called Reading Excel or iExcel. He’s able to do reading comprehensions and lessons, and he gets points and awards through that with the computer that the school provides.”*
8. *“Subscription to ABC Mouse and I station for language arts and reading activities.”*
9. *“Fun 4 Gator Kids provides social media updates on activities and resources for younger children.”*
10. *“He loves words and uses ABC Mouse fairly regularly. A lot of the stuff he watches on YouTube involves words, numbers, and number blocks.”*
11. *“We use the ClassDojo app to send messages and ask about her progress and any issues.”*
12. *“Utilize school resources like the school-issued Chromebooks with learning apps.”*
13. *“My child enjoys using reading apps that turn stories into interactive experiences.”*
14. *“Online literacy programs have been a great supplement to schoolwork.”*
15. *“We use digital storybooks to make reading more fun and accessible.”*
16. *“Technology has allowed my child to practice reading at their own pace.”*
17. *“Using audiobooks alongside print books has improved my child’s comprehension skills.”*
18. *“We use an online phonics program that has significantly helped with decoding words.”*

Parental Engagement and Home Literacy Practices – Families and educators employ everyday interactions as opportunities for literacy development. Respondents highlighted that interactive and context-based literacy activities encourage children to develop strong and lasting reading and writing habits. They indicated how reading aloud and structured writing activities—such as composing thank-you notes and creating shopping lists—were beneficial literacy practices.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"We also read signs while we're driving, and we try to implement reading throughout the day, whether it's reading different things like menus or even putting the TV on with closed captions."*
2. *"Writing thank-you notes, grocery lists, and letters to pen pals naturally builds literacy skills."*
3. *"Sight words, encourage reading time, use learning apps, and encourage writing assignments."*
4. *"Reading books and playing word games together make learning fun."*
5. *"Allowing him to pick what he wants to read keeps him interested in reading."*
6. *"We have reading time and mock quizzes and tests. I make things fun."*
7. *"My kids do mini scavenger hunts at home with sight words."*
8. *"We do positive reinforcements, such as 30 minutes of free laptop time if tasks are completed."*
9. *"During Hurricane Irma, there were no phones because we didn't have power. So, we did reading, sight words, comprehension, and context activities."*
10. *"Well, we read, especially the books that he has received. I make sure to help him with all his homework, which includes reading."*
11. *"We read together and I help him understand what he's reading."*
12. *"I read and point at the words, helping her with homework. I go over the words one by one, the spelling words, and everything like that."*
13. *"We read all the Harry Potter books together."*
14. *"I ask them questions about what they read to ensure comprehension."*
15. *"I always try to make it as fun as possible because I think that's where they're going to learn—by enjoying it."*
16. *"I read to my kids a lot, and I try to act out the books I read, or sometimes I'll sing them—just anything to make it fun."*
17. *"I read with him, and I also have him read to me and my husband."*
18. *"We read at bedtime every night. We've been doing that since they were really young babies... I pick something that they choose to read and something they're interested in so they're more engaged with it."*

Home Literacy Resources – Participants underscored the value of consistent book exposure and reading-related discussions in reinforcing school-based learning. Digital tools, including reading applications, were also acknowledged as effective literacy supplements. Many parents utilized educational workshops, instructional guides, and curated literacy materials to further strengthen their children’s reading and writing skills.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Audiobooks have been a fantastic tool to help my child follow along with text and build comprehension.”*
2. *“We use phonics-based flashcards and workbooks to strengthen reading skills at home.”*
3. *“Educational reading apps have been an engaging way for my child to practice reading skills independently.”*
4. *“Having access to a variety of books at home has helped foster a love for reading in our family.”*
5. *“...having books with a variety of topics helps develop literacy. We also use journals, workbooks, and interactive writing exercises.”*
6. *“Writing is done authentically—thank-you notes, shopping lists, pen pals, any chance to write.”*
7. *“Having a variety of books at home has made my child more eager to read.”*
8. *“We made flashcards for sight words and practice them.”*
9. *He also grew up surrounded by educated family/friends who talked a lot.*

School Resources and Strategies – Educational institutions play a fundamental role in literacy development by implementing structured programs and evidence-based interventions. Respondents highlighted teacher-led reading sessions, phonics-centered instruction, and targeted literacy support as essential components of effective literacy education. Schools employ structured phonics programs, small group reading interventions, and guided reading sessions to enhance students’ reading proficiency.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Our school’s guided reading program has significantly improved my child’s comprehension.”*
2. *“The school’s literacy intervention program has been beneficial for my child.”*
3. *“The implementation of structured reading programs has been beneficial in improving reading comprehension.”*
4. *“Having a dedicated literacy coach in our school has made a noticeable difference in student progress.”*
5. *“Our school uses a structured curriculum with phonemic awareness activities to improve literacy outcomes.”*
6. *“Tutoring after school offered at Buchholz and Fort Clarke.”*

7. *"He takes speech therapy in school, and for a while, he was doing it outside of school too."*
8. *"The UFLI program being used at Norton seems to have helped my twins a lot."*
9. *"Utilize school resources like the school-issued Chromebooks with learning apps."*
10. *"The ClassDojo app to send messages and ask about her progress and any issues."*
11. *"She is getting tutoring at the school, and they are very helpful."*
12. *"The school provides access to digital books through student portals."*
13. *"The structured literacy intervention program provided by our district has helped struggling readers progress."*

Classroom Strategies – Participants underscored the significance of classroom libraries, intervention programs for struggling readers, and the presence of literacy specialists in fostering student progress. Additionally, schools offer specialized literacy support for children with learning disabilities, ensuring that instructional strategies align with their specific needs. Parents emphasized the critical role of school-based programs in identifying literacy challenges early and providing tailored interventions through trained educators and research-backed curricula.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"Teachers incorporate daily read-aloud sessions to engage students."*
2. *"Guided reading groups help students improve at their own pace."*
3. *"Classroom literacy stations provide hands-on learning experiences."*
4. *"We integrate literacy across subjects to ensure students build comprehension skills."*
5. *"Educators use visual storytelling to make reading more engaging for students."*
6. *"Reading buddies in the classroom create a supportive literacy environment."*
7. *"Teachers provide extra reading materials to help struggling readers."*
8. *"Classroom libraries offer students easy access to books during school hours."*
9. *"Small reading groups led by teachers have boosted students' confidence in reading."*
10. *"Phonics-based instruction in school has helped early readers develop strong skills."*
11. *"Our school provides small-group literacy interventions to help struggling readers catch up."*
12. *"Phonics-based reading instruction in early grades has helped my child develop stronger literacy skills."*

What Works for Educators

Classroom-Based Strategies – Teachers shared a variety of classroom-based literacy strategies that have been particularly effective. These include independent reading time, close reading techniques, and student choice in reading materials to boost engagement and literacy development.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Allowing students to choose their own books during independent reading has led to increased engagement and motivation.”*
2. *“Close reading activities have helped students learn how to analyze texts and find supporting evidence, which is crucial for comprehension.”*
3. *“Graphic novels and real-world texts have been particularly useful in helping struggling readers develop a stronger interest in literacy.”*
4. *“Using pop culture references and relatable texts has helped struggling readers develop a stronger interest in literacy.”*
5. *“Reading pop culture texts and using song lyrics has been effective in engaging reluctant readers.”*
6. *“Providing students with book choice during independent reading has led to greater engagement.”*
7. *Using pop song lyrics for fluency practice has been effective for my students.”*
8. *“Implementing structured independent reading time every week has had a noticeable impact on student attitudes toward books.”*

Community and Parental Involvement – Many educators emphasized the importance of community partnerships and parental involvement in supporting literacy outside the classroom. Programs that provide structured resources to families have been beneficial in reinforcing reading skills at home.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Library partnerships offering free books and reading events have been great for encouraging literacy beyond the classroom.”*
2. *“Providing parents with simple literacy resources, like magnetic letters and dry-erase boards, has helped reinforce skills at home.”*
3. *“Reading incentive programs with local businesses have encouraged students to read more outside of school.”*
4. *“Structured literacy nights involving both parents and students have had strong attendance and impact.”*
5. *“Community-based book distributions have been instrumental in ensuring students have access to reading materials at home.”*

Digital Literacy Tools – Several technology-based tools received positive feedback for their adaptability, engagement, and ability to personalize learning for students. iReady, Amira, and Reading Plus were among the most frequently cited as effective digital resources that track progress and support literacy growth. Educators found IXL and Reading Plus particularly useful in helping students build skills at their own pace. Teachers appreciated these programs’ ability to provide differentiated instruction and reinforce core literacy skills.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“iReady meets students where they are and allows them to work at their own level while reinforcing skills with instant feedback.”*
2. *“Amira has been effective in improving fluency and vocabulary, and I can track student progress over time.”*
3. *“Reading Plus helped improve comprehension, and my students seemed more engaged with the content.”*
4. *“One of the best things about iReady is that it supports writing by covering grammar, sentence structure, and organizing thoughts.”*
5. *“These programs allow me to target specific literacy gaps in students, making it easier to adjust my instruction accordingly.”*
6. *“IXL allows students to work at their own level, reinforcing skills while providing instant feedback.”*
7. *“Reading Plus improved student comprehension and engagement, [and made] reading more interactive.”*
8. *“Students enjoy the gamification aspect of IXL, which keeps them motivated to practice reading skills.”*
9. *“The adaptive nature of Reading Plus ensures that students are reading at their level, helping with gradual improvement.”*
10. *“We saw measurable gains in reading fluency and comprehension when using these digital tools consistently.”*

Literacy Interventions and Assessment Tools – Educators often referenced intervention programs as effective tools for improving literacy, with many responses underscoring their importance in addressing specific literacy challenges. Respondents widely recognized the value of DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) and Great Leaps as effective tools for identifying and intervening with struggling readers. These assessments and interventions provide valuable insights into students’ reading progress and allow for targeted instruction in small groups. Educators emphasized the importance of small-group instruction and structured phonics-based interventions for literacy improvement.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Supportive after-school intervention programs help bridge learning gaps.”*
2. *“Early interventions tailored to student needs.”*

3. *"Benchmark intervention strategies are essential for progress tracking."*
4. *"Intervention programs like SIPPS target foundational reading skills."*
5. *"Ability grouping, Intervention Programs delivered in small groups."*
6. *"Reading Plus, working in small groups on specific concepts."*
7. *"Extra intervention in small groups or one-on-one."*
8. *"SIPPS used in small groups with time for repetition."*
9. *"Small group direct instruction with UFLI and SIPPS."*
10. *"Guided reading groups are integral, allowing me to meet students at their individual reading levels."*
11. *"DIBELS helps pinpoint specific reading challenges, allowing for tailored interventions that actually work."*
12. *"Great Leaps is excellent for fluency building and provides structured reading practice that benefits struggling students."*
13. *"We use DIBELS data to create effective small-group instruction that meets students at their exact reading level."*
14. *"Phonics-based intervention is crucial for students in primary grades, and Great Leaps has been useful for improving reading rate and accuracy."*
15. *"The data from these assessments help us track student growth and ensure they're receiving the right interventions."*
16. *"The combination of DIBELS assessment and structured interventions ensures we're addressing literacy gaps early."*
17. *"Using diagnostic tools like DIBELS helps us track growth and adjust instruction as needed."*

UF Literacy Instruction – One of the most frequently mentioned and positively reviewed programs was the UFLI (University of Florida Literacy Institute) Foundations program. Educators across multiple focus groups praised its systematic approach to phonics, its consistency in instruction, and its effectiveness in improving decoding skills for early readers. Many noted significant progress in students' ability to recognize letter sounds, blend phonemes, and read fluently. Unlike other curricula, UFLI provides a structured, research-based approach that has shown measurable improvement in foundational literacy skills.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"UFLI has been a game-changer for at-risk students. I see real benefits in encoding and decoding, especially for students who have had little literacy exposure."*
2. *"The structured routine of UFLI ensures that students know what to expect each day, and I've seen huge growth between the beginning of the year and now."*
3. *"We use UFLI as an intervention tool for struggling readers, and I can see a stark difference in those who consistently receive the instruction."*
4. *"When used consistently, UFLI provides clear progress in phonemic awareness and phonics application."*

5. *“UFLI’s multisensory approach has made a big difference for students with learning difficulties.”*
6. *“I see UFLI has been really helpful, especially in the early grades.”*
7. *“Close reading strategies and UFLI have been effective, though long-term benefits are still being assessed.”*
8. *“Consistency and repetition of UFLI help students build confidence.”*
9. *“Using UFLI in conjunction with guided reading has shown improvement.”*
10. *“UFLI, when used consistently, has been instrumental in improving literacy levels.”*

Teacher-Guided Instruction – Teachers also favored teacher-guided instruction and highlighted the critical role of educators in providing direct, personalized support. Their responses indicate teachers use scaffolding, modeling, and differentiated strategies to meet diverse student needs.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Direct instruction based on a teacher-created curriculum.”*
2. *“Guided reading groups are integral to my instruction.”*
3. *“Explicit vocabulary instruction paired with close reading strategies.”*
4. *“Teachers use scaffolded assignments to improve student confidence.”*
5. *“Teacher-created strategies often outperform district-provided programs.”*

Vocabulary Development – Teachers frequently emphasized the role of vocabulary in literacy development. Explicit vocabulary instruction helps students understand complex texts and improves comprehension by building a robust foundation of word knowledge.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Explicit vocabulary instruction is a priority, where subject-specific terms can be challenging.”*
2. *“Read aloud, chunking, vocabulary, and higher-order questioning.”*
3. *“Specific vocabulary instruction focusing on word roots, prefixes, and suffixes.”*
4. *“Repetition, writing out vocabulary, counting spelling.”*
5. *“Students teaching students, focusing on morphology and vocabulary skills.”*
6. *“Reading Plus encourages discussion of words used in broader educational contexts.”*
7. *“Flocabulary to introduce and reinforce key vocabulary through engaging, interactive videos and activities.”*

What Works for Organizations

Collaborative Community Partnerships in Literacy – Organizations further reported that they often collaborate with community partners and also find ways to involve parents and families. Participants noted that collaboration fosters a supportive network, enhances resource availability, and promotes the sharing of best practices and effective instructional methods. Their staff and student development collaborations include joint training sessions, collaborative projects, and shared access to educational materials. Their broader community engagement initiatives have involved organizing public reading events, literacy fairs, community/parent workshops, and volunteer programs aimed at promoting literacy both within and outside the school environment.

Funding and Resource Optimization for Literacy Initiatives – Organizations noted that financial support is critical for sustaining high-quality literacy programs and ensuring that necessary resources are available to both educators and students. To limit costs for public participation, many organizations regularly employ cost-cutting and cost-sharing strategies and seek financial support to fund their literacy programs. This includes securing grants, budgeting for educational materials, and streamlining funds for staffing and professional development.

Leveraging Available Literacy Tools for Learning – Many organizations and programs utilize specific literacy-related tools and resources to support reading and writing development. These include access to a variety of books, educational software, interactive e-books, digital apps, and multimedia resources that cater to different learning styles. Participants highlighted the importance of having diverse and current instructional materials and technology in keeping students engaged and providing tailored learning experiences. Even when organizations indicate that they do not have dedicated literacy programs, they find ways to integrate literacy activities within their existing programs.

Staff and Volunteer Development Initiatives -The organizations we spoke with emphasized the importance of training for staff and volunteers to improve their ability to identify and address literacy issues among students. Most reported providing internal training for full-time, part-time, and volunteer staff whenever possible. This typically includes workshops, certification courses, and on-the-job training sessions designed to enhance their skills and knowledge.

Elected Officials' Perceptions of What Works

Community and School Partnerships – Collaboration between schools, local governments, and community organizations has proven to be an effective strategy for improving literacy rates. Interviewees emphasized the importance of continuing to leverage external resources to support literacy initiatives. Community organizations provide mentorship and supplemental reading programs. Libraries, businesses, and nonprofit groups serve as literacy hubs; and schools benefit from additional funding, volunteers, and literacy-focused programs.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"The Children's Trust has been a game-changer in coordinating literacy resources."*
2. *"Partnerships with local universities help bring in research-based literacy practices."*
3. *"After-school programs supported by the city and county provide valuable literacy interventions."*
4. *"Churches, nonprofits, and businesses have stepped up to support literacy efforts."*
5. *"We need to coordinate better among all these groups to maximize impact."*

Early Childhood Literacy Programs – Early literacy development was consistently identified as a key factor in improving overall literacy rates. Because community-supported early literacy programs deliver interventions that help close achievement gaps before they begin to widen and provide literacy-rich environments that enhance vocabulary and reading readiness in pre-kindergarten settings, they essentially reduce disparities among students entering elementary school. Respondents stressed the importance of ensuring children enter kindergarten with foundational literacy skills, as gaps at this stage can lead to long-term struggles.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"Reading by age three or grade three. I really believe we need to focus our efforts right there."*
2. *"The things we can do for our community from zero to five will have the greatest impact so that children are ready for kindergarten."*
3. *"Providing books and literacy activities in daycare centers and preschools can make a huge difference."*
4. *"Early exposure to books and reading helps children develop stronger vocabulary and comprehension skills."*
5. *"If we don't address literacy early, we'll be playing catch-up for years."*
6. *"High-quality early childhood education is critical to ensuring long-term academic success."*

Targeted Literacy Interventions for High-Need Students – One of the most frequently mentioned efforts was the implementation of targeted literacy interventions for students who struggle the most. Many respondents emphasized that specialized programs tailored to students' needs help close literacy gaps. Tiered intervention strategies help students who are behind in literacy catch up. Schools that provide one-on-one or small group tutoring see significant improvement. Data-driven instruction ensures resources are directed where they are needed most.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"Small-group reading interventions have been effective in helping struggling readers catch up to their peers."*
2. *"Providing structured, one-on-one literacy intervention has made a measurable difference in student outcomes."*
3. *"Students who receive targeted literacy interventions show marked improvements in reading comprehension and fluency."*
4. *"Our intervention efforts are particularly important for low-income students who may not have literacy support at home."*
5. *"A data-driven approach helps us identify students who need additional reading support."*

Opportunities for Improvement

Challenges, Barriers, and Needs of Families and Community Members

Resource Accessibility – Limited access to age-appropriate books, educational tools, and updated learning materials poses a significant barrier to literacy development. Respondents emphasized that without sufficient resources, children have fewer opportunities to refine their reading and writing skills, both in school and at home. Many participants also highlighted the financial and logistical constraints of obtaining books and educational materials. While public libraries provide some support, restricted hours and limited book selections may not adequately meet the literacy needs of all learners. These challenges underscore the need for more accessible and diverse literacy resources to support both students and parents in fostering literacy growth.

- **Financial and Logistical Limitations** - One of the most frequently cited challenges is the lack of sufficient financial resources to access literacy programs. This financial constraint limits the ability to access high-quality educational materials, effective literacy interventions, and adequately trained staff. The cost of assessments, transportation, participation fees, etc. sets resources out of reach for many families, particularly those in marginalized communities. Families also regularly mentioned more practical issues associated with work and programming schedules and challenges with limited transportation options to participate in community programs—even those available through public libraries.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Parental involvement is crucial, but many families do not engage due to various barriers.”*
2. *“Accessibility issues, such as transportation or location, can hinder resource use.”*
3. *“Busy schedules and time constraints limit participation in literacy programs.”*
4. *“Financial challenges may restrict access to certain resources.”*
5. *“Technological constraints can make digital resources inaccessible.”*
6. *“We have great library programs, but I meet parents who struggle to even catch the bus to attend them.”*
7. *“We don’t have enough books at home, and buying them regularly is too expensive.”*
8. *“Our library has limited resources, and it’s hard to find books that engage my child.”*
9. *“Access to reading materials is a challenge, especially in rural communities.”*
10. *“My child’s school doesn’t have a strong library, making it difficult to encourage reading.”*

11. *"Class sizes are too large, making it difficult to provide the necessary support for struggling students."*
12. *"Many families don't have the transportation to reach local libraries regularly."*

- **Resource Visibility and Communications Limitations** – Focus group participants frequently reported the lack of a coordinated communication system that allows greater access to and understanding of available literacy resources, how to use them, and participation in support programs. The lack of clear, up-to-date, and consistent communication on existing resources limits and delays access to much needed literacy resources. This points to the need for better communication between schools, community organizations, and parents to bridge the gap and ensure that families are fully informed about opportunities that can support their children's education.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"Awareness of available resources is often lacking."*
2. *"It's essential that teachers and parents are continually made aware of the resources at their disposal."*
3. *"Properly curated and up-to-date resources are crucial for literacy programs."*
4. *"Language barriers prevent some families from accessing resources."*
5. *"Families might lack the literacy skills to effectively utilize available resources."*
6. *"I'm sure the resources are out there, so maybe just making it easier to find out about said resources."*
7. *"I don't always find out anything through the school... I learned about you guys from one of our little community centers..."*
8. *"They send homework, but no additional resources on how to help my child with literacy at home."*
9. *"It'd be nice if parents got a list of all the online resources their children could use for extra learning."*
10. *"We assume people have access to the internet, but if your community is your house, it's hard to get information."*
11. *"Even though the district pays for some helpful subscriptions, parents often don't know how to access them or use them."*
12. *"Many parents want to help their kids but don't know where to find literacy resources."*
13. *"Many families lack knowledge of the importance of early reading and how to support it at home."*

Early Identification and Support – Early identification and support for literacy challenges are critical for timely intervention. However, many families and educators report difficulties in recognizing literacy issues early on, leading to delayed support and intervention. Without early identification, children with learning disabilities, underserved, or most at risk of falling behind may not receive the necessary assistance promptly, impacting their long-term literacy development. A contributing factor in this is inadequate training and support for teachers in implementing literacy programs. Teachers need ongoing professional development and support to stay updated with evidence-based practices and to handle diverse student needs effectively.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"Identification of literacy issues early on is crucial, but it remains a significant challenge."*
2. *"As a parent, you always have a hunch, but teachers can really pinpoint it with their training."*
3. *"We need more targeted support to identify and address literacy issues early."*
4. *"Early assessment tools are outdated or not precise enough to spot specific literacy issues."*
5. *"Recognizing literacy problems at an early stage can dramatically change outcomes."*
6. *"Parents often lack the knowledge to identify literacy issues, relying heavily on schools."*
7. *"Without early identification, some students don't receive the necessary support quickly enough."*
8. *"We have students graduating who are illiterate because they didn't get the proper interventions in time."*

Families of Children with Special Needs – Families with children who have special needs face multiple challenges in accessing resources and consistent support. Parents must navigate medical treatments, educational support, therapies, and diligently advocate for their child's needs. This highlights the gap in accessible, consistent services that align with children's unique learning and developmental needs.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"I asked for her to be screened for dyslexia last year, but the public school didn't screen for it, so I had to go and pay for a private screening."*
2. *"My younger one hates to read and write. She's super smart but struggles with motivation, and the type of reading they do in class doesn't help—it's all teaching to the test."*
3. *"He ended up with some hearing loss, so that has affected his ability to read because we caught it later."*
4. *"It's hard with autistic kids because sometimes their days can be so different, and having a set schedule for tests really puts a damper on things."*

5. *“He’s got some behavioral issues coupled with everything else. So, it’s been a little hard for us trying to find a learning process that works best for him.”*

Limited Parental Involvement and Guidance – Parental involvement plays a vital role in children’s literacy development, yet many parents face challenges in providing consistent support. Balancing work and family responsibilities often limits their ability to engage in academic activities, particularly for children who require additional reinforcement. Respondents frequently expressed frustration over the lack of accessible guidance on how to support literacy at home, leading to missed opportunities for skill development outside the classroom. Some parents also struggle due to their own educational background or uncertainty in teaching reading skills. Others find it difficult to maintain a literacy-rich environment when their children show little interest in reading. Participants highlighted the need for practical, family-friendly literacy resources to help parents navigate these challenges and effectively support their children’s literacy growth.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Parents want to help, but they need accessible and practical guidance on supporting their children’s reading development.”*
2. *“Not all families have the resources or education to provide literacy support at home.”*
3. *“I want to help my child with reading, but I don’t always know the best approach.”*
4. *“Getting my kids interested in books is difficult when they prefer digital entertainment.”*
5. *“My child prefers playing video games over reading, and it’s hard to change that habit.”*
6. *“I didn’t grow up with strong literacy skills myself, so teaching reading feels overwhelming.”*
7. *“Encouraging literacy habits is tough when children resist structured reading time.”*
8. *“Some parents struggle with literacy themselves, making it harder to help their children.”*
9. *“Finding books that my child enjoys reading has been a challenge.”*
10. *“I feel like people don’t know where to find resources outside of school. We have great library programs, but many families struggle to access them due to transportation issues.”*
11. *“A lot of parents don’t go to open houses where they explain things, so many miss out on the resources shared there.”*

Insufficient Educational Support – Participants noted disparities in the availability and quality of educational resources and support across different schools and communities. For example, while some schools offer strong literacy programs and access to tutors, others lack sufficient support, particularly for children with learning disabilities like dyslexia. This deficiency delays critical interventions necessary for effective literacy development. Participants noted that without proper support, children with learning difficulties fall behind their peers, leading to further academic challenges and decreased confidence in their reading

and writing abilities. This variation in resources exacerbates educational inequalities, particularly for families in underserved or low-income communities.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"I was in the gifted program and had extra support, but other mainstream classes didn't get nearly the same level of attention from teachers."*
2. *"The tutoring for me and other people, including my sister...was amazing, but they took that away, and now we don't have accessible tutoring options."*
3. *"The inequity in resources is apparent between different schools, like the number of books available and access to reading materials."*
4. *"There's not a lot of great resources coming out of Alachua County school district... It's a lot of tear-out workbooks and stuff like that."*
5. *"The school doesn't provide enough individualized reading support for struggling students."*
6. *"Teachers are stretched too thin to focus on literacy development in depth."*
7. *"My child is behind in reading, but the school doesn't have enough resources to help."*

Limitations Of Existing Literacy Programs – Existing literacy programs often face limitations in terms of scope, reach, and effectiveness. Many programs are not specifically focused on literacy or lack the comprehensive structure needed to address all aspects of literacy development. Effective literacy outcomes are hampered by inconsistent curriculum implementation and a lack of evidence-based practices. Additionally, large class sizes and a one-size-fits-all approach make it challenging to provide the individualized attention that many students require.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"We have no literacy-specific program, but the skills we cover help indirectly."*
2. *"Many programs lack the focus or structure needed for effective literacy development."*
3. *"Large class sizes make it hard to provide individualized attention and support."*
4. *"Standardized curriculum doesn't always address students' individual literacy needs."*
5. *"Our current programs are stretched thin and can't cater to the unique needs of every student."*
6. *"We need more targeted literacy initiatives that address specific learning challenges."*
7. *"Existing programs provide limited scope, often missing comprehensive literacy strategies."*
8. *"We need more literacy programs in schools that focus on comprehension skills."*
9. *"Without dedicated literacy programs, progress remains inconsistent."*
10. *"Implementing a standardized literacy framework can help."*

Limited Community, School, and Parent Collaboration– Engaging the community, school, and parents in collaborative literacy initiatives is vital but challenging. Many families report encountering obstacles such as lack of awareness, language barriers, or simply not knowing how to support their children’s literacy development effectively. Community engagement is crucial for reinforcing literacy skills outside formal educational settings, yet consistency and active participation are often limited.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Community engagement is a significant challenge; involving parents in their children’s literacy development is difficult.”*
2. *“We need more support from the community to sustain our literacy programs.”*
3. *“Parental involvement is crucial, but many families do not engage due to various barriers.”*
4. *“Without strong community and parental engagement, it’s tough to create a lasting impact on literacy development.”*

School and Organizational Funding and Resource Limitations – One of the most frequently cited challenges is the lack of sufficient funding and resources to support comprehensive literacy programs. The financial constraint limits the ability to provide high-quality educational materials, effective literacy interventions, and adequately trained staff. Insufficient funding also hinders the development and expansion of literacy initiatives needed to cater to diverse learning needs.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Insufficient funding limits our ability to provide comprehensive literacy programs.”*
2. *“Resource limitations, like the availability of books and technology, hinder literacy instruction.”*
3. *“Community engagement is essential, but it’s challenging to secure consistent financial support.”*
4. *“More funding would allow us to expand our literacy initiatives and offer high-quality resources to our students.”*
5. *“Funding shortages restrict access to the latest teaching tools and materials.”*
6. *“Limited budget impacts our ability to run extensive literacy workshops and training for educators.”*
7. *“We often struggle with resource limitations, including essential learning materials.”*
8. *“Resource limitations severely impact what we can achieve in literacy development.”*

Time Constraints and Work Schedules – Many families struggle to find the time for literacy activities due to busy schedules and competing priorities. Parents often juggle work, household responsibilities, and school commitments, leaving little room for reading with their children. Respondents expressed frustration that structured reading time often falls by the wayside, making consistent literacy improvement difficult.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Work schedules and work hours make it difficult to set aside daily reading time.”*
2. *“Between work and chores, I barely have time to sit down and read with my child.”*
3. *“We try to make time for reading, but homework and other activities take priority.”*
4. *“Finding a balance between screen time and reading is a daily challenge.”*
5. *“By the end of the day, everyone is too tired to focus on books.”*
6. *“There just aren’t enough hours in the day to dedicate to reading as much as we’d like.”*
7. *“Working late shifts makes it difficult to establish a consistent reading routine.”*
8. *“Extracurricular activities take up a lot of after-school time, leaving little for reading.”*

Challenges, Barriers, and Needs of Educators

The focus group discussions with educators revealed several recurring themes that highlight systemic challenges in curriculum implementation, student literacy development, assessment practices, and professional support. These themes reflect common experiences and concerns across different grade levels and schools, providing valuable insights for improving educational practices and outcomes.

Behavioral and Attendance Barriers – Behavioral issues and inconsistent attendance disrupt learning environments and create obstacles for student progress.

Representative Responses:

1. *“Attendance issues—if they are not here, they cannot learn.”*
2. *“Unaddressed behavior issues prevent learning.”*
3. *“Students act out when the work is too hard.”*
4. *“Behaviors impede learning in the classroom.”*
5. *“Disruptive behavior from some students takes away from the learning environment.”*
6. *“...behavior issues create significant barriers to academic progress.”*
7. *“Behavioral challenges often stem from unmet academic and social-emotional needs.”*

Curriculum Effectiveness and Challenges – One of the most frequently discussed topics was the effectiveness of the district’s curriculum, particularly *Benchmark Advance*. Educators noted that while the curriculum provides structure, it often lacks alignment with students’ developmental needs. Many teachers felt that the reading materials were too complex for younger students, requiring substantial modifications to be effective in daily instruction. Additionally, teachers found that the writing components were beyond students’ skill levels, making it challenging to develop foundational literacy skills.

Key Concerns:

- The curriculum is not developmentally appropriate for younger students.
- Teachers must supplement additional resources to meet students’ needs.
- The writing component is particularly challenging for early-grade learners.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Benchmark has been a struggle to teach because I don’t feel like it’s the best use of time. The reading assessments don’t align with what we’ve actually taught.”*
2. *“I just think that, as a second-grade teacher, the benchmark curriculum is so over their heads that we set them up for failure.”*
3. *“The writing component of the benchmark was so over their heads. They were asking them to write a three- or four-paragraph essay, and some kids couldn’t even write a complete sentence.”*

4. *"The reading assessments don't align with the skills we've taught, making it difficult for students to succeed."*
5. *"The texts in the curriculum are complex and beyond the students' comprehension level, making reading a chore rather than an engaging learning experience."*
6. *"Benchmark doesn't provide enough pencil-to-paper activities, which are crucial in elementary school. Everything is done verbally, and it just doesn't sink in for the students."*
7. *"We are constantly supplementing because the curriculum alone is not enough to help students grasp fundamental reading and writing skills."*

Limited Foundational Literacy Skills – Educators observed that a substantial number of students struggle with foundational literacy skills, often performing below grade level in reading fluency, comprehension, and decoding. These difficulties hinder their ability to engage with grade-level content and progress academically. Teachers also pointed to systemic challenges, such as poverty and high student mobility, as factors exacerbating literacy gaps. Many educators voiced frustration over declining student engagement with reading and writing. In upper grades, a lack of fundamental writing skills—such as sentence structure, punctuation, and comprehension—was identified as a key barrier to academic success in more advanced coursework.

Key Concerns:

- Declining independent reading habits.
- Insufficient emphasis on writing instruction.
- Students struggle with comprehension and fluency

Representative Responses:

1. *"Difficulty in reading (vocabulary and comprehension), writing, cognitive (ADHD and Dyslexia), and environmental factors such as mobility and poverty are common challenges."*
2. *"A curriculum that moves too fast with little time for real remediation; once they are behind/below grade level, it seems impossible for them to catch up."*
3. *"Basic phonological awareness deficits."*
4. *"Core curriculum tests passages are at lexiles beyond that of what is grade level appropriate."*
5. *"I get students every single day who don't put periods at the end of their sentences or write full sentences."*
6. *"Not enough direct literacy instruction for struggling readers and students with exceptionalities."*
7. *Lack of background knowledge and foundational skills."*
8. *"Children are reading below grade level, content is written above grade level and students are not able to access the reading curriculum with ease."*
9. *"Being behind since elementary school and reading below grade level."*

10. *"Many of my 12th graders still don't put periods at the end of their sentences. Writing is the hardest thing to teach, and it often gets neglected because of the focus on comprehension."*
11. *"Even in high school, comprehension is a big issue, but I think a lot of it has to do with exposure."*
12. *"Writing is the hardest thing to teach, and it's often neglected due to the strong focus on comprehension."*
13. *"Students should be exposed to more engaging and developmentally appropriate reading materials."*

Limited Support at Home – Limited home support remains a critical factor affecting students' academic success. Educators identified key challenges, including low parental literacy, limited literacy exposure, unstable home environments, and socioeconomic hardships, all of which contribute to difficulties in reading and writing development. Educators stressed the importance of parental involvement but observed a decline in engagement and expressed that parents feel unprepared to assist with literacy activities, and the absence of structured resources further limits their ability to provide meaningful support.

Key Concerns:

- Parents feel overwhelmed and unsure how to help.
- More structured resources for families are needed.
- Community partnerships could provide additional literacy support.

Representative Responses:

1. *"Lack of resources/exposure to academic skills prior to beginning kindergarten."*
2. *"Parents are overwhelmed because they keep getting reports that their child is struggling, but they don't know how to help."*
3. *"Home life/support, apathy, attendance."*
4. *"Lack of support from home, lack of interest and respect for education in general."*
5. *"Not reading outside of school or having parents read to them when young."*
6. *"Limited language exposure prior to entering PK/Kindergarten impacts grade-level comprehension."*
7. *"Many students lack respect for education at home."*
8. *"The lack of home reinforcement significantly affects academic outcomes."*
9. *"Some parents are very involved, but many struggle due to time constraints."*
10. *"Some families lack the time or knowledge to support their child's literacy development."*

Professional Support and Training – Another recurring theme was the need for stronger professional development and ongoing training for educators. Many teachers felt ill-equipped to navigate new curricula, digital tools, and assessment methods due to a lack of structured training. The absence of ongoing professional learning opportunities made it challenging for educators to effectively implement literacy programs.

Key Concerns:

- Inadequate training on new curriculum tools and assessment platforms.
- Lack of professional development on teaching writing effectively.
- Need for mentorship and peer collaboration.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“I haven’t had any training on ClearSight, even though we’re supposed to start using it this week. Teachers are left to figure things out on their own, which isn’t sustainable.”*
2. *“We had training on the curriculum at the beginning of the year, but after that, there was no follow-up.”*
3. *“There’s a huge gap in professional development. We’re expected to use these programs, but no one trains us on how to do it effectively.”*
4. *“I wish we had more structured professional learning opportunities tailored to our needs.”*
5. *“DIBELS gives us great data, but we’re not always trained on how to interpret it for targeted interventions.”*
6. *“Many teachers are left to figure out instructional strategies on their own, which isn’t sustainable.”*
7. *“The district needs to provide more practical workshops on teaching writing skills effectively.”*
8. *“There was no follow-up training after the initial Benchmark curriculum rollout.”*
9. *“We need to go back to the old ways of professional development days on Wednesdays, where we could actually collaborate and learn from each other.”*
10. *“We need ongoing training, not just a one-time session. There’s no follow-up on how to actually implement what we learn.”*

Staffing and Resource Constraints – Teachers cited staffing shortages and resource constraints as major obstacles to delivering effective literacy instruction. The reduction of interventionists and instructional support, coupled with funding limitations, has made it increasingly difficult to address the needs of struggling students. Educators stressed the importance of additional staffing to facilitate small-group instruction and targeted interventions. Many also noted that limited instructional time, heavy workloads, and administrative demands further restrict their ability to support students’ literacy development. To improve instructional effectiveness, teachers advocated for increased planning time, reduced administrative tasks, and access to high-quality professional development.

Key Concerns:

- Loss of interventionists has reduced individualized support.
- Class sizes are too large to provide targeted literacy interventions.
- More funding is needed for additional instructional staff.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"The loss of Covid-related funding means we no longer have interventionists, which were crucial in helping students who need additional support."*
2. *"There are not enough trained teachers to give interventions to every student who needs them."*
3. *"Schools are understaffed, making it difficult to provide adequate interventions."*
4. *"The loss of interventionists has hurt students who need extra support."*
5. *Funding cuts have made it harder to access necessary literacy resources."*
6. *"We are expected to do more with fewer resources, and it's not sustainable."*
7. *"We need staffing. The district always says they want to see gains, but without proper staffing, that's never going to happen."*
8. *"Some sort of interventionist who comes in just for the really low kids would be ideal, so I could focus on the Tier 2 kids and fill those gaps."*
9. *"We chuckle about needing an assistant, but the end of COVID funding has had a drastic effect. We lost so much instructional support."*
10. *"Small groups are crucial, but time constraints mean we barely see one group a day. More staff would change that."*
11. *"We desperately need interventionists back in our schools. Without them, struggling students are not getting the help they need."*
12. *"Small groups are critical for early literacy, but with limited staff, it's nearly impossible to reach every student who needs it."*

Student Engagement and Motivation – Educators routinely identified student disengagement as a significant obstacle to literacy development. From their perspective, many students perceive reading and writing as tedious tasks, which reduces their motivation to engage and develop literacy skills. Teachers emphasized the importance of incorporating student choice, interactive learning materials, and innovative instructional strategies to enhance engagement and interest. Additionally, systemic factors and a lack of perceived relevance in literacy skills further contribute to student disinterest.

Key Concerns:

- Lack of intrinsic motivation for reading and writing.
- Students need more choice in reading materials.
- Creative instructional strategies are necessary to sustain engagement.

Representative Responses:

1. *"Students do not want to practice, and the skills are lackluster."*
2. *"Students lack interest and motivation to read."*

3. *"They are not motivated to think critically or to learn."*
4. *"Stamina of attention span for reading longer excerpts."*
5. *"The tools provided do not interest students and do not encourage them to want to learn."*
6. *"The lack of interest and respect for education in general has led to a generation of non-committed students."*
7. *"Cultural shifts mean students do not value reading outside the classroom."*
8. *"Many students dislike reading, often due to early negative experiences."*
9. *"Students are disengaged because the material feels irrelevant to their interests."*
10. *"Reading should be fun, but students see it as another school task."*
11. *"Students just don't read. Phones have replaced books, and reading has become a lost habit."*

Systemic Issues (Curriculum and Resources) – Systemic issues like large class sizes and inequitable resource distribution, curriculum pacing, and inappropriate testing frameworks create barriers for achievement and students struggle to catch up and thrive academically. Students and teachers alike encounter difficulties with curricula that move too fast or are not developmentally appropriate. Limited tools and resources and large class sizes exacerbate these issues.

Representative Responses:

1. *"The core curriculum does not meet the needs of our students."*
2. *"A curriculum that moves too fast with little time for real remediation."*
3. *"There are not enough trained teachers to give interventions to every student who needs them."*
4. *"Students are behind their whole educational career and will never catch up."*
5. *"Systemic inequities in resource allocation create challenges for schools and students."*
6. *"Teaching to the test. The pacing guide is way too fast."*
7. *"Schools are understaffed, making it difficult to provide adequate interventions."*
8. *"Many systemic issues in education disproportionately affect struggling students."*

Technology and Learning Tools – While technology has the potential to enhance literacy instruction, educators expressed concerns about its limitations. Many students lacked digital literacy skills, and frequent technical issues disrupted learning. Teachers emphasized the need for structured training on how to effectively integrate technology into literacy instruction.

Key Concerns:

- Digital assessments are challenging for younger learners.
- Students lack basic digital literacy skills.
- Training is needed to effectively integrate technology in instruction.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"Technology should be a support tool, not a replacement for direct instruction. Many students struggle to navigate digital reading tools effectively."*
2. *"The transition to digital testing has been difficult for students who are used to paper-based assessments."*
3. *"Many students lack the technical skills to effectively navigate digital learning tools."*
4. *"The loss of IXL and other learning platforms has made it harder for us to provide supplemental practice."*
5. *"Digital tools should be used as a support, not a replacement for traditional literacy instruction."*
6. *"We need more structured technology training for both teachers and students to maximize learning outcomes."*
7. *"Students struggle with digital assessments due to technical issues."*
8. *"The transition to online testing has been difficult for younger learners."*
9. *"Many students lack the digital literacy skills needed to navigate online reading tools."*

Testing and Assessment Challenges – The use of standardized testing as a measure of student literacy was another area of concern. Teachers reported that assessments often failed to accurately reflect students' abilities, particularly when administered digitally. Many students struggled with test-taking strategies, and there was a perceived disconnect between classroom learning and assessment outcomes.

Key Concerns:

- Computer-based assessments do not always reflect actual learning.
- Students struggle with digital test formats.
- Misalignment between instruction and standardized testing.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"High-stakes testing puts undue pressure on students and doesn't capture their full learning potential. We need better alignment between instruction and assessment methods."*
2. *"Computer-based assessments don't always reflect what students actually know."*
3. *"The tests are set up in a way that overwhelms students, making it hard to gauge their true understanding."*
4. *"Students often guess on digital assessments rather than engage with the content."*
5. *"Even if they master skills in small groups, the knowledge doesn't always transfer to the standardized test setting."*
6. *"Students struggle with the format of the test, especially when transitioning from paper-based to digital assessments."*
7. *"We need better alignment between instruction and assessment methods."*

Challenges, Barriers, and Needs of Organizations

Early Identification and Assessment – Interviewees stressed the importance of early literacy assessments in identifying students at risk of falling behind. While timely intervention can significantly improve outcomes, many organizations face challenges in implementing effective screening measures. Without accurate early identification, students with learning disabilities or literacy difficulties may not receive the support they need. Training educators to recognize literacy challenges enables targeted interventions, ensuring students receive appropriate assistance before gaps widen.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Identification [and] assessment early on of possible reading challenges is crucial. Being more informed in that area is important.”*
2. *“Recognizing literacy problems at an early stage can dramatically change outcomes, but it’s something we currently struggle with.”*
3. *“Early assessment tools are either outdated or not precise enough to spot specific literacy issues promptly.”*
4. *“Teachers need more support in identifying literacy challenges early, as this can make a huge difference in [students’] learning trajectory.”*
5. *“We lack the necessary tools to assess literacy challenges among early learners accurately, which delays crucial interventions.”*

Insufficient Funding and Resources – The lack of adequate funding remains a significant barrier to the successful implementation of literacy programs. Many organizations struggle to secure financial resources necessary for purchasing instructional materials, hiring specialized educators, and delivering targeted literacy interventions. Limited access to books, digital tools, and other essential resources further constrains literacy development efforts. The absence of interactive technology restricts student engagement, reducing the effectiveness of literacy instruction. Moreover, the lack of sustainable funding models creates financial instability, making long-term program planning difficult. Without reliable funding, literacy initiatives risk inconsistent implementation and diminished long-term impact.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Insufficient funding limits our ability to provide comprehensive literacy programs.”*
2. *“Community engagement is essential, but without enough funding, it’s hard to maintain effective literacy initiatives.”*
3. *“We often struggle with resource limitations, including books and technology needed for literacy instruction.”*
4. *“More funding would allow us to expand our literacy initiatives and offer high-quality resources to our students.”*
5. *“Better resource allocation can help us address the specific literacy needs of our students more effectively.”*

Parental, Community, and Resource Support – Securing community support and resources is vital for the sustainability and success of literacy programs. Several interviews highlighted the importance of building partnerships with local entities and ensuring sufficient resources to sustain literacy initiatives. Organizations often face challenges in garnering sufficient backing from local stakeholders, including parents, businesses, and government agencies. Additionally, there is frequently a lack of necessary resources, such as books, technology, and funding, to support comprehensive literacy efforts.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Community engagement is a significant challenge; involving parents in their children’s literacy development is difficult.”*
2. *“We need more support from the community to sustain our literacy programs. Parental involvement is crucial but hard to achieve.”*
3. *“We need to develop more effective strategies to engage parents and make them active participants in their children’s literacy education.”*
4. *“Securing community support has been difficult, yet it is critical for the success of our literacy programs.”*
5. *“Families need to partner with schools to support learning.”*
6. *“Resource limitations, whether it’s books or funding, severely limit what we can achieve in literacy development.”*
7. *“Partnership with local entities is essential, but we often struggle to get the necessary support.”*
8. *“Building a network of supportive stakeholders is key, but it’s a significant challenge we face.”*

Student Engagement and Participation – Engaging students sufficiently and ensuring their active participation are critical for literacy success. However, many organizations report difficulties in maintaining high levels of engagement, which is essential for meaningful learning. Lack of engagement can result from various factors, including outdated teaching methods, lack of interest, or external distractions. Encouraging active participation requires innovative approaches that incorporate motivational strategies, interactive learning experiences, engaging content, and materials that capture students’ interest and make literacy learning enjoyable and relevant to their lives.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Ensuring participant engagement and comprehension is a significant challenge.”*
2. *“Keeping students motivated and interested in literacy activities is something we continually work on.”*
3. *“Engagement is critical, but many students find traditional literacy exercises boring.”*
4. *“Participation drops when students don’t see the immediate relevance of literacy activities.”*
5. *“Reading is not fun for kids when they’re younger, and as they grow older, they associate reading with being boring or uninteresting...but it’s difficult to change that perception.”*

Targeted Literacy Programs –The absence of dedicated literacy programs remains a significant challenge for many organizations. Respondents emphasized that while some initiatives incorporate literacy development, it is often a secondary outcome rather than a primary objective. This lack of focus prevents literacy leaders from directing resources toward specialized interventions and limits their ability to address literacy challenges effectively.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“We have no literacy-specific program... But many of the skills we talk about in our program can help students with their literacy.”*
2. *“While we do support a range of educational skills, there isn’t a dedicated program just for literacy improvement, which we desperately need.”*
3. *“Our organization focuses on holistic development, but without a targeted literacy agenda, some students fall through the cracks.”*
4. *“Developing literacy needs a specialized approach, which we currently lack in our existing programs.”*
5. *“Our organization does a lot of different things, but literacy isn’t our main focus. It’s just one of the skills we hope to improve incidentally.”*
6. *“Specialized literacy programs are essential for consistent improvement in literacy skills...We see improvement in general education, but without literacy-specific initiatives, progress in reading and comprehension is slow.”*

Training and Professional Development – The effectiveness of literacy programs is highly dependent on the skills and knowledge of educators. Insufficient training and professional development opportunities for teachers in literacy education remain a significant barrier. Continuous training is necessary to familiarize educators with the latest literacy teaching strategies and tools. Without ongoing professional development, educators may be ill-equipped to handle diverse literacy challenges, which can hinder the overall effectiveness of literacy initiatives.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Teachers in our community aren’t adequately supported in their growth areas, especially concerning literacy instruction.”*
2. *“Our staff requires more frequent and updated training to keep up with the evolving challenges in literacy education.”*
3. *“Professional development opportunities are scarce, leaving our educators underprepared for literacy teaching.”*
4. *“Our staff would benefit greatly from more professional development opportunities in literacy education.”*
5. *“Without adequate training, our staff cannot implement the most effective literacy strategies.”*

Elected Officials' Perceptions of Current Challenges, Barriers, and Needs

Early Childhood Literacy Gaps – One of the most frequently mentioned challenges in the interviews was the gap in literacy skills among young children before they enter formal education. Several interviewees emphasized the importance of early literacy development, particularly in the critical years between birth and age five. Without adequate support during these formative years, children often begin kindergarten already behind, which leads to long-term struggles with reading and writing proficiency. Early childhood literacy gaps are exacerbated by limited access to structured early learning programs, a lack of parental awareness about literacy development, and disparities in pre-kindergarten educational opportunities. Many stakeholders agreed that reading proficiency by third grade is a crucial benchmark, as students who are not reading at grade level by this point are more likely to struggle throughout their academic careers. Addressing this challenge requires targeted interventions, community-supported early learning initiatives, and enhanced parental engagement to foster early literacy habits at home.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"Students who don't develop literacy skills early are at risk of falling behind in every subject."*
2. *"Our students need to be reading on grade level by the time they get to 3rd grade."*
3. *"Children are finishing elementary school not reading competently, and by middle school or high school, it's really too late."*
4. *"We have students progressing through elementary school with gaps in their skill sets."*
5. *"Some enter kindergarten without the necessary prerequisite skills and struggle throughout school."*

Impact of Socioeconomic Disparities – Literacy development is closely linked to socioeconomic status. Families with higher incomes benefit from greater access to books, tutoring, and educational resources that support literacy growth, while children from low-income households often face early disadvantages due to resource limitations. Generational poverty further contributes to these disparities, as parents with lower literacy proficiency may be less equipped to support their children's reading development. Without strategic intervention, these gaps persist, leading to long-term academic and economic challenges. Interviewees emphasized the necessity of directing literacy funding and educational support to low-income communities to ensure all children receive equitable opportunities for success.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"If you are wealthy in America, you get the tutoring and the skills where you are weak."*
2. *"In poor communities, they don't have those opportunities because of the wealth gap."*
3. *"Children from low-income families enter school already behind and struggle to catch up."*

4. *"The cycle of generational poverty is fueled by lack of access to literacy resources."*
5. *"Schools in affluent neighborhoods often have better-funded literacy programs."*

Inconsistent Literacy Programs and Strategies –Interviews revealed significant inconsistencies in literacy instruction across schools. While some effectively use evidence-based programs, others lack structured approaches, leading to disparities in student achievement. Without a cohesive district-wide literacy strategy, schools implement varied instructional methods, resulting in uneven application of best practices. Participants stressed the importance of standardized literacy curricula, clear instructional guidelines, and accountability measures to ensure consistent, high-quality literacy education.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"There is no comprehensive strategy for addressing literacy gaps across our district."*
2. *"Instruction is not being differentiated appropriately for struggling readers."*
3. *"Principals and teachers are left to determine their own literacy interventions, leading to inconsistency."*
4. *"Some schools are effectively using evidence-based reading programs, while others are not."*
5. *"A lack of accountability means that some schools do not fully implement literacy initiatives."*
6. *"We need a standardized approach to literacy instruction to ensure all students receive adequate support."*

Enhance Parental Support and Education – Parental involvement is a key factor in literacy development, yet many parents face obstacles that hinder their ability to support their children effectively. Interviews highlighted challenges such as limited literacy proficiency, demanding work schedules, and lack of awareness regarding their child's reading progress. Some parents, particularly those with limited formal education or multiple job commitments, struggle to provide academic support at home. A significant concern is that many parents are unaware of literacy intervention programs or how to access them.

Representative Quotes:

1. *"If a parent can't read well or dropped out of high school, they can't help with homework."*
2. *"Parents who struggle with literacy themselves cannot fully support their children's reading development."*
3. *"Single parents juggling multiple jobs have little time to assist their children with reading."*
4. *"Without parental reinforcement, school-based literacy efforts have limited success."*
5. *"Teaching parents to support literacy at home is just as important as teaching students."*

Teacher Training and Retention Issues – A shortage of qualified literacy educators poses a significant challenge to literacy improvement, particularly in traditionally underserved areas. Many schools rely on teachers with alternative certifications who may lack the specialized training necessary for effective literacy instruction. High turnover rates and insufficient access to professional development further disrupt instructional continuity. There is a need for comprehensive teacher training programs that prioritize evidence-based literacy instruction, particularly for early-career educators.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“We have a shortage of trained teachers who specialize in literacy instruction.”*
2. *“Many of our teachers are on temporary certification and lack the necessary skills.”*
3. *“High turnover rates in struggling schools make it difficult to establish consistent literacy instruction.”*
4. *“Without proper training, teachers are unable to implement effective reading strategies.”*

Recommendations

Recommendations of Families and Community Members

Community and Library Engagement – Community-based literacy initiatives were a common recommendation among survey participants. Many called for more library events, community reading groups, and mentorship programs to support children’s literacy development. Participants emphasized the importance of collaboration between schools, libraries, and local organizations to create an environment where literacy is prioritized.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Community centers should offer free literacy workshops for families.”*
2. *“Public libraries should host more interactive reading programs for children.”*
3. *“Mentorship programs where older students read with younger children could be effective.”*
4. *“Providing free community resources, such as tutoring and educational support, is necessary for families that can’t afford private help.”*
5. *“It’s important for schools and libraries to work together to support literacy, especially by offering programs outside of school hours.”*
6. *“Events to demonstrate valuable tips for reading together, such as interactive strategies, should be incorporated into school and community activities.”*
7. *“Access to affordable tutoring services should be expanded so more children can benefit from additional literacy support.”*
8. *“More volunteer-led reading programs in libraries and schools would be beneficial.”*
9. *“Local businesses should sponsor literacy initiatives and book giveaways.”*
10. *“More community spaces on the east side of town, with better transportation, would make it easier for students to access learning opportunities.”*
11. *“Reading challenges [competitions] within communities would encourage children to read more.”*
12. *“Community literacy programs need to expand, but they should also be accessible to families who may struggle with transportation and scheduling conflicts.”*
13. *“Public spaces should have reading corners to make books more accessible.”*
14. *“Collaboration between schools and libraries would strengthen literacy outreach efforts.”*

Desired Literacy Resources and Tools – Respondents expressed a strong need for more accessible and engaging literacy resources. Many emphasized the importance of early exposure to books, interactive reading materials, and diverse literacy formats such as audiobooks, magazines, and digital resources. Additionally, several participants highlighted the role of book clubs and community-based reading initiatives in encouraging a love of reading. Suggestions included expanding library services, providing free or affordable books, and ensuring children have access to a diverse range of literature to encourage reading engagement.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Local book clubs, access to books at home, and providing audiobooks and magazines would make a huge difference.”*
2. *“Schools should provide more take-home books so children can practice reading at home.”*
3. *“We need more community book exchanges to make reading materials accessible to all families.”*
4. *“Our local library needs better funding to expand its children’s book collection.”*
5. *“Book donation programs can help families who cannot afford to buy books regularly.”*
6. *“Parents ... need easy, low-stakes ways to learn how to support literacy at home.”*
7. *“We need more resources that are parent-friendly so families can reinforce learning at home.”*
8. *“Workshops for parents and kids would be a great idea, offering hands-on activities to engage them with literacy.”*
9. *“Public libraries should have extended hours so working parents can take their children.”*
10. *“We need more engaging and interactive literacy tools to keep students involved.”*
11. *“There should be more initiatives to distribute free books in underserved communities.”*
12. *“Parental guidance on effective use of educational tools.”*
13. *“Increasing parental involvement through interactive literacy activities.”*
14. *“Properly curated and up-to-date resources are crucial for literacy programs.”*
15. *“Affordable book fairs would encourage parents to buy more books for their kids.”*
16. *“Enhanced support systems for educators to help guide parents.”*
17. *“Increasing access to book clubs, library programs, and providing more teachers and resources in classrooms will improve literacy outcomes.”*
18. *“School libraries should have more diverse books so children can relate to the stories.”*

Digital and Technological Literacy Tools – Technology was frequently mentioned as a valuable tool for literacy development. Respondents recommended the integration of educational apps, digital storybooks, and interactive software to make literacy more engaging. Many suggested that schools and parents should have greater access to high-quality digital literacy tools to supplement traditional reading activities.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Schools should incorporate more interactive digital literacy tools in classrooms.”*
2. *“Educational apps have made reading more engaging for my child.”*
3. *“Online libraries should be expanded to provide free digital books for students.”*
4. *“Interactive e-books can help struggling readers by providing audio support.”*
5. *“Interactive educational software helps reinforce literacy skills at home.”*
6. *“Adaptive learning platforms provide personalized literacy instruction.”*
7. *“Free online literacy resources should be expanded to reach more children.”*
8. *“Free online programs that give audiobooks that visually show kids the words help when parents work two jobs and don’t have time to read with them.”*
9. *“Digital story time sessions could help busy families integrate literacy into daily life.”*
10. *“More free online literacy resources should be available for students and parents.”*
11. *“Virtual reading mentors would provide additional literacy support.”*
12. *“Schools should partner with tech companies to improve access to digital reading tools.”*

Educational Programs and Support Services – Many participants highlighted the need for enhanced educational programs and support services, including smaller class sizes, one-on-one reading interventions, and teacher training to address diverse learning needs. There was also an emphasis on early childhood literacy screening and ensuring that struggling readers receive targeted support before falling behind.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Less students per classroom, more support in classrooms, and more individualized reading interventions would benefit struggling readers.”*
2. *“As a former reading teacher, I saw firsthand how overcrowded classrooms make it difficult to close literacy gaps. We need more targeted support.”*
3. *“Ensure that children are developmentally ready before pushing reading and writing instruction too early. Early literacy screenings and teacher training in learning disabilities are essential.”*
4. *“Community literacy programs need to expand, but they should also be accessible to families who may struggle with transportation and scheduling conflicts.”*
5. *“Increasing access to book clubs, library programs, and providing more teachers and resources in classrooms will improve literacy outcomes.”*

Teacher Training and School-Based Literacy Programs – Many responses underscored the need for improved teacher training and structured school-based literacy programs. Participants mentioned that educators should be better equipped with literacy-focused teaching strategies and that schools should adopt more effective literacy interventions for struggling readers. Respondents also recommended incorporating literacy development across all subjects.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Teachers need better training to help struggling readers with personalized strategies.”*
2. *“Additional training for educators would help in early identification of literacy challenges.”*
3. *“Teachers are better equipped to handle student challenges with the right training.”*
4. *“More training enables teachers to customize their teaching methods to suit various learning styles.”*
5. *“Ongoing professional development is essential for teacher effectiveness.”*
6. *“Continuous training on effective literacy instruction strategies is crucial for our educators.”*
7. *“Schools should integrate reading comprehension exercises into all subjects, not just English.”*
8. *“More reading intervention specialists in schools would help students falling behind.”*
9. *“Literacy should be a priority across the curriculum, not an afterthought.”*
10. *“One-on-one reading support for struggling students would make a significant impact.”*
11. *“Professional development for teachers should include evidence-based literacy instruction.”*
12. *“Teachers need access to more classroom literacy resources.”*
13. *“Reading coaches in schools could provide additional support to teachers and students.”*

Recommendations of Educators

Focus on Literacy and Writing Skills – Educators indicated that improving literacy and writing skills involves explicit vocabulary instruction, repeated practice, and opportunities to engage in writing tasks. The strategies focus on helping students master literacy through consistent practice, structured lessons, and opportunities to apply their skills in writing-based activities.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“Read-alouds and critical thinking questions develop vocabulary and comprehension.”*
2. *“Repeated practice of skills that students struggle to master.”*
3. *“Repetition and vocabulary-focused tasks build foundational skills.”*
4. *“Specific vocabulary instruction focusing on word roots, prefixes, and suffixes.”*
5. *“Students teaching students can reinforce morphology and vocabulary.”*
6. *“Children need to be challenged with writing-based assessments.”*
7. *“Incorporating competitions and real-world writing tasks enhances engagement.”*
8. *“Encouraging creativity through writing workshops builds confidence.”*

Parental, School, and Community Engagement – Educators frequently highlighted the critical role of parental involvement and broader community engagement in supporting literacy and in creating a collaborative environment where students benefit from consistent support both inside and outside the classroom. Strategies include empowering parents with skills and encouraging collaboration between families and schools. The responses underscore the importance and need for collaboration between schools and communities to create targeted support programs, smaller class sizes, and equitable learning environments.

Representative Responses:

1. *“Rezone schools to make individual classrooms more equitable for all learners.”*
2. *“Engage local leaders to promote literacy through public campaigns.”*
3. *“Parent involvement has declined, but structured literacy nights and take-home resources could help bridge that gap.”*
4. *“Create community-wide reading initiatives to make literacy a shared priority.”*
5. *“Encourage local businesses to sponsor literacy programs and book donations.”*
6. *“Community-based reading initiatives, like partnerships with local libraries and bookstores, could encourage students to read outside of school.”*
7. *“If we could provide families with literacy kits—magnetic letters, dry-erase boards, or simple phonics resources—it could really help support learning at home.”*
8. *“Encourage partnerships between schools and libraries for after-school programs.”*
9. *“Involve local organizations in sponsoring literacy events and resources.”*
10. *“Offer transportation for students to stay after school for additional help.”*
11. *“Encourage schools to collaborate with nonprofits to provide tutoring services.”*
12. *“Emphasize the importance of reading by providing more free opportunities, especially in underserved areas.”*

13. *“Offer community workshops to teach individuals how to use literacy resources effectively.”*
14. *“Encourage parents to engage with their children’s academics through events and resources.”*
15. *“More at-home practice and increased parental involvement for lowest achievers.”*

Promoting Reading Programs and Access to Books – Educator responses emphasize the importance of community initiatives to improve access to books and encourage reading habits. Libraries, book clubs, and reading challenges are frequently suggested strategies.

Representative Responses:

1. *“Emphasize the importance of reading by providing more free opportunities, especially in underserved areas.”*
2. *“Community-wide reading initiatives: book clubs for all ages, little free libraries, and community reading challenges.”*
3. *“Provide reading challenges with different businesses like ‘read 20 books and get a free pizza.’”*
4. *“We need community-based reading incentives—programs like ‘Read for Pizza’ or bookstore rewards that encourage students to engage in literacy outside of school.”*
5. *“Organize community book clubs for readers of all ages.”*
6. *“Set up free book-sharing programs, like Little Free Libraries, in neighborhoods.”*
7. *“Create digital libraries for easier access to educational resources.”*
8. *“Collaborate with public libraries to expand access to digital and physical books.”*
9. *“Promote community-wide literacy challenges with accessible reading materials.”*

Targeted Reading Programs and Interventions for Students – Teachers frequently indicated that students who fall behind require additional resources, such as early interventions, specialized programs, and classroom support, to bridge the achievement gap. Providing adequate resources ensures that struggling students receive the support necessary to catch up with their peers. This includes financial investment, early interventions, and classroom assistance. Educator responses frequently highlighted the need for specialized programs and strategies aimed at improving literacy and reading skills. These programs emphasize phonics, comprehension, and fluency, often using technology to supplement learning. They may include structured interventions, tools like UFLI, and efforts to make reading engaging and meaningful.

Representative Responses:

1. *“Animated reading programs engage students and improve their comprehension.”*
2. *“Daily individual novel reading, weekly group novel study, instructional center-based reading and writing exercises.”*
3. *“Intensive reading programs.”*
4. *“UFLI, Achieve 3000, IXL, IREADY.”*

5. *“Chunking and buddy reading strategies assist with reading complex passages.”*
6. *Reading Plus has shown to improve literacy skills for some students.”*
7. *“Daily novel reading combined with instructional center-based exercises supports literacy.”*
8. *“Early interventions address skill deficits before they widen.”*
9. *“Offer programs for individualized support to struggling students.”*
10. *Provide specific, phonics-based instruction and regular comprehension interventions.”*
11. *“Additional financial resources are necessary to support intervention programs.”*

Recommendations of Organizations

Address and Support Literacy Through Experiential Engagement

- Incorporate arts, PE, and experiential activities like clay modeling or music: These types of activities can improve comprehension and vocabulary by connecting students' practical knowledge to concepts.
- Use STEM as a literacy bridge for low-level readers
- Leverage STEM subjects to help low-level readers grasp complex vocabulary through context-based, interactive learning.
- Promote hands-on, experiential learning: Many educators emphasized that STEM and literacy development benefit from hands-on, real-world applications, which improve understanding and engagement.
- Increase hands-on, multisensory learning opportunities
- Shift toward a student-led, inquiry-based learning model

Develop Targeted Literacy Programs

- Provide resources and capacity for GED and adult education programs: Many adults within the community require GED and literacy support. Expanding GED and adult education programs, along with offering flexible learning options (e.g., online and evening classes), could increase adult literacy rates.
- Target middle school and teen demographics with literacy programs: Addressing literacy needs for older children who may have been overlooked or lack confidence is seen as crucial.
- Expand early engagement: Starting student engagement in earlier grades, such as 8th grade, could help bridge knowledge gaps and prepare students more thoroughly.

Enhance Parent/Family Involvement and Community Engagement

- Engage families in literacy activities through incentives, partnerships, and community events can foster a supportive environment for both children and adults. Consider exploring outreach initiatives via faith-based organizations and creating shared family literacy activities to increase engagement.

Establish a Rural Community Alliance/Support Network

- Establish a coalition representing rural areas within Alachua County to present unified requests to funders and policymakers. This alliance could effectively advocate for equitable distribution of resources and better representation at decision-making tables.
- Expand Literacy Resources and Programs to Rural Communities: There is a need for mobile or community-based resources to reach underserved areas lacking transportation and program access.

Improve Access and Awareness of Literacy Resources

- Programs require access to effective literacy tools and resources, especially for students in grades five and up who struggle with reading. Securing appropriate

materials, such as curriculum-based tools and supplementary learning aids, can aid in closing literacy gaps.

- Provide access to diverse literacy tools and engagement strategies: Many organizations recommend expanding literacy programming to include engaging activities like music, arts, and interactive technology.
- Create a centralized literacy/youth program resource book, website, or calendar - This could improve access, participation, and outcomes. It could also improve communication among organizations hosting literacy and youth events.
- Expand literacy resources and access to physical books.

Professional Development for Staff and Volunteers

- Provide specialized training: Organizations expressed a need for specialized training in reading, literacy strategies, and trauma-informed care for both staff and volunteers.
- Target literacy and disability support: Provide targeted professional development for staff in teaching literacy, contextualized learning, and supporting students with disabilities.
- Highlight retention: Training should cover effective retention strategies, particularly for adult learners balancing multiple responsibilities.
- Show and model hands-on teaching methods: Teachers need guidance and resources to implement effective hands-on and experiential learning, particularly in STEM.
- Enhance ESL support and training: The need for ESL-specific training for staff was highlighted to better support the increasing number of non-native English speakers, particularly Spanish speakers and Haitian Creole learners.

Promote Collaboration Between Schools and Community Centers

- Enhance partnerships between Alachua County public schools, charter schools, and community centers: This could include sharing professional development opportunities for staff and volunteers, collaborating on literacy initiatives, and creating integrated pathways for students moving between programs.

Promote Public Support and Awareness of Literacy Gaps/Needs

- Raise public awareness around literacy issues, especially for ESL and minority students. This could attract more community support and resources for literacy and college-readiness initiatives
- Increase awareness of literacy gaps among community members: Raising awareness about the prevalence and impact of literacy issues, especially in underserved areas, is essential for mobilizing support and resources.

Strengthen Organizational Partnerships

- Bridge gaps through multisector collaboration & coordination: There is a need for greater partnership between organizations to effectively support literacy and youth programs.
- Utilize community round tables for resource sharing and networking: Regular round-table discussions among literacy providers, public school representatives, community

leaders, and service organizations can create a supportive network for sharing resources and coordinating efforts to meet the diverse literacy needs of the community.

Other Recommendations

- Provide individualized and trauma-informed support for literacy
- Foster literacy enrichment programs with local and cultural relevance
- Integrate emotional and social learning into literacy programs
- Increase funding and staffing: Many community and educational organizations express a critical need for additional funding and staff, particularly in rural areas. This additional support could reduce the strain on current employees, enable more consistent programming, and improve retention of qualified personnel.
- Address basic needs to improve educational outcomes: The pressing need for accessible food, medical care, and transportation was repeatedly highlighted, especially for rural areas. Addressing these basic needs is foundational to improving literacy and overall community well-being.
- Recognize and reward positive behavior and engagement in education: Implement community recognition programs to incentivize both students and families who actively engage in educational opportunities and literacy programs. Recognizing such efforts can reinforce positive behavior and engagement in education.
- Encourage consistency in educational programs: Addressing the issue of inconsistency in program availability and resources can lead to more reliable support for children and families.
- Develop and fund community-wide literacy initiatives: The community should establish literacy-focused roundtables and initiatives, including those from city and county leaders and other stakeholders.

Recommendations of Students

Emphasize Reading as a Key Literacy Skill – One of the dominant themes emerging from the students responses was the emphasis on reading as a foundational skill for students. Many participants highlighted the importance of incorporating reading into both school and home environments. Several responses suggested making reading a regular habit, like that of one participant who stated, *“Make visiting the library part of your family’s weekly routine,”* and another that emphasized, *“Encourage children to read at least two chapters of a book every week.”* Additionally, survey participants frequently mentioned the role of books in developing literacy, with one respondent recommending, *“Provide small daily/weekly reading logs where students track their progress.”* This theme underscores a strong belief in the power of reading to improve student academic success.

Encourage Writing as a Means of Expression – Another common theme focused on writing as an essential literacy skill that should be fostered both at school and at home. Several responses suggested that students should engage in frequent writing exercises to enhance their skills. One respondent wrote, *“Regularly assign brief writing exercises in your classroom to help students articulate their thoughts.”* A similar sentiment was echoed in another student’s response, *“Keep reading with me and making me write,”* indicating that writing is most effective when practiced in conjunction with reading. There was also an emphasis on making writing enjoyable, with one suggestion advocating for *“using creative storytelling prompts to make writing more engaging for children.”*

Interactive and Engaging Learning Approaches – A final theme emerging from student responses is the value of interactive and engaging learning methods. Many responses emphasized the need for schools and families to make literacy education enjoyable. For example, one participant recommended, *“Practicing phonetics with fun activities.”* This aligns with other responses that suggested creative strategies such as roundtable discussions, book clubs, and hands-on activities to make learning more dynamic and engaging. The emphasis on interactive methods suggests that respondents see literacy as a skill best cultivated through enjoyable and meaningful experiences.

The Role of Families in Literacy Development – Several responses also highlighted the role of families in supporting literacy development outside of school. The feedback encouraged parents and guardians to actively participate in their children’s learning process. Some responses suggested engaging in educational outings, such as, *“Going with family to museums or historical places to encourage discussion and writing about experiences.”* Others recommended integrating literacy activities into daily life, with one participant stating, *“Make reading a habit.”* These responses reflect a shared understanding that literacy development extends beyond the classroom and into everyday family interactions.

Recommendations of Elected Officials

Expand Early Childhood Literacy Initiatives – One of the most consistently mentioned recommendations was the need to invest more resources into early childhood literacy. Many respondents emphasized that intervention between birth and age five is crucial in setting children up for long-term success in reading and writing.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“We need to ensure all children have access to high-quality early learning programs.”*
2. *“Expanding literacy programs for toddlers and preschoolers will prevent the cycle of struggling readers.”*
3. *“Investing in early literacy will ultimately save money by reducing the need for later remediation.”*
4. *“We need more investment in training teachers in evidence-based literacy instruction.”*

Implement Targeted Literacy Interventions for At-Risk Students – Respondents emphasized the importance of targeted interventions for students who are most at risk of falling behind in literacy. Providing additional support to address gaps early helps to ensure more balanced access to literacy education for all students. They highlighted the need for structured, data-driven approaches to support struggling readers.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“We need a system-wide approach to track and support struggling readers.”*
2. *“We need to ensure that students with disabilities receive the literacy support they require.”*
3. *“A data-driven approach helps us identify students who need additional reading support.”*
4. *“High-quality tutoring and intervention programs can turn literacy trajectories around.”*
5. *“With the right interventions, we can close the achievement gap and ensure all students reach grade-level literacy.”*

Increase Community and School Collaboration – Interviewees consistently highlighted the need for better partnerships between schools, local governments, and community organizations to improve literacy. They have the potential to provide additional resources, volunteers, and support programs to local schools, and allow us to leverage expertise from universities, businesses, and nonprofits to strengthen literacy education. Many pointed to successful collaborations that have already made a difference and emphasized the importance of expanding such initiatives.

Representative Quotes:

1. *“The Children’s Trust has been a game-changer in coordinating literacy resources.”*
2. *“We need to coordinate better among all groups to maximize literacy efforts.”*
3. *“Partnerships with UF and Santa Fe College could bring in much-needed research-backed literacy practices.”*
4. *“Libraries, after-school programs, and community centers should be better integrated into the literacy strategy.”*
5. *“More collaboration between schools and local businesses could help fund literacy initiatives.”*

Strengthen Parental Engagement and Home-Based Literacy Support – Respondents highlighted the importance of family involvement in literacy development. They frequently suggested that schools and community organizations need to do more to engage parents and equip them with the tools to help their children develop literacy skills. Such efforts would strengthen home-school partnerships, encourage parents to take an active role in their child’s reading progress, and create a culture of literacy within families and communities

Representative Quotes:

1. *“We need programs to engage parents in supporting early literacy at home.”*
2. *“We need better communication between schools and parents about literacy progress.”*
3. *“Providing parents with literacy workshops can empower them to support their children’s reading development.”*
4. *“Home libraries and book distribution programs can help families create literacy-rich environments.”*
5. *“We need to ensure parents understand the critical role they play in their child’s literacy success.”*
6. *“Building strong parent-teacher relationships will help families feel more confident in supporting literacy at home.”*

EARLY VERSIONS OF UF LASTINGER CENTER RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhanced Communication and Collaboration

- **Create Centralized Resource Hub** – <https://flbt5.floridaearlylearning.com/> and <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/standards/just-read-fl/families/>.]
- **Promote existing book delivery programs** – The New Worlds Literacy Initiative employs engagement specialists with whom school districts can work to increase awareness and uptake. Alachua County stakeholders should work closely with these specialists to promote knowledge of the program in schools and the school board’s knowledge of the program. The New Worlds Reading Initiative and other book delivery programs should be focal points at family nights, open houses, and other community events.
- **Host a community summit on literacy** – This would bring together educators, parents, community leaders, and organizations to discuss challenges and solutions. Scheduling and logistics of these community summits should take into consideration the transportation and scheduling challenges of the rural sections of Alachua County. To the furthest extent possible, meetings should be held in locations that are easy to access for families with limited means of transportation.
- **Create literacy “campaigns” across various media** – Use social media, local newspapers, and other platforms to highlight best practices for language and literacy development for families.
- **Use social media and local media outlets** – Encourage news segments, articles, and community events that focus on literacy. Promote literacy initiatives, events, and resources through social media, local newspapers, and radio stations.

Targeted Support

- **English Language Learner Support** – The U.S. Office of Special Education Programs has published a comprehensive policy document that outlines best practices in relationship building: *Fostering Collaborative Partnerships with Families of English Learners Within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports* - <https://www.mtss4els.org/files/resource-files/Series2-Brief4.pdf>
- **Resources for Educators of English Language Learners** – Tap into existing resources, such as the following:
 1. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/WWC/PracticeGuide/19>
 2. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/WWC/PracticeGuide/6>
 3. <https://www.centeroninstruction.org/files/Lang%20and%20Rdng%20Interventions%20for%20ELLs%20and%20ELLs%20with%20Disabilities.pdf>
 4. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED517791.pdf>

5. <https://www.asha.org/Practice/multicultural/Phono/>
 6. <https://www.mtss4els.org/>
 7. <https://www.colorincolorado.org/>
 8. <https://www.cselcenter.org/>
- **Resources for Students with Disabilities** – There are ample existing professional learning resources for teachers of students with disabilities: Council for Exceptional Children and the CEEDAR Center: High Leverage Practices for Students with Disabilities- <https://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/High-Leverage-Practices-for-Students-with-Disabilities-updated.pdf>
National Center on Intensive Intervention’s course content: <https://intensiveintervention.org/training/course-content>
 - **Attract and retain ESE teachers** – Recommendations are offered through the CEEDAR Center (2020). For additional information, please see the CEEDAR Center’s policy brief (*Preparing and Retaining Effective Special Education Teachers: Short Term Strategies and Long Term Solutions*): <https://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/CEEDAR-GTL-Shortages-Brief.pdf>
 - **Expanded Professional Learning (Alachua County Schools)**
 - **Data-Driven Decision Making** – The Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project (<https://floridarti.usf.edu/>) is a project funded by the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services through the University of South Florida that supports school districts’ use of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Alachua County Schools could work with the PS/RtI Project to improve all aspects of its data-based decision-making processes.
 - **Professional Learning Opportunities for Organizations** – Further guidance on tutor and volunteer training can be found here:
 1. <https://studentsupportaccelerator.org/tutoring/tutors/training-support/pre-service-training-guidance>
 2. Reading 101 from Reading Rockets: <https://www.readingrockets.org/reading-101/reading-101-learning-modules>
 3. Ohio Department of Education Literacy On-Demand Courses: <https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Literacy/Literacy-Academy/Literacy-Academy-on-Demand>
 - **Training on Assessments** – Reading Rockets Reading Assessment 101 Module: <https://www.readingrockets.org/reading-101/reading-101-learning-modules/course-modules/assessment>
 - **Support children’s literacy development at home.** Examples include:
 - Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) and Institute of Educational Science’s (IES) Family Involvement Guides:

- Kindergarten: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/southeast/pdf/REL_2020016.pdf
- 1st grade: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/southeast/pdf/REL_2021042.pdf
- 2nd grade: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/southeast/pdf/REL_2021053.pdf
- 3rd grade: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/southeast/pdf/REL_2021086.pdf

Enhance Community Engagement in Reading

- **Engage Families and Communities**
 - **Create “Book Clubs” for Families** – Encourage families to read together and discuss books.
 - **Organize intergenerational reading events** – Bring together grandparents, parents, and children to read aloud or share their favorite stories.
 1. Study to model from: <https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=3bfefbd2-c1e7-453f-8f10-bd5280d7aa80%40redis>
 2. This method is a great way to involve volunteers in the classroom or school community.
 - **Offer incentives for reading** – Provide rewards or prizes for students who reach certain reading goals.
- **Parent and Family Support**
 - **Create parent support groups** – Facilitate peer-to-peer learning and provide a space for parents to share their experiences and challenges.
 - **Provide translation services** for parent communication – Ensure that parents from diverse linguistic backgrounds have access to information and support in their native language. The district can evaluate current translation services for ease of use, availability, and effectiveness and make changes if needed. The district can also develop a relationship with UF International Center to recruit English-proficient student volunteer translators to help parents at school events and parent-teacher meetings.
- **Community support**
 - **Establish collaborations with local businesses** – Engage businesses in sponsoring literacy events, providing resources, or offering volunteer opportunities. Develop relationships with local bookstores [Barnes & Noble, Books-a-Million, Book Gallery West, The Lynx Books] to host literary events for various age groups.
 - **Strengthen relationships with libraries** – Partner with libraries to offer joint programs, share resources, and promote literacy initiatives. Alachua County Schools and other community stakeholders can partner with Alachua County

Libraries to offer joint programs (i.e. “night at the library” events field trips, etc.), share resources, and promote literacy initiatives.

- **Collaborate with community centers** – Work with community centers to provide literacy programs, access to resources, and support for families. Connect literacy coalition with community centers like YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, O2B Kids, sports leagues, etc. to share literacy resources and host literacy focused events.
- **Connect with faith-based organizations** – Partner with churches, synagogues, mosques, and other faith-based organizations to reach families and provide literacy support.
- **Administer Volunteer Recruitment Campaigns** – Launch campaigns to recruit volunteers from the community to support literacy programs. Volunteers can provide valuable manpower and expertise, reducing the burden on staff.
- **Implement Corporate Social Responsibility Programs** – Encourage local businesses to include literacy support in their corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. CSR programs often include financial contributions and volunteer efforts that benefit literacy programs.
- **Promote Intergenerational Literacy** – Host events where grandparents can read to children or share their personal stories. Create additional opportunities for older adults to volunteer in schools or community programs.
- **Develop a Unified Community Approach** – Develop a comprehensive community literacy plan to identify key areas of need, strategies for addressing needs and ways to track progress.
- **Promote Reading Engagement**
 1. Identify laundromat book programs and work to establish them in local businesses.
 2. Develop a relationship with Friends of the Library to establish and stock free libraries in public parks, stores, and restaurants. Work with other organizations to gather book donations as needed to replenish shelves. For example, include a shelf of borrow-able books in the waiting area of a restaurant.
 3. Encourage ALL healthcare providers to keep a variety of books in their waiting rooms. Many parents bring their children with them to appointments.
 4. Encourage faith-based organizations to maintain a lending library in their public space, supplemented by donations from other organizations when possible.
 5. Headquarters library has at least one large event each year.

6. Develop a relationship with The Lynx Books, a local bookstore, to identify children's and YA authors who would be willing to visit a few schools and read aloud from their books. Also work with the Lynx to share information about The Lynx Tails Story Time events with families.

SURVEY PROTOCOLS

Mini Survey (Events)

Description: The mini survey is used only at events where respondents complete the survey using Lastinger laptops. This survey is *not* provided on the Lastinger website or in email recruitment.

Mini Survey Welcome Block

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with the University of Florida Lastinger Center and Children's Trust of Alachua County. This survey asks about how children, youth, and adults in Alachua County learn how to read and write. This survey is completely anonymous, which means your name will not be recorded with your answers. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Julie Banks (juliebanks@coe.ufl.edu).

This survey is available in English and Español. Select your preferred language using the menu at the top right corner.

Mini Survey Eligibility Block

1. Which of these applies to you? Select all that apply.
 - a. I live in Alachua County.
 - b. I work in Alachua County.
 - c. I attend school in Alachua County.
 - d. I graduated from school in Alachua County in the last five years.
 - e. I have a child or children who currently attend school in Alachua County.
 - f. I had a child or children attend school in Alachua County in the last five years.
 - g. None of the above.

Mini Survey Literacy Block

The first set of questions asks for your thoughts about literacy (language, reading, writing) in Alachua County. How much do you agree or disagree that **in Alachua County**:

1. **Children** have the early literacy skills they need to be **ready for kindergarten**.
2. **Children** can read age-appropriate and grade-level texts by the **end of third grade**.
3. **Children** can read age-appropriate and grade-level texts, including non-fiction text, by the **end of eighth grade**.
4. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed academically in **college**.
5. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed in a **variety of careers**.
6. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed in **daily life**.
7. **Adults** have the literacy skills they need to succeed in a **variety of careers**.
8. **Adults** have the literacy skills they need to succeed in **daily life**.

- a. Strongly Disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neutral
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly Agree

The next question asks you to share your thoughts about how to improve literacy learning (language, reading, and writing) in Alachua County.

9. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?

Mini Survey Family Block

The next questions ask you to share your thoughts about literacy learning (language, reading, and writing) in your family.

1. What are the most important activities, if any, your family does to help your children with reading and writing?
2. What, if anything, prevents families such as yours from helping children with reading and writing?

Mini Survey Demographics Block

The next set of questions asks for your background information so we make sure we are hearing from people all over Alachua County.

1. What is the zip code where you live?
2. What schools have your child or children attended? This list includes most of the schools in Alachua County. Start typing a school name to select it more quickly. Select all that apply.
3. What is your highest level of formal education?
 - a. No schooling completed
 - b. Up to 8th grade
 - c. Some high school, no diploma
 - d. High school graduate, diploma or equivalent (such as GED)
 - e. Some college credit, no degree
 - f. Trade, technical, or vocational training
 - g. Associate's degree
 - h. Bachelor's degree
 - i. Master's degree
 - j. Professional degree
 - k. Doctoral degree
4. What language or languages do you speak the most at home? Select all that apply.
 - a. Albanian
 - b. Arabic

- c. Chinese
 - d. Dravidian (Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam)
 - e. Dutch
 - f. English
 - g. Filipino, Tagalog
 - h. French
 - i. German
 - j. Hebrew
 - k. Hindi or related
 - l. Italian
 - m. Korean
 - n. Persian, Iranian, Farsi
 - o. Portuguese
 - p. Russian
 - q. Spanish
 - r. Vietnamese
 - s. Not listed
5. What is your racial/ethnic group? Select all that apply.
- a. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - b. Asian
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. Hispanic or Latino/a/x
 - e. Middle Eastern or North African
 - f. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - g. White
 - h. Prefer not to say
 - i. Prefer to describe
6. What is your gender identity?
- a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Prefer not to say
 - d. Prefer to describe
7. What is your total household annual income?
- a. Less than \$10,000
 - b. \$10,000 to \$24,999
 - c. \$25,000 to \$49,999
 - d. \$50,000 to \$74,999
 - e. \$75,000 to \$99,999
 - f. \$100,000 to \$149,999
 - g. \$150,000 or more
 - h. Prefer not to answer
8. How old are you?
- a. Less than 18
 - b. 18-24
 - c. 25-29

- d. 30-34
- e. 35-39
- f. 40-44
- g. 45-49
- h. 50-54
- i. 55-59
- j. 60-64
- k. 65 or over

Mini Survey Closing Block

Mini Survey Non-Alachua Respondents

You indicated that you do not live, work, study, or have a child attending school in Alachua County.

1. What is the zip code where you live?
2. What does your community do **really well** to help children, youth, and adults learn how to read and write successfully?
3. What could your community **improve** to help children, youth, and adults learn how to read and write successfully?

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us!

Mini Survey Alachua Respondents

Are you interested in receiving \$50 to further share your ideas in a focus group? If so, you will be sent to a brief survey after you click Submit.

1. Yes
2. No

Thank you for participating in our survey! Your feedback will help us create an action plan to help everyone in Alachua County be LIFELONG READERS.

To end the survey, please click the SUBMIT button at the bottom right corner of the page.
Thank you!

Website Survey (Email/Social Media Recruitment)

Description: The website survey is linked on the Lastinger Center website. Postcard QR codes and social media recruitment will link to this survey.

Website Survey Welcome Block

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with the University of Florida Lastinger Center and Children's Trust of Alachua County. This survey asks about how children, youth, and adults learn how to read and write in Alachua County. This survey is completely anonymous, which means your name will not be recorded with your answers. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Julie Banks (juliebanks@coe.ufl.edu).

This survey is available in English and Español. Select your preferred language using the menu at the top right corner.

Website Survey Eligibility Block

1. Which of these applies to you? Select all that apply.
 - a. I live in Alachua County.
 - b. I work in Alachua County.
 - c. I attend school in Alachua County.
 - d. I graduated from a school in Alachua County in the last five years.
 - e. I have a child or children who currently attend school in Alachua County.
 - f. I had a child or children attend school in Alachua County in the last five years.
 - g. None of the above.

Website Survey Literacy Block

The first set of questions asks for your thoughts about literacy (language, reading, writing) in Alachua County. How much do you agree or disagree that **in Alachua County**:

1. **Children** have the early literacy skills they need to be **ready for kindergarten**.
2. **Children** can read age-appropriate and grade-level texts by the **end of third grade**.
3. **Children** can read age-appropriate and grade-level texts, including non-fiction text, by the **end of eighth grade**.
4. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed academically in **college**.
5. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed in a **variety of careers**.
6. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed in **daily life**.
7. **Adults** have the literacy skills they need to succeed in a **variety of careers**.
8. **Adults** have the literacy skills they need to succeed in **daily life**.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

How much do you agree or disagree that **in Alachua County these groups of children have access to education** that helps them gain literacy skills (language, reading, writing)?

9. Children with disabilities
10. Children learning English
11. American Indian and Alaska Native children
12. Asian children
13. Black or African American children
14. Hispanic or Latino children
15. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander children
16. White children
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

The next set of questions ask about what it was like for you to learn to read and write.

17. Please select the schools, if any, that you attended in Alachua County
18. What was it like for you to learn to **read**?
 - a. Very difficult
 - b. Difficult
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Easy
 - e. Very easy
19. What was it like for you to learn to **write**?
 - a. Very difficult
 - b. Difficult
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Easy
 - e. Very easy

The next question asks you to share your thoughts about how to improve literacy learning (language, reading, and writing) in Alachua County.

20. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?

Website Survey Family Block

The next questions ask you to share your thoughts about literacy learning (language, reading, and writing) in your family.

1. What are the most important activities, if any, your family does to help your children with reading and writing?

2. What, if anything, prevents families such as yours from helping children with reading and writing?

Website Survey Recent Graduate Block

The next set of questions asks about the degree to which you agree with the following statements.

1. I graduated with the literacy skills I needed to succeed academically in **college**
2. I graduated with the literacy skills I needed to succeed in the **workplace**
3. I graduated with the literacy skills I needed for **daily life**
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

The next items ask you to add your additional thoughts about your literacy learning.

4. What, if anything, could **schools in Alachua County** have done to help you learn to read and write better?
5. What, if anything, could **your family** have done to help you learn how to read and write better?

Website Survey Demographics Block

The next set of questions asks for your background information so we make sure we are hearing from people all over Alachua County.

1. What is the zip code where you live?
2. What schools have your child or children attended? Select all that apply.
3. What is your highest level of formal education?
 - a. No schooling completed
 - b. Up to 8th grade
 - c. Some high school, no diploma
 - d. High school graduate, diploma or equivalent (such as GED)
 - e. Some college credit, no degree
 - f. Trade, technical, or vocational training
 - g. Associate's degree
 - h. Bachelor's degree
 - i. Master's degree
 - j. Professional degree
 - k. Doctoral degree
4. What language or languages do you speak the most at home? Select all that apply.
 - a. Albanian
 - b. Arabic

- c. Chinese
 - d. Dravidian (Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam)
 - e. Dutch
 - f. English
 - g. Filipino, Tagalog
 - h. French
 - i. German
 - j. Hebrew
 - k. Hindi or related
 - l. Italian
 - m. Korean
 - n. Persian, Iranian, Farsi
 - o. Portuguese
 - p. Russian
 - q. Spanish
 - r. Vietnamese
 - s. Not listed
5. What is your racial/ethnic group? Select all that apply.
- a. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - b. Asian
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. Hispanic or Latino/a/x
 - e. Middle Eastern or North African
 - f. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - g. White
 - h. Prefer not to say
 - i. Prefer to describe
6. What is your gender identity?
- a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Prefer not to say
 - d. Prefer to describe
7. What is your total household annual income?
- a. Less than \$10,000
 - b. \$10,000 to \$24,999
 - c. \$25,000 to \$49,999
 - d. \$50,000 to \$74,999
 - e. \$75,000 to \$99,999
 - f. \$100,000 to \$149,999
 - g. \$150,000 or more
 - h. Prefer not to answer
8. How old are you?
- a. Less than 18
 - b. 18-24
 - c. 25-29

- d. 30-34
- e. 35-39
- f. 40-44
- g. 45-49
- h. 50-54
- i. 55-59
- j. 60-64
- k. 65 or over

Website Survey Closing Block

Website Survey Non-Alachua Respondents

You indicated that you do not live, work, study, or have a child attending school in Alachua County.

1. What is the zip code where you live?
2. What does your community do **really well** to help children, youth, and adults learn how to read and write successfully?
3. What could your community **improve** to help children, youth, and adults learn how to read and write successfully?

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us!

Website Survey Alachua Respondents

Thank you for participating in our survey! Your feedback will help us create an action plan to help everyone in Alachua County be LIFELONG READERS.

Are you interested in receiving \$50 to further share your ideas in a focus group? If so, you will be sent to a brief survey after you click Submit.

1. Yes
2. No

Thank you for participating in our survey! Your feedback will help us create an action plan to help everyone in Alachua County be LIFELONG READERS.

To end the survey, please click the SUBMIT button at the bottom right corner of the page.
Thank you!

Educator Survey

Description: The teacher survey is intended to be shared directly by education partners with teacher or education administrator constituents (e.g., Alachua County Public Schools, Early Learning Coalition, Episcopal Children’s Services, Lastinger Center Flamingo Learning).

Educator Survey Welcome Block

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with the University of Florida Lastinger Center and Children’s Trust of Alachua County. This survey asks about how children, youth, and adults learn how to read and write in Alachua County. This survey is completely anonymous, which means your name will not be recorded with your answers. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Julie Banks (juliebanks@coe.ufl.edu).

This survey is available in English and Español. Select your preferred language using the menu at the top right corner.

Educator Survey Eligibility Block

1. Which of these applies to you? Select all that apply.
 - a. I live in Alachua County.
 - b. I work in Alachua County.
 - c. I have a child or children who currently attend school in Alachua County.
 - d. I had a child or children attend school in Alachua County in the last five years.
 - e. None of the above.

Educator Survey Qualifications and Demographics Block

The following questions ask about your workplace, role, and qualifications.

1. Which of the following best describes your role?
 - a. Teacher
 - b. Paraprofessional/Teacher Assistant
 - c. Tutor/Volunteer
 - d. Instructional Support/Coach
 - e. Another teaching role
 - i. Please describe:
 - f. District Administrator
 - g. School Administrator
 - h. Center/Program Administrator
 - i. Another administrative role
 - i. Please describe:
2. Do you provide any amount of literacy instruction or learning support (language, reading, writing)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

3. Do you provide any amount of guidance for literacy instruction or learning support (language, reading, writing)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. What is the zip code for your school or program? <5-digit number only>
5. What is the name of the school or program where you currently work? (This survey is anonymous, and your answers will not be shared with anyone at your place of work.)
6. What student ages/grades do you work with?
 - a. Early Learning Program or Center (ages 0-5)
 - b. Elementary School (grades K-5)
 - c. Middle School (grades 6-8)
 - d. High School (grades 9-12)
7. At what type of school or program do you work?
 - a. Early Learning Program or Center (ages 0-5)
 - b. Elementary School (grades K-5)
 - c. Middle School (grades 6-8)
 - d. High School (grades 9-12)
 - e. District Office
8. Which of the following credentials, if any, do you currently hold? Select all that apply.
 - a. Director Credential from the Florida Department of Children and Families
 - b. Staff Credential from Florida Department of Children and Families
 - c. Florida Child Care Professional Credential (FCCPC)
 - d. Emergent Literacy Micro-Credential
 - e. Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) Endorsement
 - f. Child Development Associate (CDA)
9. What type of teaching certificate, if any, do you currently hold in Florida?
 - a. Professional Certificate
 - b. Temporary Certificate
 - c. Military Temporary Certificate
 - d. Not Certified
10. How did you receive your certification?
 - a. Bachelor's Degree plus Licensure
 - b. Master's Degree plus Licensure
 - c. Alternative Certification
11. How many years have you been in your current role/position?
 - a. <1 year
 - b. 1-3 years
 - c. 4-6 years
 - d. 7-9 years
 - e. 10-12 years
 - f. 13-15 years
 - g. 16-18 years
 - h. 19 years or more

Educator Survey Literacy Block

The next set of questions asks for your thoughts about literacy (language, reading, writing) in Alachua County. How much do you agree or disagree that **in Alachua County**:

1. **Children** have the early literacy skills they need to be **ready for kindergarten**.
2. **Children** can read age-appropriate and grade-level texts by the **end of third grade**.
3. **Children** can read age-appropriate and grade-level texts, including non-fiction text, by the **end of eighth grade**.
4. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed academically in **college**.
5. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed in a **variety of careers**.
6. **Students graduate** with the literacy skills they need to succeed in **daily life**.
7. **Adults** have the literacy skills they need to succeed in a **variety of careers**.
8. **Adults** have the literacy skills they need to succeed in **daily life**.
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

How much do you agree or disagree that **in Alachua County these groups of children have access to education** that helps them gain literacy skills (language, reading, writing)?

9. Children with disabilities
10. Children learning English
11. American Indian and Alaska Native children
12. Asian children
13. Black or African American children
14. Hispanic or Latino children
15. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander children
16. White children
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree

Educator Survey Professional Block

The next set of questions asks for your thoughts about literacy (language, reading, writing) **at your school or program**. How much do you agree or disagree that:

17. Children leave my program prepared for their next level of education.
18. My program's **curriculum** helps children gain language and emergent literacy skills.
19. My program's **approaches to teaching** helps children gain language and emergent literacy skills.

20. Students leave my school or program prepared for their next level of education.
21. My school or program's **core literacy curriculum** helps students learn how to **read**.
22. My school or program's **core literacy curriculum** helps students learn how to **write**.
23. My school or program's **phonics program** helps students learn how to **read**.
24. My school or program's **phonics program** helps students learn how to **write**.
25. My school or program's **intervention program** helps students learn how to **read**.
26. My school or program's **intervention program** helps students learn how to **write**.
27. Students leave my school or program prepared for their next level of education.
28. What are the most common literacy challenges your students face?
29. What strategies or programs have been most effective in improving literacy for your students?
30. Looking at the bigger picture, how can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
31. What are the most common literacy challenges students face?
32. What strategies or programs have been most effective in improving literacy for students?
33. Looking at the bigger picture, how can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
 - a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
 - f. Not applicable

The next set of questions asks about professional learning opportunities.

34. What mode of professional learning do you prefer?
 - a. In-person synchronous
 - b. Virtual synchronous
 - c. Virtual asynchronous
 - d. Mix of both in-person and virtual
35. What type of literacy-related professional learning opportunities would you like to access? Select all that apply.
 - a. Coaching
 - b. Competency-based credentials
 - c. Conferences
 - d. Courses
 - e. Professional learning communities
 - f. Webinars
 - g. Workshops
 - h. I'm not interested in literacy-related professional learning opportunities
36. What topics of literacy-related professional learning opportunities would you like to access? Select all that apply.
 - a. Oral language development

- b. Phonemic awareness
- c. Phonics
- d. Fluency
- e. Vocabulary
- f. Reading comprehension
- g. Written language
- h. Behavior management
- i. Small group instruction
- j. Whole group instruction
- k. Curriculum implementation
- l. Supplemental reading programs
- m. Effective instruction for typically developing learners
- n. Effective instruction for gifted learners
- o. Effective instruction for students with disabilities
- p. Effective instruction for English learners
- q. I'm not interested in literacy-related professional learning opportunities

The next set of questions asks about professional learning opportunities.

37. What mode of professional learning do teachers prefer?
- a. In-person synchronous
 - b. Virtual synchronous
 - c. Virtual asynchronous
 - d. Mix of both in-person and virtual
38. What type of literacy-related professional learning opportunities would you like teachers to access? Select all that apply.
- a. Coaching
 - b. Competency-based credentials
 - c. Conferences
 - d. Courses
 - e. Professional learning communities
 - f. Webinars
 - g. Workshops
 - h. I'm not interested in literacy-related professional learning opportunities for teachers
39. What topics of literacy-related professional learning opportunities would you like teachers to access? Select all that apply.
- a. Oral language development
 - b. Phonemic awareness
 - c. Phonics
 - d. Fluency
 - e. Vocabulary
 - f. Reading comprehension
 - g. Written language
 - h. Behavior management

- i. Small group instruction
- j. Whole group instruction
- k. Curriculum implementation
- l. Supplemental reading programs
- m. Effective instruction for typically developing learners
- n. Effective instruction for gifted learners
- o. Effective instruction for students with disabilities
- p. Effective instruction for English learners
- q. I'm not interested in literacy-related professional learning opportunities for teachers.

Educator Survey Demographics Block

The next set of questions asks for your background information so we make sure we are hearing from people all over Alachua County.

1. What is your highest level of formal education?
 - a. No schooling completed
 - b. Up to 8th grade
 - c. Some high school, no diploma
 - d. High school graduate, diploma or equivalent (such as GED)
 - e. Some college credit, no degree
 - f. Trade, technical, or vocational training
 - g. Associate's degree
 - h. Bachelor's degree
 - i. Master's degree
 - j. Professional degree
 - k. Doctoral degree
2. What language or languages do you speak the most at home? Select all that apply.
 - a. Albanian
 - b. Arabic
 - c. Chinese
 - d. Dravidian (Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam)
 - e. Dutch
 - f. English
 - g. Filipino, Tagalog
 - h. French
 - i. German
 - j. Hebrew
 - k. Hindi or related
 - l. Italian
 - m. Korean
 - n. Persian, Iranian, Farsi
 - o. Portuguese
 - p. Russian
 - q. Spanish

- r. Vietnamese
 - s. Not listed
3. What is your racial/ethnic group? Select all that apply.
- a. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - b. Asian
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. Hispanic or Latino/a/x
 - e. Middle Eastern or North African
 - f. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - g. White
 - h. Prefer not to say
 - i. Prefer to describe
4. What is your gender identity?
- a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Prefer not to say
 - d. Prefer to describe
5. What is your total household annual income?
- a. Less than \$10,000
 - b. \$10,000 to \$24,999
 - c. \$25,000 to \$49,999
 - d. \$50,000 to \$74,999
 - e. \$75,000 to \$99,999
 - f. \$100,000 to \$149,999
 - g. \$150,000 or more
 - h. Prefer not to answer
6. How old are you?
- a. Less than 18
 - b. 18-24
 - c. 25-29
 - d. 30-34
 - e. 35-39
 - f. 40-44
 - g. 45-49
 - h. 50-54
 - i. 55-59
 - j. 60-64
 - k. 65 or over

Educator Survey Closing Block

Educator Survey Non-Alachua Respondents

You indicated that you do not live, work, study, or have a child attending school in Alachua County.

1. What is the zip code where you live?
2. What does your community do **really well** to help children, youth, and adults learn how to read and write successfully?
3. What could your community **improve** to help children, youth, and adults learn how to read and write successfully?

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us!

Educator Survey Alachua Respondents

We want to learn from you! We are conducting school and classroom visits this fall. Do you want to share what is exciting, innovative, or beneficial about how your students are reading, writing, and communicating? If you want us to visit you to see what is working well for you and your students, click Yes below, and you will be sent to a brief survey after you click Submit.

1. Yes
2. No

Thank you for participating in our survey! Your feedback will help us create an action plan to help everyone in Alachua County be LIFELONG READERS.

Thank you!

Student Survey

Description: The Student Survey is intended to be distributed via links shared on the website, by partnering organizations, and by parents.

Student Survey Welcome Block

This survey asks about how students learn how to read and write in Alachua County. This survey is anonymous, which means your name will not be included with your answers.

Student Survey Eligibility Block

1. Do you go to school in Alachua County (including homeschooling)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I already finished 12th grade

Student Survey Literacy Block

The first questions ask you about learning to read and write.

1. What grade are you in?
2. What school do you attend? <drop down>
3. What has it been like for you to learn to read?
 - a. Very difficult
 - b. Difficult
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Easy
 - e. Very easy
4. What has it been like for you to learn to write?
 - a. Very difficult
 - b. Difficult
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Easy
 - e. Very easy
5. What has it been like for your friends or peers at school to learn to read?
 - a. Very difficult
 - b. Difficult
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Easy
 - e. Very easy
6. What has it been like for your friends or peers at school to learn to write?
 - a. Very difficult
 - b. Difficult
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Easy
 - e. Very easy

The next items ask you to add your thoughts about literacy.

7. What, if anything, can **your school** do to help you learn to read and write better?
8. What, if anything, can **your family** do to help you learn how to read and write better?

Finally, we ask a few questions about your background so we make sure we are hearing from people across Alachua County.

9. What language or languages do you speak the most at home? Select all that apply.
 - a. Albanian
 - b. Arabic
 - c. Chinese
 - d. Dravidian (Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam)
 - e. Dutch
 - f. English
 - g. Filipino, Tagalog
 - h. French
 - i. German
 - j. Hebrew
 - k. Hindi or related
 - l. Italian
 - m. Korean
 - n. Persian, Iranian, Farsi
 - o. Portuguese
 - p. Russian
 - q. Spanish
 - r. Vietnamese
 - s. Not listed
10. What is your racial/ethnic group? Select all that apply.
 - a. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - b. Asian
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. Hispanic or Latino/a/x
 - e. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - f. White
 - g. Prefer not to say
 - h. Prefer to describe

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us!

Focus Group Survey

Thank you for your interest in joining a focus group to share your ideas about literacy needs in Alachua County. You will receive \$50 if you participate in a focus group.

1. What is your name?
2. What is your phone number?
3. What is your email address?
4. By checking “Yes”, you agree to receive text messages from the UF Lastinger Center about participating in a focus group.
5. What is your preferred way to attend a focus group? Select all that apply.
 - a. In-person
 - b. Zoom
 - c. Phone call
6. Do you need transportation to attend an in-person focus group?
7. Do you need childcare in order to attend an in-person focus group?
8. Which of the following describes you? Select all that apply.
 - a. I currently live or work in Alachua County.
 - b. I am a parent/caregiver of a student who attends or has attended an early learning program (ages 0-5) or K-12 school in Alachua County.
 - c. I am a student who attends or recently attended school in Alachua County.
 - d. I am a community or business leader, policy maker, or other elected government official in Alachua County.
 - e. I am an early learning teacher or an employee of the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County.
 - f. I am an early learning director or family childcare home provider in Alachua County.
 - g. I am a K-12 teacher, teacher aide, or paraprofessional at a school or program in Alachua County.
 - h. I am a K-12 school or district literacy or instructional coach at a school or program in Alachua County.
 - i. I am a K-12 school administrator or other school leader at a school or program in Alachua County.
 - j. I am a K-12 district administrator or other district leader at a school or program in Alachua County.
 - k. I am a tutor or volunteer at a school or program in Alachua County.
 - l. Something else not listed.
 - i. Please describe:

We will contact you in the next few months if you are selected to participate in a focus group. To end the survey, please click the NEXT button at the bottom right corner of the page.

Thank you for your interest!

Classroom Visit Survey

Thank you for your interest in having us visit you to see what is working well for you and your students.

1. What is your name?
2. What is your phone number?
3. What is your email address?
4. What is the name of your school or program?
5. What age(s) or grade level(s) do you teach?
6. Tell us about what you are doing! What is exciting, innovative, or beneficial about how your students are reading, writing, and communicating?

We are hoping to visit a range of schools and age levels. We will contact you in the next couple of months if you are selected to participate in a school visit.

To end the survey, please click the NEXT button at the bottom right corner of the page.
Thank you for your interest!

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOLS

Adult Focus Groups

Welcome/Introduction Prior to Recording (Adult Participants)

[This protocol is meant for groups of up to 8 people for around 45 minutes]

Welcome Message & Purpose

Hi everyone and thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to talk with us today. My name is [NAME], and I'm here with [INTRODUCE COLLEAGUE]. This project is being sponsored by the Children's Trust of Alachua County, the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners, and the School Board of Alachua County. The UF Lastinger Center is collecting surveys and doing focus groups to better help children, youth, and adults gain literacy skills. By "literacy," we mean reading, writing, communication, and language.

Please don't feel like you have to answer every question. There are no right or wrong answers. We hope you feel comfortable sharing your point of view even if it's different from what other people share. Any follow-up questions we might ask are just for the purpose of ensuring that we clearly understand what has been said. We expect this session to take 45 to 60 minutes.

As a reminder, we will record this session for transcription purposes. No one outside of our team will have access to the recording. We will be on a first name basis, and we will not use any names in our reports. Everything you say here will be kept confidential.

There are several focus groups taking place. The notes from these sessions will be compiled and studied to identify what's working and what needs to be improved so everyone in Alachua County can be lifelong readers. Your feedback will be used to create a list of recommendations and an action plan.

Does anyone have any questions?

Media Release

We are asking you to review and sign a media release form, which will allow us to use your quotes directly, though without your name attached. [Share link in chat.] Now that you've had a chance to look over the form, do you have any questions?

If people have not already had a chance to read the media release form (digitally or in paper format), have them do that now. Make sure everyone who stays in the room/on Zoom has signed the media release before continuing.

Start Recording

We will now start recording, and I will begin with some basic questions about you and your background.

For general focus groups (i.e., not held with specific organizations or school district staff), start with the following explanation and question: We want to make sure to ask questions that are relevant to your experiences in Alachua County. How many of you have children or are in families with children who are attending or attended school in Alachua County?” If one or more people indicate YES, then go to the Family Focus Group Protocol. If no one indicates YES, then go to the Community Member Focus Group Protocol.

Ending the Focus Group

Final Opportunity to Share

Before we finish up today, is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Stop Recording & Thank Participants

Thank you so much for your time today.

District Leader Focus Group Protocol

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe:
 - a. Role
 - b. Years in current role
 - c. Grade(s)/course(s) previously taught, if any
 - d. Total years teaching, if at all

Part II: Literacy Implementation

2. Please identify the (a) curricula, (b) programs, (c) strategies, and (d) assessments schools and teachers use for reading instruction and intervention [differentiated by grade level].
 - a. Of all the tools that have been used in the district, what has worked best to support children’s reading and writing?
 - b. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders support teachers in using these tools with fidelity, or as intended?
 - c. Describe the professional learning opportunities teachers are provided to use these tools.
 - i. What would make professional learning opportunities more effective for teachers?
1. What additional literacy-related professional learning opportunities do you wish administrators and teachers could access?
 - a. What type (e.g., coaching, competency-based credentials, conferences, courses, professional learning communities, webinars, workshops)?
 - b. On what topics?

2. Discuss your processes for implementing high-quality tier 1 instruction, as well as matching students to tier 2 and tier 3 intervention.
 - a. What professional learning is provided, if any, that helps teachers differentiate tier 1 instruction when large numbers of students are reading below grade level?
 - b. How prepared are schools/teachers in identifying students' underlying reading, writing, or language difficulties and implementing strategies that target them?
 - c. How do you determine which intervention is most appropriate and how is that communicated to schools/teachers?
 - d. What proportion of students in tier 2 or tier 3 make satisfactory or accelerated progress?
 - i. How, if at all, do you track this?
 - ii. Using what measures?
3. What is your greatest need in your role, which would yield the biggest improvement for Alachua County Public Schools students?
4. Describe how, if at all, district and/or school leaders support collaborative grade-level planning.
 - a. What does collaborative grade-level planning look like?
5. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders build the capacity of *all* staff to implement evidence-based literacy instruction?
6. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders promote teachers as leaders in the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction?
7. How, if at all, do district, school leaders, and/or teachers ensure family and community engagement in literacy-related activities? Can you describe the role of the family liaison?
8. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders establish and sustain positive and effective relationships with early education providers in Alachua County?
9. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders establish and sustain positive and meaningful relationships with community organizations that provide students with supplemental educational opportunities related to literacy?

Part III: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

School Leader Focus Group Protocol

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe:
 - a. Role
 - b. Years in current role
 - c. Grade(s)/course(s) previously taught, if any
 - d. Total years teaching, if at all

Part II: Literacy Implementation

1. Identify the (a) curricula, (b) programs, (c) strategies, and (d) assessments your school uses for reading instruction and intervention [differentiated by grade level].
 - a. Of all the tools you've used, what has worked best to support children's reading and writing? How do you know that it worked?
 - b. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders support teachers in using these tools with fidelity, or as intended?
 - c. Describe the professional learning opportunities teachers are provided to use these tools.
 - i. What would make professional learning opportunities more effective for teachers?
2. What additional literacy-related professional learning opportunities do you and/or your teachers could access?
 - a. What type (e.g., coaching, competency-based credentials, conferences, courses, professional learning communities, webinars, workshops)?
 - b. On what topics?
3. Discuss your processes for implementing high-quality tier 1 instruction, as well as matching students to tier 2 and tier 3 intervention.
 - c. What professional learning is provided, if any, that helps teachers differentiate tier 1 instruction when large numbers of students are reading below grade level?
 - d. How do you determine which intervention is most appropriate and how is that communicated to schools/teachers?
 - e. What proportion of students in tier 2 or tier 3 make satisfactory or accelerated progress?
 - i. How, if at all, do you track this?
 - ii. Using what measures?
4. What is your greatest need in your role, which would yield the biggest improvement for Alachua County Public Schools students?
5. How prepared are teachers in identifying students' underlying reading, writing, or language difficulties and implementing strategies that target them?
6. Describe how, if at all, district and/or school leaders support collaborative grade-level planning.
 - f. What does collaborative grade-level planning look like?

7. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders build the capacity of *all* staff to implement evidence-based literacy instruction?
8. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders promote teachers as leaders in the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction?
9. How, if at all, do district, school leaders, and/or teachers ensure family and community engagement in literacy-related activities? Can you describe the role of the family liaison?
10. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders establish and sustain positive and effective relationships with early education providers in Alachua County?
11. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders establish and sustain positive and meaningful relationships with community organizations that provide students with supplemental educational opportunities related to literacy?
12. As your building's instructional leader, do you feel like you're equipped with the necessary literacy content/background knowledge to guide your school?
13. What barriers do your school and students face in accessing resources that help them learn to read and write? How can those barriers be resolved?
14. Can we visit 1-2 classrooms at your school that are engaging in high-leverage and/or innovative literacy instruction?

Part III: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

Teacher Focus Group Protocol

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe:
 - a. School where you work
 - b. Grade/learners/course(s) you currently teach
 - c. Years in current role
 - d. Total years teaching

Part II: Literacy Implementation

1. Of all the reading tools that have been used in the district, including curricula, supplemental programs, and assessments, what has worked best to support student's reading and writing? Or what hasn't worked? How do you know?
1. How, if at all, have district and/or school leaders supported how you use these tools with fidelity, or as intended?
2. What additional literacy-related professional learning opportunities do you need? Probes: On what topics? What type of professional learning do you prefer? (e.g., coaching, competency-based credentials, conferences, courses, professional learning communities, webinars, workshops)
3. How are you able to differentiate to meet student needs?
4. What is your greatest need in your role, which would yield the biggest improvement for your students?
5. How, if at all, do you, your school, or the district ensure family and community engagement in literacy-related activities? Can you describe the role of the family liaison?
6. (Secondary teachers) To what extent should secondary content-area teachers be trained in, and implement reading strategies to help students access content?
7. Do you feel adequately prepared to teach your content to students with reading difficulties? Why or why not?
8. What barriers do your school and students face in accessing resources that help them learn to read and write? How can those barriers be resolved?

ASK PART II ONLY IF TIME – NOT A PRIORITY

Part II: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

Teachers of Adult Learners Focus Group Protocol

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe:
 - a. Current role
 - b. Years in current role
 - c. Total years teaching

Part II: Literacy Implementation

1. Identify the (a) curricula, (b) programs, (c) strategies, and (d) assessments you use for assisting adult learners.
 - a. Of all the tools that you have used, what has worked best support their language and reading skills? How do you know?
 - b. How, if at all, do you get support for using tools with fidelity, or as intended?
 - c. Describe the professional learning you have received to use these tools.
 - i. How helpful, if at all, has your professional learning been?
 - ii. What would make your professional learning more effective?
2. What additional professional learning opportunities do you wish you could access to better serve adult learners?
 - a. What type (e.g., coaching, competency-based credentials, conferences, courses, professional learning communities, webinars, workshops)?
 - b. On what topics?
3. What is your greatest need in your role, which would yield the biggest improvement for the adults you serve?

Part II: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

Coach/Instructional Support Staff Focus Group Protocol

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe:
 - a. School where you work
 - b. Current role
 - c. Grade(s) supported
 - d. Years in current role
 - e. Total years teaching

Part II: Literacy Implementation

1. Identify the (a) curricula, (b) programs, (c) strategies, and (d) assessments you use for supporting teachers' reading instruction and intervention.
 - a. Of all the tools you've used, what has worked best to support children's reading and writing?
 - b. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders support how you and/or teachers use these tools with fidelity, or as intended?
 - c. Describe the professional learning you and/or teachers have received to use these tools.
 - i. How helpful, if at all, has your professional learning been?
 - ii. What would make your professional learning more effective?
 - iii. Have you been provided with any additional professional learning above that which was provided to teachers?
2. What additional literacy-related professional learning opportunities do you wish you and/or teachers could access?
 - a. What type (e.g., coaching, competency-based credentials, conferences, courses, professional learning communities, webinars, workshops)?
 - b. On what topics?
3. Discuss your processes for supporting high-quality tier 1 instruction, as well as matching students to tier 2 and tier 3 intervention.
 - a. What professional learning is provided, if any, that helps you differentiate tier 1 instruction, especially if large numbers of students are reading below grade level?
 - b. How prepared do you feel in identifying students' underlying reading, writing, or language difficulties and implementing strategies that target them?
 - c. How do you determine which intervention is most appropriate?
 - d. What proportion of students in tier 2 or tier 3 make satisfactory or accelerated progress?
 - i. How, if at all, do you track this?
 - ii. Using what measures?
4. What is your greatest need in your role, which would yield the biggest improvement for teachers and/or students?
5. How prepared do you feel in supporting teachers to identify students' underlying reading, writing, or language difficulties and implementing strategies that target them?

6. Describe how, if at all, district and/or school leaders support collaborative grade-level planning.
 - a. What does collaborative grade-level planning look like?
7. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders build the capacity of all staff to implement evidence-based literacy instruction?
8. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders promote teachers as leaders in the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction?
9. How, if at all, do you, your school, or the district ensure family and community engagement in literacy-related activities? Can you describe the role of the family liaison?
10. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders establish and sustain positive and effective relationships with early education providers in Alachua County?
11. How, if at all, do district and/or school leaders establish and sustain positive and meaningful relationships with community organizations that provide students with supplemental educational opportunities related to literacy?
12. Do you feel like you have the professional autonomy to support teachers in ways that you know are effective?
13. What proportion of time do you engage in directly supporting teachers as opposed to other duties as assigned by school leader(s)?

Part III: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

Tutoring/Outside of School Time Focus Group Protocol

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe:
 - a. School or organization where you work
 - b. Current role
 - c. Grade(s) supported
 - d. Years in current role
 - e. Total years teaching, if any

Part II: Literacy Implementation

2. Identify the (a) curricula, (b) programs, (c) strategies, and (d) assessments you use for reading instruction and intervention.
 - a. Of all the tools you've used, what has worked best to support children's language and emergent literacy?
 - b. How, if at all, do you receive support for how you use these tools with fidelity, or as intended?
 - c. Describe the professional learning you have received to use these tools.
 - i. How helpful, if at all, has your professional learning been?
 - ii. What would make your professional learning more effective?
3. What additional literacy-related professional learning opportunities do you wish you could access?
 - a. What type (e.g., coaching, competency-based credentials, conferences, courses, professional learning communities, webinars, workshops)?
 - b. On what topics?
4. What is your greatest need in your role, which would yield the biggest improvement for your students?
5. How prepared do you feel in supporting teachers to identify students' underlying reading, writing, or language difficulties and implementing strategies that target them?
6. How, if at all, does your organization build the capacity of all staff to implement evidence-based literacy instruction?
7. How, if at all, does your organization promote staff in your role as leaders in the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction?
8. How, if at all, does your organization ensure family and community engagement in literacy-related activities?
9. How, if at all, does your organization establish and sustain positive and effective relationships with early education providers in Alachua County?
10. How, if at all, does your organization establish and sustain positive and meaningful relationships with community organizations that provide students with supplemental educational opportunities related to literacy?

Part III: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

Early Learning Leaders/Teachers Focus Group Protocol

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe:
 - a. Program, school, or organization where you work
 - b. Current role
 - c. Age(s) supported
 - d. Years in current role
 - e. Total years teaching, if any

Part II: Literacy Implementation

1. Identify the (a) curricula, (b) programs, (c) strategies, and (d) assessments you use to support children's language and emergent literacy.
 - a. Of all the tools you've used, what has worked best to support children's language and emergent literacy?
 - b. How, if at all, do you receive support for how you use these tools with fidelity, or as intended?
 - c. Describe the professional learning you have received to use these tools.
 - i. How helpful, if at all, has your professional learning been?
 - ii. What would make your professional learning more effective?
2. What additional literacy-related professional learning opportunities do you wish you could access?
 - a. What type (e.g., coaching, competency-based credentials, conferences, courses, professional learning communities, webinars, workshops)?
 - b. On what topics?
3. What is your greatest need in your role, which would yield the biggest improvement for your students?
4. How prepared do you feel in identifying students' underlying emergent reading, writing, or language difficulties and implementing strategies that target them?
5. How, if at all, does your organization build the capacity of *all* staff to implement evidence-based language and emergent literacy support for children?
6. How, if at all, does your organization promote staff in your role as leaders in the implementation of evidence-based language and emergent literacy support for young children?
7. How, if at all, does your organization ensure family and community engagement in language and emergent literacy-related activities?
8. How, if at all, does your organization establish and sustain positive and effective relationships with other education organizations such as the Early Learning Coalition and Alachua County Public Schools?
9. How, if at all, does your organization establish and sustain positive and meaningful relationships with community organizations that provide students with supplemental educational opportunities related to literacy?

Part III: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

Family Focus Group Protocol

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe:
 - a. Your interest in attending the focus group
 - b. For participants with children, your child or children's grade(s) or age(s) and school(s) they attend or attended

Part II: Child-Focused Questions

1. How do you support your child or children's literacy development at home?
2. What do you feel families need most to better support children's success with reading and writing?

Part II: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

Community Member Focus Group Protocol

This focus group protocol was used if NO focus group members said they had children. Otherwise, the Family Focus Group Protocol was used.

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe your interest in attending the focus group

Part II: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

Youth Focus Groups

Welcome Message & Purpose

Hi everyone! Thank you for taking time to talk with us today about reading and writing.

My name is [NAME] and I'm here with [INTRODUCE COLLEAGUE]. We will be asking you a few questions about what you think about learning to read and write. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions, and any other questions we might ask you are just to make sure we understand what you are saying. I expect we will talk for about 45 minutes.

We really care about what you think about learning to read and write, and what you tell us will be helpful for knowing what things would be good to keep doing in school and what things might need to change. Let me stop here. Are there any questions?

Now that you've had a chance to look over the media release form (with your parent/guardian), are there any questions about what you are agreeing to by participating?

Start Recording

We will now start recording, and I will begin with some basic questions about you and your background.

Ending the Focus Group

Final Opportunity to Share

Before we finish up today, is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Stop Recording & Thank Participants

Thank you so much for your time today.

Student Focus Group Protocol

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce yourself and describe:
 - a. What school you go to
 - b. How old you are
 - c. What do you want to be when you grow up / are an adult?

Part II: Student-Focused Questions

1. Why do you think it is important for you to learn to read and write?
2. What has it been like for you to learn how to read and write?
 - a. What has been easy for you?
 - i. What about for your friends or peers at school?

- b. What has been hard for you?
 - i. What about for your friends or peers at school?
- 3. What are the most important things your school can do to help you learn how to read and write?
- 4. What are the most important things your family can do to help you learn how to read and write?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Organization Interview Protocol

Welcome/Introduction Prior to Recording

Welcome Message & Purpose

Hi everyone and thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to talk with us today. My name is [NAME], and I'm here with [INTRODUCE COLLEAGUE], and we will be asking you some questions about your hopes, dreams, challenges, and desires for improving reading and writing in Alachua County.

As a reminder, we will record this session for transcription purposes. No one outside of our team will have access to the recording. We will be on a first name basis, and we will not use any names in our reports. Everything you say here will be kept confidential by our team.

There are several interviews with organizations and focus groups with community members taking place. The notes from these sessions will be compiled and studied to identify what's working and what can be strengthened. Your feedback on the survey and in this interview will be used to create a list of recommendations and an action plan to improve literacy in Alachua County.

Does anyone have any questions?

Media Release

We would like you to sign a media release form, which will allow us to use your quotes directly, though without your name attached. [Share link/screen/form.] Now that you've had a chance to look over the form, do you have any questions?

If people have not already had a chance to read the media release form (digitally or in paper format), have them do that now. Make sure everyone who stays in the room/on Zoom has signed the media release before continuing.

Start Recording

We will now start recording, and I will begin with some basic questions about you and your background.

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce your organization and yourself and describe:
 - a. Role
 - b. Years in current role

Part II: Literacy Programming

1. Of the literacy-related tools (such as curricula, programs, strategies, or resources) that you have used at your organization, what has worked best to support learners' reading and writing development?
2. How, if at all, does your organization help staff/volunteers in using literacy-related tools with fidelity, or as intended?
3. What quality standards/best practices do you have in place?
 - a. Can you provide some examples?
4. On what topics do you wish staff/volunteers could access additional professional learning?
5. What would make professional learning opportunities more effective for staff/volunteers?
6. What barriers does your program and the students served by your program face in accessing resources that help them learn to read and write? How can those barriers be resolved?
7. What is your greatest need in your role, which would yield the biggest improvement for children, youth, and/or adults in Alachua County?
8. How, if at all, does your organization build the capacity of *all* staff (and/or volunteers) to implement evidence-based literacy instruction?
9. How, if at all, does your organization ensure family and community engagement in literacy-related activities?
10. How, if at all, does your organization establish and sustain positive and effective relationships with early education providers and/or Alachua County Public Schools?
11. How, if at all, does your organization establish and sustain positive and meaningful relationships with other community organizations that provide students with supplemental educational opportunities related to literacy?

Part III: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

1. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
2. What additional resources or support are needed?
3. Who is responsible for providing those resources?

Ending the Interview

Final Opportunity to Share

Before we finish up today, is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Stop Recording & Thank Participants

Thank you so much for your time today.

Request Participants to Assist with Needs Assessment

We would appreciate your organization's continued support of the Alachua County literacy needs assessment. I'm going to put the link to this project's website in the chat. The website includes links for people to complete our survey or sign up for a focus group.

- Ask #1: Would you be willing to share information about this project with the staff at your organization and the people your organization serves?
 - We can share our social media toolkit and email script, which makes sharing information really easy. Who should we email with that information?
 - We understand. Please feel free to fill out a survey yourself!
- Ask #2: We would like to conduct several focus groups across the county. Would your organization be willing to host a focus group? Hosting a focus group could include introducing us via email to people you think might be interested and we set it up from there. Or you could invite people and we could attend. Focus groups can be virtual or in person.
 - Great! How would you prefer to serve as host? What support do you need from us? Who would be our contact person for the focus group?
 - Ok, no problem!
- Ask #3: We are also attending in-person events across the county where we can ask people to fill out surveys. Do you know of any events that might be good for us to attend?
 - Awesome! What details do you have about the event? Is there someone we should contact about attending?
 - That's ok!
- Ask #4: Finally, do you know of other organizations that we should survey and interview?
 - What is their name and contact information?
 - Ok, thanks!

We really appreciate your time today. It was really wonderful talking with you!

Elected Officials Interview Protocol

Welcome/Introduction Prior to Recording

Welcome Message & Purpose

Hi everyone and thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to talk with us today. My name is [NAME], and I'm here with [INTRODUCE COLLEAGUE], and we will be asking you some questions about your hopes, dreams, challenges, and desires for improving reading and writing in Alachua County.

As a reminder, we will record this session for transcription purposes. No one outside of our team will have access to the recording. We will be on a first name basis, and we will not use any names in our reports. Everything you say here will be kept confidential by our team.

There are several interviews with organizations and focus groups with community members taking place. The notes from these sessions will be compiled and studied to identify what's working and what can be strengthened. Your feedback on the survey and in this interview will be used to create a list of recommendations and an action plan to improve literacy in Alachua County.

Do you have any questions?

Media Release

We would like you to sign a media release form, which will allow us to use your quotes directly, though without your name attached. [Share link/screen/form.] Now that you've had a chance to look over the form, do you have any questions?

Start Recording

We will now start recording, and I will begin with some basic questions about you and your background.

Part I: Background and Opening Move

1. Please introduce your organization and yourself and describe:
 - a. Role
 - b. Years in current position

Part II: Perceptions of Literacy Needs and Possible Solutions

2. What do you perceive as the "most pressing" literacy needs for students within the county?
3. Are there specific community demographics you believe require targeted literacy support, and how might these needs be addressed?

4. How can our community help children, youth, and adults achieve their full potential when it comes to reading and writing?
5. Who is responsible for providing those resources?
6. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Ending the Interview

Stop Recording & Thank Participants

Thank you so much for your time today. <Add additional comments as appropriate.>

Request Participants to Assist with Needs Assessment

We really appreciate your time today. It was really wonderful talking with you!

File Attachments for Item:

12. Recommendation for Award – Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP 2025-01

**Item:**

Recommendation for Award – Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP 2025-01

Requested Action:

The Board is asked to:

- 1) Approve Resolution 2025-03, Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP Award recommendation
- 2) Authorize the staff to negotiate and execute contracts with the following organizations:
 1. I Am Stem
 2. Gainesville Area Community Tennis Association
 3. Just For Us Education
 4. Gainesville Circus Center
 5. Girls Place, Inc.
 6. Traveling Art Camp
 7. Community Impact Corporation
 8. Boys & Girls Club of Northeast Florida, Inc.
 9. Deeper Purpose Community Church
 10. Camp Makerie
 11. IGB Education Group
 12. Kids Count in Alachua County
 13. Behavior Bricks
 14. 1000 Voices of Florida, Inc.
 15. Concrete Rose Foundation
- 3) Staff recommends for the Board to determine to integrate all Freedom School funds into the Summer Camp allocation or fund one Freedom School site, not to exceed \$80,000 and add remaining funds into the Summer Camp allocation

Background:

In making this recommendation, the process described below was used in accordance with Board Policy 6.50 C – Competitive Sealed Proposals.

Description of Process

- 1) The RFP was reviewed and approved for release by the Board on February 10, 2025 through Resolution 2025-01
- 2) A notice of Request for Proposals was advertised via Alachua County's Legal Notice site.
- 3) The RFP, which can be found below, contains the provisions approved by the Board. [2025-01 Summer and Freedom School \(RFP\) | Children's Trust of Alachua County, Florida](#)
 - a) The minimum qualifications to bid on page 6 of the RFP.
 - b) The RFP Scope of Services for Summer Camp is on pages 7-15. Scope of Services for Freedom School on pages 23-25
 - c) The evaluation criteria for Summer Camp are defined on pages 15-18 of the RFP. The evaluation criteria for Freedom School are defined on pages 25-28.
- 4) During the 27-day proposal preparation period questions were submitted concerning the project. Responses to these questions were approved by the Director of Program Operations and posted in SAMIS. The question-and-answer period was from February 19, 2025 – March 7, 2025.
- 5) As of March 13, 2025, 3:00 PM, 28 responses were submitted. (***See "Bid Opening"***).
- 6) A volunteer review team utilized the evaluation criteria as specified in the RFP to evaluate and score the proposals as follows:
 - a) A scoring rubric was used as a guide by the review team to determine the best score for each criterion. Provider scores were completed independently by the Review Team, composed of Deon Carruthers, Erica Townes, Matthew Traum, and Cinton Alford
 - b) All proposals were examined for proper form by the Director of Programs.
 - c) The following organizations were found to be non-responsive. Non-responsive proposals are defined as a proposal that does not meet the requirements and/or the intent of the RFP.
 - a) N/A
 - d) A public meeting to discuss scoring was held on March 28, 2025. As a result of that meeting, a consensus score was developed.
 - e) The results of the evaluation team were presented in written form to the Executive Director.
- 7) Attached are the scores for each applicant.

Award Recommendation

Taking into consideration the review process described below, Board Policy 6.50, C,9 tasks the Executive Director with making a recommendation. The Executive Director recommends CTAC staff begin contract negotiations with the following organizations.

1. I Am Stem
2. Gainesville Area Community Tennis Association
3. Just For Us Education
4. Gainesville Circus Center
5. Girls Place, Inc.
6. Traveling Art Camp
7. Community Impact Corporation
8. Boys & Girls Club of Northeast Florida, Inc.
9. Deeper Purpose Community Church
10. Camp Makerie
11. IGB Education Group
12. Kids Count in Alachua County
13. Behavior Bricks
14. 1000 Voices of Florida, Inc.
15. Concrete Rose Foundation

CTAC intends to fund two additional Freedom School sites, expanding Freedom School access to rural communities in Alachua County. Freedom Schools provide engaging learning experiences through the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) integrated reading curriculum (IRC).

CTAC did not receive any applications for Freedom School. The Board has the authority to integrate all Freedom School funds into the Summer Camp allocation or fund one Freedom School site, not to exceed \$80,000 and add remaining funds into the Summer Camp allocation.

Attachments:

Bid Opening
RFP Scope
Scoring Summary
Award Recommendation PowerPoint
RFP Award Resolution

Programmatic Impact:

Goal 2- Children and youth can learn what they need to be successful.

Fiscal Impact:

\$1,840,000-Summer Camp

\$160,000-Freedom School

Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval

Organization/Agency	Total amount (Budget)
I AM STEM	180095.5
GAINESVILLE AREA COMMUNITY TENNIS ASSOCIATION	56700
GAINESVILLE CIRCUS CENTER, INC.	25200
Traveling Art Camp	291949
GIRLS PLACE, INC.	153934.46
Just for Us Education	137120.11
COMMUNITY IMPACT CORPORATION, INC.	129299.5
BOYS' AND GIRLS' CLUBS OF NORTHEAST FLORIDA	126000
DEEPER PURPOSE COMMUNITY CHURCH, INC.	180110.46
Camp Makerie	122750
The Concrete Rose Foundation	50000
IGB EDUCATION CORP	106468
KIDS COUNT IN ALACHUA COUNTY, INC.	40001.62
Behavior Bricks	250182.46
1000 Voices of Florida, INC.	63540
University of Florida	20296.74
MIRROR IMAGE EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP, INC	88800
Limitless Adventures, Inc.	54025.04
University of Florida	40000
Star Center Children's Theatre	76440
DANCE ALIVE, INC.	7000
Williams Temple	39222.24
CULTURAL ARTS COALITION, INC.	14000
HAGIOS EARLY LEARNING CENTER	33677.25
Greater Duval Neighborhood Association	113744.63
Alachua County Board of County Commissioners	40500
Palm Breeze Youth Services Inc	67347
Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church	13020
	2521424.01



CHILDREN'S TRUST
OF ALACHUA COUNTY

COVER PAGE

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) #:	2025-01
PROJECT TITLE:	Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP
CTAC Contact Address	Procurement@childrenstrustofalachuacounty.us
SUBMIT A QUESTION:	SAMIS
LAST DAY FOR QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS RFP	March 5, 2025
AVAILABLE FUNDING: \$2,000,000	Summer Camps - \$1,840,000 Freedom School - \$160,000
ANTICIPATED CONTRACT TERMS:	FY 2024-2025 FY 2025-2026
WEBSITE:	SAMIS Link
RFP ISSUE DATE:	February 14, 2025
Submission Deadline	March 13, 2025

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

A. Notice to Prospective Contractors

Prospective contractors should carefully review this solicitation for defects and questionable or objectionable matters. Comments concerning defects and questionable or objectionable matter must be made to the Children's Trust of Alachua County (CTAC) Project Manager at email on the cover page and must be received by the CTAC prior to the deadline for written questions also shown on the Request for Proposals (RFP) cover page. The date limitation for posing questions will permit CTAC to issue any necessary corrections and/or addenda to this RFP in time for all prospective contractors to react by adjusting, if needed, their proposals. A summary of all questions from prospective contractors and CTAC responses to those questions will be posted by RFP number on the CTAC's website site.

Prospective contractors are prohibited from communicating directly with any CTAC employee or CTAC Board member except as specified in this RFP, and no CTAC employee or representative other than the CTAC's Project Manager is authorized to provide any information or respond to any question or inquiry concerning this RFP. Prospective contractors may contact the CTAC's Project Manager solely via the question link. Prospective contractors that fail to conform to this requirement may be disqualified from participating in this procurement. The Project Manager may provide reasonable accommodations, including the provision of informational material in an alternative format, for qualified prospective contractors with a disability. Prospective contractors requiring accommodation shall submit requests in writing, with supporting documentation justifying the accommodation, to the Project Manager. The Project Manager reserves the right to grant or reject any request for accommodation in accordance with Federal ADA guidelines.

Late proposals are not accepted. Errors in the proposals or non-responsive proposals may be corrected by the proposer during the negotiation process. However, prospective contractors are advised that they should endeavor to submit responsive, error-free proposals on time because failure to do so may result in rejection of their proposal.

Prospective contractors that receive this RFP from the CTAC website or from any source other than the Project Manager and wish to assure receipt of any addenda or additional materials related to this RFP, should immediately contact the Project Manager and provide their contact information so that RFP addenda and other communications related to this procurement can be sent to them. It is the prospective contractor's responsibility to ensure that all addenda have been reviewed and, if need be, signed and returned or noted in the proposal.

A copy of all inquiries along with the CTAC response will be posted on CTAC's website as shown on the cover page.

B. Overview of the Children's Trust of Alachua County

The Children's Trust of Alachua County (CTAC) funds and supports a coordinated system of community services that allows all youth and their families to thrive. Established as an Independent Special District in 2018, the CTAC vision is to facilitate equitable access and opportunities for all children and families in Alachua County to ensure every child reaches their maximum potential.

Three strategic priorities include:

- All children and youth are healthy and have nurturing caregivers.
- All children and youth can learn what they need to be successful.
- All children and youth live in a safe community.

Mission Statement

The Children's Trust of Alachua County funds and supports a coordinated system of community services that allows all youth and their families to thrive.

Vision Statement

Facilitate equitable access and opportunities for all children and families in Alachua County to ensure every child reaches their maximum potential.

Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles are utilized within organizations as a method to align behaviors, guide decision making, and provide consistency with the Trust's Board values. The Trust's Board and stakeholders identified the following guiding principles:

1. Initiatives should ensure accessibility to universal supports for all children 0 to 18 and their families, targeted supports for those who need additional help, and place-based supports for those with the greatest need.
2. Innovative initiatives should be funded that coordinate comprehensive systems of support and deliver those supports in collaborative ways that allows the Trust to achieve collective impact.
3. Initiatives shall be evaluated based on their ability to ultimately impact all children, directly or indirectly, with a priority for long-term continual return on investment.
4. Initiatives must be measurable with priority given to a comprehensive system of supports that provide for prevention, timely intervention, and services that strengthen families and produce achievable results.
5. Initiatives must be aligned to a documented gap or need.
6. Funds will be invested, and initiatives will be prioritized based on the highest educational, social, or emotional outcome value.
7. Initiatives will be evaluated in an open, transparent, and competitive manner in order to ensure equitable results and confidence in the process.
8. The Trust values fiscal and operational accountability and will fund partners in a manner that rewards efficiencies, takes advantage of economies of scale, and maximizes services to children or family members/support members in order to meet the educational, social, emotional, and/or physical health.
9. The complete portfolio of Trust investments shall be reviewed to ensure that Alachua County children and families have equitable access to services that will work to increase racial equity.
10. Prior to any funding decision, the direct impact on children must be the primary consideration.

C. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants may be governmental entities, for-profit or not-for-profit organizations, or faith-based organizations providing services within Alachua County. Applicants should be currently qualified to conduct business in the State of Florida, under the laws of Florida, and must be qualified to conduct business on or before the service and contract start date(s). Eligible applicants must remain qualified to conduct business in the State of Florida for the duration of their service award. All contractors will be required to have current general liability insurance before contracts can be executed.

The CTAC is prohibited from contracting with programs that are under the exclusive jurisdiction of the public-school system. Additionally, Alachua County Public Schools are not eligible for funding. Applicants that operate a charter school are also ineligible for funding. However, collaboration with the public-school system and leveraged use of school resources by applicants are encouraged.

D. Solicitation Timeline – Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP

Event	Date/Due Date
Release of the competitive solicitation and begin the Cone of Silence	Friday, February 14, 2025
Bidders' Conference and Application Training (Virtual) <i>Attendance strongly recommended</i>	Date: Wednesday, February 19, 2025 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM – Bidders' Conference & Application Training
Registration links for virtual training: 9-11AM: Link 6-8PM: Link	Date: Wednesday, February 19, 2025 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM – Bidders' Conference & Application Training
Office hours for technical support One-on-one appointments can be scheduled during this time to address any technical questions regarding the application materials. Send email to Procurement@chlidrenstrustofalachuacounty.us to schedule an appointment	February 24th-28th 9:00AM-3:00PM
Philanthropy Hub Information Session <i>Attendance strongly recommended</i> https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/JBizfeggSLKkc-mhIDckAQ	February 25, 2025 10:00AM
Last day to submit written questions	Wednesday, March 5, 2025 3:00pm
Final response to all written questions posted	Friday, March 7, 2025 5:00PM
Application submission deadline	Thursday, March 13, 2025 3:00PM
Public Opening of bids (Public Meeting) Virtual: registration link	Thursday, March 13, 2025 4:00PM
Application review period	March 17 th -25 th , 2025
Review team – final score deliberation (Virtual Public Meeting)	Thursday, March 27, 2025
Funding recommendations released – (Trust Board Meeting Packet)	Monday, March 31, 2025
The Children's Trust of Alachua County Board Meeting Review funding recommendations Location: To be determined	Monday, April 7, 2025 4:00pm
End cone of silence; Appeal process begins	April 7, 2025 4PM (Start of Board meeting)

Contract negotiations begin	Monday, April 14, 2025
Contracts begin	May 1, 2025
Summer Camp Kick Off Training (Required, In Person)	Thursday, May 8, 2025
Training for SAMIS Onboarding and Delivery (Required, In Person)	Wednesday, May 14, 2025 Friday, May 16, 2025
Summer Camp Fiscal Training (Required, In Person)	Wednesday, May 21, 2025
Provider Professional Development Training (Required, In Person)	Tuesday, May 27, 2025 Thursday, May 29, 2025

SECTION 2: FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

A. Overview of Solicitation

By approval of Resolution 2025-01 on February 10, 2025. The CTAC seeks qualified providers to offer summer camp services to children and youth in Alachua County. The CTAC also seeks qualified providers to support the expansion of Freedom School sites to Hawthorne, FL and Newberry, FL. The CTAC intends to make multiple awards. The total allocation is \$2,000,000. \$1,840,000 is allocated to summer camps and \$160,000 is allocated for Freedom Schools.

CTAC intends to fund summer camps offering Alachua County children and youth a summer filled with fun and exposure to a variety of exciting activities where adventure and learning intertwine. Summer camp participants should be encouraged to explore nature, develop new skills, and make lasting friendships. Camp days should include a range of creative activities such as arts and crafts, drama, dance, or music, allowing campers to express themselves and discover new passions. Campers should be encouraged to step out of their comfort zones, gain confidence, and develop teamwork skills in a supportive and inclusive environment.

CTAC intends to fund two additional Freedom School sites, expanding Freedom School access to rural communities in Alachua County. Freedom Schools provide engaging learning experiences through the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) integrated reading curriculum (IRC). The IRC focuses on culturally and linguistically sustaining literature and is designed to support reading skills for all students and stop summer learning loss. Freedom Schools incorporate the totality of the Children's Defense Fund's mission by fostering environments that encourage children and young adults to excel and believe in their ability to make a difference in themselves and in their families, schools, communities, nation and world, through hope, education and action.

CTAC funded summer camps are created to ensure children from low- and middle-income families living in Alachua County have access to camps that will have a positive impact on children, youth, and their families. Through this solicitation, CTAC is seeking proposals for the following services:

Summer Camp:

- Offer ongoing in-person summer camp services and programming that serve children and families
- Serve low- and middle-income children who reside in Alachua County entering grades K to 12th
- Recruit eligible children for CTAC summer camp scholarships
- Implement creative, innovative programming that meets the needs and interests of children enrolled
- Employ highly qualified staff members capable of developing strong, positive relationships with participants
- Host summer camp services at sites that are safe and enriching environments

- Staff trained in first aid and infant and child cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) procedures
- Ensure minimum staff ratios are 1:20 and all staff have Level 2 background screenings, approved by DCF
- Ensure required liability coverage requirements are met prior to contract execution

Freedom School:

- Serve low- to middle- income children who reside in Alachua County entering grades K to 12th
- Recruit eligible children to attend Freedom School
- Attend all required Freedom School trainings
- Implement and host Freedom School in Hawthorne, FL and Newberry, FL
- Host Freedom School at a site that is safe and has an enriching environment
- Employ highly qualified staff members capable of developing strong, positive relationships with participants
- Provide Freedom School for six weeks
- Staff trained in first aid and infant and child cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) procedures
- Ensure minimum staff ratios are 1:10 and all staff have Level 2 background screenings, approved by DCF
- Ensure required liability coverage requirements are met prior to contract execution

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a contract with the CTAC for the services requested in this RFP within 4 weeks of the funding announcement. Organizations submitting a proposal must be prepared to use CTAC's standard contract form rather than its own contract form. A Model Contract for Services is attached to this RFP for your review. The CTAC intends to award a contract substantially in the form of the attached Model Services Contract to the selected contractors.

B. Term of Services

Applicants will be awarded contracts with anticipated service dates of May 1, 2025, through August 30, 2025. Contracts will be a fee for service, based on actual enrollment and weekly attendance of children eligible for CTAC summer camp scholarships. CTAC reserves the right to renegotiate terms annually. Contracts awarded may be renewed for two additional years, for a total of three years of funding with annual performance reviews, for the following terms:

- April 1, 2026 – August 30, 2026
- April 1, 2027- August 30, 2027.

C. Minimum Qualifications to Bid

Organizations can apply for funding based on the following requirements:

- All proposed services must take place within Alachua County.
- Applicants must be currently qualified to conduct business in the State of Florida.
- Applicants must not be a charter school approved by any public-school system in the State of Florida.
- Applicants must have experience managing an in person out-of-school time (OST) program, such as after school or summer camp.
- Philanthropy Hub verification for nonprofits
- 501©3 and not for profits must provide a letter of support from the Board of Directors.
- For profits, LLCs, churches, and government organizations must provide a reference letter from a community partner and a letter of support from executive leadership.

D. Scope of Service

The CTAC seeks qualified providers to offer summer camp services to children and youth in Alachua County. The CTAC also seeks qualified providers to support the expansion of Freedom School sites in Alachua County.

Potential Applicants

The CTAC seeks applications from youth serving organizations that intend to offer safe and enriching summer camps in Alachua County. Applicants must have experience in offering summer camps in person. The applicant must have the support of their Board of Directors and/or the leadership or governing board of their organization.

All nonprofits must complete a Philanthropy Hub verification prior to starting the application process. The Philanthropy Hub is North Central Florida's first-ever, fully searchable online database of local nonprofit organizations. This resource was created to help donors and local residents better understand North Central Florida's nonprofit community and discover how to engage in the causes they care about most. Use the link below to learn more about the Philanthropy Hub and how to complete the verification process.

<https://www.thephilanthropyhub.org/>

Summer Camp Providers

Site Profile

All applicants must complete a site profile for each site they are seeking funding for. A site profile must be completed with the following information: Site name, address, contact information, grades served, site dates and hours of operation, executive summary, and site staffing. Organizations with multiple sites must be prepared to describe their capacity to manage all proposed sites.

Target Population

The target population for this RFP is children and youth from low- to middle income families living in Alachua County, who are rising kindergarteners through rising 12th graders.

Summer camp providers will recruit and enroll children in summer camp programming under the following criteria:

1. Children from families at or below 300% FPL
2. Children in foster care
3. Children in voluntary and formal kinship care
4. Children under in-home case management supervision, and/or
5. Children from families receiving SNAP benefits

Note: Children receiving school readiness funds at a site are not eligible for Children's Trust summer scholarship funds

2025 Poverty Guidelines: 48 Contiguous States (Excluding Alaska and Hawaii)						
Dollars Per Year						
Household/ Family Size	100%	150%	200%	250%	300%	400%
1	15,650.00	23,475.00	31,300.00	39,125.00	46,950.00	62,600.00
2	21,150.00	31,725.00	42,300.00	52,875.00	63,450.00	84,600.00
3	26,650.00	39,975.00	53,300.00	66,625.00	79,950.00	106,600.00
4	32,150.00	48,225.00	64,300.00	80,375.00	96,450.00	128,600.00
5	37,650.00	56,475.00	75,300.00	94,125.00	112,950.00	150,600.00
6	43,150.00	64,725.00	86,300.00	107,875.00	129,450.00	172,600.00
7	48,650.00	72,975.00	97,300.00	121,625.00	145,950.00	194,600.00
8	54,150.00	81,225.00	108,300.00	135,375.00	162,450.00	216,600.00
9	59,650.00	89,475.00	119,300.00	149,125.00	178,950.00	238,600.00
10	65,150.00	97,725.00	130,300.00	162,875.00	195,450.00	260,600.00
11	70,650.00	105,975.00	141,300.00	176,625.00	211,950.00	282,600.00
12	76,150.00	114,225.00	152,300.00	190,375.00	228,450.00	304,600.00
13	81,650.00	122,475.00	163,300.00	204,125.00	244,950.00	326,600.00
14	87,150.00	130,725.00	174,300.00	217,875.00	261,450.00	348,600.00

Reference: 2025 Federal Poverty Guidelines

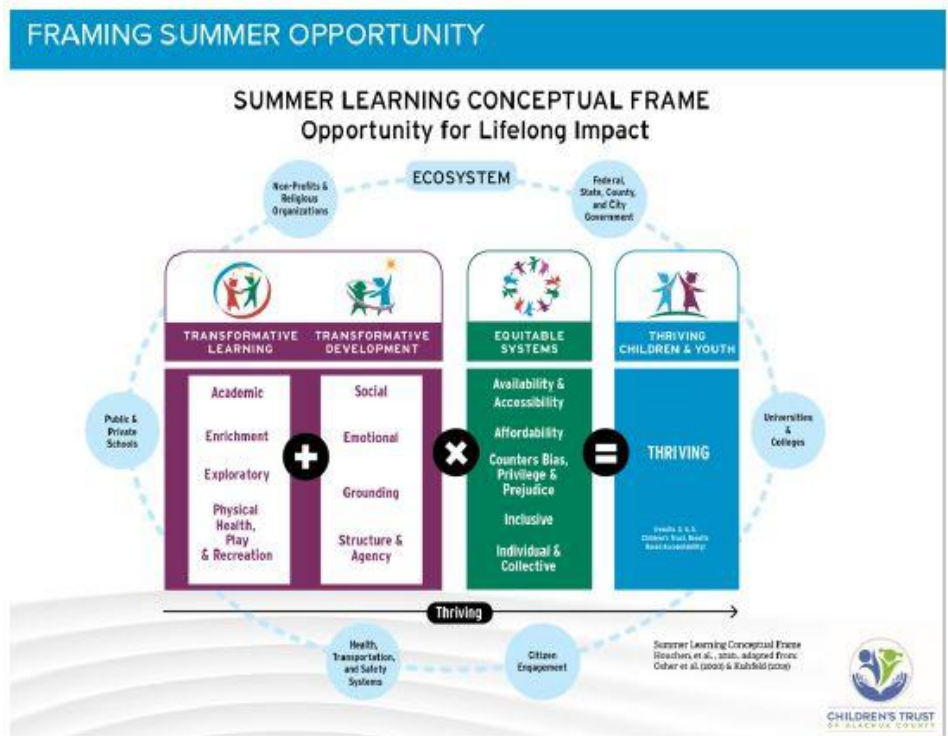
Programming Activities

The CTAC seeks to fund summer camp providers offering a range of programming activities. Applicants have the flexibility to implement creative, innovative programs that meet the needs and interests of children enrolled in their programming.

Based on a summer needs assessment and recommendations completed by [Youth Development Research-Practice Partnership \(YDRPP\)](#) in 2021, CTAC is building a supportive summer ecosystem where all children can thrive. A priority in building the foundation of a thriving summer ecosystem is to offer activities under the transformative learning section of the conceptual framework that focuses on academic, enrichment, exploratory, and physical, health, play and recreation. Applicants will describe how they will implement at least one type of activity under this RFP but are not required to offer more than one type of activity programming. Summaries of activities are listed below for reference:

Transformative Learning:

- Academic:** activities that are designed to improve success in school. Typically, these activities are led by highly trained staff such as certified teachers and/or tutors.
- Literacy:** While all students tend to lose some literacy skills over the summer break, summer learning loss is more profound for students from low-income households¹. Camps are encouraged to incorporate literacy activities into programming. Students



¹ Gao, M., Gilbert, B. B., Woods, L. (2016). Low-income students lose literacy skills in the summer: Do summer programs make a difference? *Journal of Research and Reflections in Education*, 10(2), 115-122. Retrieved from <https://www.ue.edu.pk/jrre/articles/102001.pdf>

are more likely to read when books are aligned with their interests and skill level, and when reading is prompted and supplemented with structured activities². Summer camps can partner with local libraries to enhance literacy offerings, and/or incorporate an evidence-based literacy curriculum into programming.

- **Enrichment:** activities that broaden knowledge and/or culture. Enrichment can cover various topics, including but not limited to STEM/STEAM, arts, music, and environmentalism.
- **Exploratory:** activities that encourage students to engage in active inquiry, decision making, and problem solving.
- **Physical, Health, Play and Recreation:** activities that allow fun, physical activity, and health.

Transformative Development:

- **Social:** activities that improve abilities to care, show empathy, cooperate, resolve conflict, and contribute to the group.
- **Emotional:** activities that improve emotional development such as self-awareness, motivation, self-efficacy, and confidence.
- **Grounding:** activities that improve children's sense of identity, meaning, and purpose and of their role in the larger community
- **Structure and Agency:** Youth benefit especially from programs that utilize well planned daily, weekly, and seasonal schedules of activities with clear components and rationale for each component. A clear, organized schedule also allows youth to expect and more fully engage in each activity. Program leaders should also build opportunities for youth to exercise agency and decision making in program schedules, allowing youth to explore, learn, and contribute to the collective camp experience.

Weekly Activity Schedule

Providers are asked to submit an activity schedule for the first week of camp, outlining specific planned activities for each hour of programming. An example weekly schedule is below. Applicants may use the format below or may use their own.

Summer Camp Activity Schedule

Camp Name: Example Day Camp

Date Range: June 2nd- 6th, 2025

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00-8:30	Sign in, breakfast, outdoor free play				
8:30-9:30	Literacy activity: READ aloud	Math activity	Literacy activity: READ aloud	Math activity	Field trip: Library
9:30-10:30	Outdoor group games: Amoeba tag	Art: drawing	Outdoor group games: Capture the flag	Music	
10:30-11:30	Art: painting	Outdoor group games: Birds have feathers	Music	Outdoor group games: Camp relay race	
11:30-12:30	Lunch				
12:30-1:30	Inquiry learning: work on long term project of choice	Dance	Inquiry learning: work on long term project of choice	Guest speaker	Inquiry learning: work on long term project of choice
1:30-2:30	Gardening	Book club	SEL Activity	Creative writing	Gardening
2:30-3:30	Sports games: Baseball	Sports games: basketball	Sports games: Baseball	Sports games: basketball	Sports games: baseball
3:30-4:00	Reflection, free play, pick up				

² McEachin, A., Augustine, C. H., McCombs, J. (2018). Effective summer programming: What educators and policymakers should know. *American Educator*. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1173313.pdf>

Family Engagement

Family engagement is a shared responsibility among schools, community organizations, and families to actively support children's learning—in school, after school, over the summer, and at home. When families are engaged, students benefit through improved attendance, achievement, and behavior³. Research highlights that summer camps, serving as a bridge between home and school, are uniquely positioned to encourage parent involvement in student learning that can continue throughout the year. Summer camps can engage families through regular communication, on-site events showcasing student learning, and resources to extend learning activities at home.³

Summer camp leaders and staff should engage with families daily; for more ideas on how to do so, see [Evidence based strategies for Supporting and Enhancing Family Engagement](#) and [A Hybrid Summer Camp Program Rethinks Family Engagement](#).

CTAC requires each summer camp to host at least one Family Engagement Event during the summer. Events can include a pre-camp parent orientation, end of camp showcase of student work, guest speakers, or seminars.

Service Locations

The CTAC expects to fund sites throughout Alachua County. Applicants may propose to serve one or more program sites throughout the County, including rural communities of the county. Providers servicing the rural communities marked with an asterisk will receive bonus points during the application review process.

- Alachua
- Archer*
- Hawthorne*
- High Springs
- La Crosse
- Micanopy
- Newberry
- Waldo*

Applicants may provide services in a variety of locations, including, but not limited to schools, city or county parks and facilities, faith-based locations, and community organizations. Best practices indicate providing services at sites that do not charge or charge minimally for space (such as schools, parks, and faith-based locations) results in higher investments in staffing that can support program quality. Applicants must submit a site agreement letter from the facility owners confirming permission for access throughout the duration of the camp.

The physical environment in which a program operates is a foundation for the youth's experience in a program. Indoor and outdoor spaces should be able to accommodate all program activities adequately and safely. Key features of high-quality service locations include:

³ Little, P. (n.d.). *Engaging families in afterschool and summer learning programs: A review of the research*. The Expanded Learning & After School Project. <https://www.expandinglearning.org/expandingminds/article/engaging-families-afterschool-and-summer-learning-programs-review-research>

- Can safely and comfortably accommodate the various activities offered and/or can be rearranged to meet the various needs of the program (e.g., spaces for physical games, creative arts, individual/quiet work, and eating/socializing)
- The outdoor environment is suitable for a wide variety of activities, including physical activity, group games, and individual play
- Alternative plan if an environment is inaccessible due to weather or other external factors

Scheduling, Frequency, and Duration

Programs are required to operate five days a week at a minimum of eight hours per day. However, camps do have the flexibility to propose the number of weeks their camp will operate. All providers proposing a minimum of 8 weeks will receive bonus points during application review.

Note: Providers must establish an attendance policy consistent with all requirements.

Staffing

Highly qualified staff members capable of developing strong, positive relationships with campers are a key component of successful youth programs. Applicants must demonstrate solid staff experience with similar services, including certifications and/or years of service. When possible, programs are encouraged to consider hiring staff from local schools that primarily serve their campers to increase collaboration and communication opportunities with the camper's schools.

- **Positions:** All Contractors must identify one program director to administer the program. This individual will serve as the primary contact for CTAC in all matters related to the summer program. At the minimum, the program director will be responsible for managing and implementing the program to ensure that the Contractor meets its responsibilities to CTAC under the contract promptly.
- **Background Screening:** All staff working in CTAC-funded programs must comply with Level 2 background screening and fingerprinting requirements in accordance with § 943.0542, Fla. Stat., § 984.01, Fla. Stat., § 435, Fla. Stat., § 402, Fla. Stat., § 39.001, Fla. Stat., and § 1012.465, Fla. Stat. as applicable. The program must maintain staff personnel files which reflect that a screening result was received and reviewed to determine employment eligibility prior to employment. An Affidavit of Good Moral Character must be completed prior to hiring each employee, volunteer, and subcontracted personnel who work in direct contact with children. Program providers will be required to re-screen each employee, volunteer and/or subcontractor every five (5) years.
- **Ratios:** Ratios should be designed to meet the needs of the students targeted by the program and should be appropriate to support the efforts to improve their academic achievement and personal growth goals. Contractors shall implement a ratio no greater than 1:20 ratio of staff /youth.
- **Infant and Child CPR/First Aid:** Each summer program must always have at least one staff member on-site and during field trips with a current and valid certification in first aid training and infant and child cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) procedures. CTAC is sponsoring an infant and child first aid/CPR class that camp staff are expected to attend. If staff are not able to attend CTAC's sponsored course, they may attend a class on their own and provide a certificate of completion. CTAC will not cover the cost of classes taken outside of the CTAC sponsored course. If staff

choose to take the First aid/CPR on their own, training may be classroom or online instruction. Training must include an on-site instructor-based skills assessment that is documented by a certified CPR instructor. Documentation of the online course and on-site assessment must be maintained on file at the facility.

- **Staff Training:** Maintaining a well-trained team of staff is essential to delivering a high-quality summer camp. Staff should have a strong understanding of daily processes, safety procedures, and skills to lead program activities and engage families. Staff should also have knowledge of positive youth development, including how to build meaningful relationships with campers and integrate social-emotional learning into activities; such knowledge strengthens staff's understanding of program goals and directly contributes to improved outcomes for youth⁴. Training also builds in staff professional skills such as leadership, problem-solving, communication, and teamwork⁵.

The American Camp Association emphasizes the importance of pre-camp training, followed by ongoing training once camp begins⁵. Training should also be job-embedded, related to day-to-day responsibilities of staff. This approach ensures staff continuously build their skills, address challenges in real time, and stay aligned with the camp's mission and goals.

CTAC requires all summer camp directors to attend a Professional Development Training, hosted by CTAC, to learn about the best practices and tools for staff training. Applicants will be required to attend mandated reporting of child abuse within CTAC's Learning Management System before the first day of camp. Camp leaders are then required to facilitate formal and informal staff training throughout the summer.

In addition to Professional Development training, providers are required to attend kickoff training, a training on SAMIS, and fiscal training. See training dates below:

Summer Camp Kick Off Training (Required, In Person)	Thursday, May 8, 2025
Training for SAMIS Onboarding and Delivery (Required, In Person)	Wednesday, May 14, 2025 Friday, May 16, 2025
Summer Camp Fiscal Training (Required, In Person)	Wednesday, May 21, 2025
Provider Professional Development Training (Required, In Person)	Tuesday, May 27, 2025 Thursday, May 29, 2025

- **Enrollment Forms:** Provider will collect from participants a CTAC developed enrollment form and submit the required data to CTAC (see Data Collection requirements).
- **Program Consent:** Provider will collect from participants a CTAC developed programmatic consent

⁴ Henderson, K.A., Bialeschki, M. D., Scanlin, M. M., Thurber, C., Whitaker, L. S., Marsh, P. E. (2007). Components of camp experiences for positive youth development. *Journal of Youth Development*, 1(3). Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311067401_Components_of_Camp_Experiences_for_Positive_Youth_Development

⁵ Gillard, A. (2021, March). *Evidence-informed guidance for summer camp training*. American Camp Association. <https://www.acacamps.org/events-education/online-learning/recorded-webinar/evidence-informed-guidance-summer-camp-staff-training>

signifying voluntary agreement to the receipt of services and acknowledgement of CTAC as funder.

- **Image Release:** Provider will collect from participants a CTAC developed image release for all children who participate in the program to indicate whether the parent authorizes photos to be shared and used for publicity purposes to promote the program and its funders. Photos provided to CTAC must have parental authorization for all children who can be identified in the photo.
- **Participant files:** Providers will enter enrollment forms, consent forms, and image releases for all participants into SAMIS. Providers will also maintain a physical file on site for each participant containing his/her enrollment form, consent form, and image release.

Data Collection

All applicants will be required to collect the following data:

- Parental consent and image releases
- Participant demographics
- Participant attendance
- Satisfaction surveys

Data collection and tools will be reviewed at the required SAMIS onboarding training (see Staff Training above). Data is expected to be entered on a weekly basis throughout the summer.

Budget and Compensation

All applicants must complete a site budget and summary budget including the following areas to determine the CTAC funding request:

- Salary & Fringe Benefits
- Transportation
- Program Supplies
- Contractual Services
- Certification & Training
- Printing
- Communication
- Insurance
- Equipment & Maintenance
- Other Operating Expenses
- Indirect Cost

The entirety of the program budget will be used to calculate the cost per child per week. Contracts awarded will be limited to \$300 per child per week for traditional camp programs and \$350 per child per week for specialty camp programs. Specialty camps are described as camps that focus on a specific activity or theme, rather than offering a more general, traditional camp experience. These camps allow children and youth to immerse themselves in a particular interest or passion for the duration of the camp. The following are examples of the type of specialty camps the CTAC intends to fund:

- Camps offering summer camp services to special needs children only
- Art and music camps

- Stem camps

Summer Camp Provider Compensation:

Summer providers awarded contracts will be compensated as follows:

- Advance Payment – Contractor may invoice the CTAC for an advance payment of up to 25% of the scholarship amount total awarded (full and partial). The Contractor will not receive any additional payments until the advance has been trued up with actual services delivered.
- Subsequent payments will be made monthly based on each site's monthly enrollment and attendance. To be considered enrolled, proper demographic information and at least three days of attendance in the week the child is enrolled in is required.

Incentives

In addition to the above compensation, the following performance-based incentives will be awarded at the end of the contract for all summer providers that meet the following *optional* outcomes. Incentives will be reevaluated every year and are at the sole discretion of CTAC:

- Extended hours of operations: \$100 per enrolled child will be awarded to providers that offer daily programming for more than 8 hours or a maximum of \$5,000 per provider [Note: must be documented with schedules and contract manager observations]
- Extended Summer Duration: \$1,000 per site will be awarded to providers that offer summer services for the duration of summer (e.g. 1st day of Summer to Last day of Summer from Alachua County Public School Calendar) [Note: must be documented with schedules and contract manager observations]
- High Participation rates: \$10 per week per child that attends the program for four or more days or a maximum of \$10,000 per provider [Note: must be documented with schedules and submitted attendance]

Applicants are encouraged to review [CTAC's Fiscal Guidelines](#) as a tool to be referenced in the execution of contracts with budget guidelines and payment procedures.

Collaboration

It is expected that successful applicants will demonstrate effective partnerships with collaborative services that would contribute to positive experiences for youth. CTAC is also devoted to supporting collaborative partnerships by expanding free training. Applicants are strongly encouraged to take advantage of CTAC training opportunities in [CTAC's Learning Management System](#).

E. Evaluation Criteria

Each application will be evaluated against the following set of criteria.

Evaluation Criteria	Review Guidelines	Maximum Points Awarded

Organizational Capacity and Description	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide a detailed description of your organization, including mission, services it provides, history of working on behalf of children, and organizational governance within Alachua County. 2. Provide a brief description of how summer camp programming is consistent with your organization's mission and vision. 3. Describe your experience working with children and youth in an out-of-school time environment. 4. Describe your organization's ability to hire and train qualified staff and comply with the background screening requirement. 5. Describe how your organization supports an environment of safety for children and youth, staff, and parents. 	20
Summer Camp Description and Implementation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide an executive summary of the program and services offered by this camp. Note: This summary will be used in reports and promotional materials developed by CTAC 2. Provide a list of specific program goals for your proposed camp. 3. Describe the community need for the location where you intend to offer summer camp programming. 4. How many summer camp sites are you proposing? Describe your capacity to manage each site. 5. Describe the target population you intend to offer services to. Please include the grades you intend to work with. 6. Describe how you will recruit children and youth for your program. 7. Provide the overall number of children served for your program for the last year (if any), expected # without any CTAC funding and additional # of children expected if CTAC funded. 8. What is your camp's adult to student ratio? (i.e. 1:20) Note: Applicants shall not propose a ratio greater than 1:20. 	30

	<p>9. Describe your staff training program. When, how, and how often do you provide staff training and other informal learning opportunities? What competencies are covered in pre-camp training and during the summer?</p> <p>10. Attach a training agenda you use/plan to use. Note: Agendas should include the activities facilitated, description of activities, time allotted for each activity, leader of activities, and projected outcomes of each training session.</p> <p>11. Complete and attach a summer camp activity schedule for the first week of your camp. Note: See example activity schedule.</p> <p>12. Complete and attach a site profile for all proposed camp sites.</p>	
Budget	<p>1. Describe your camp costs including the weekly fees, enrollment fees, transportation costs, material, and field trips.</p> <p>2. Does your organization have a fiscal team? If so, describe their roles and responsibilities and how they will support your organization with your summer camp invoices?</p> <p>3. Describe how your organization determined your camp costs. Note: Complete the budget worksheet to support proposed camp costs.</p> <p>4. What do you currently charge private pay families to attend your camp? Include costs for enrollment and weekly fees. Note: Explain any differences in proposed costs to the Children's Trust.</p> <p>5. What percentage of your budget is dependent on the funds you have requested from the Trust?</p> <p>6. If the Trust only funds your proposal at 50% percent of your request, will your organization still offer a summer camp? If yes, please describe if services will be different when compared to a fully funded proposal. If not, please explain why.</p> <p>7. What is the total amount of funding you are requesting from the Children's Trust?</p>	20

Rural Areas Bonus Points	Five points will be awarded if the completed site profile indicates services in Archer, Hawthorne, or Waldo.	5
Duration of the Camp Bonus Points	Five points will be awarded if the completed site profile indicates the proposed camp services are for a minimum of 8 weeks.	5
Provider Video	1. Complete a 3–5-minute video about your organization and your proposed summer camp. The video must include the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Name of organization and summary of services offered <input type="checkbox"/> Number of years organization has offered services in Alachua County <input type="checkbox"/> The impact you believe your program will have on the lives of children <input type="checkbox"/> Why it is important for the Children’s Trust to fund your proposed program 	5
Site Agreement Letter	The applicant must submit a site agreement letter from the facility owners confirming permission for access throughout the duration of the camp.	15
		Max points =100

Application Score	
80 - 100	Organizations with the highest scores will be recommended for funding, contingent upon available funding.
70-79.9	
69.9 and below	Not recommended for funding

Freedom School

A. Akwaaba Freedom School Expansion

Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) Freedom schools focus on addressing summer learning loss in low-income and minority populations, where children fall behind academically because their families and/or community may not have access to resources to engage them in high-quality summer programs. CTAC intends to fund two additional Freedom School sites, expanding Freedom School access to rural sites in Alachua County. The proposed sites must be located within Hawthorne, FL and Newberry, FL. Applicants must demonstrate the ability to facilitate the implementation of a Freedom School. Each site will be under the direction of Dr. Chonika Coleman-King, Executive Director of Akwaaba Freedom School located in Gainesville, Florida. In addition, each site will have an assigned Project Director.

Applicants must recruit and enroll children into the expansion site. To ensure that programs are implemented with fidelity, according to the CDF guidelines, selected applicants will complete training on the following required components of the Freedom School programs:

- Integrated Reading Curriculum (3 hours/day)
- Daily debrief sessions
- Weekly field trips

- Weekly parent meetings/workshops (to be combined with main site)
- Afternoon Enrichment Activities (e.g., music, dance, sports, arts, STEM, etc.)
- Daily Morning Reading (each site should secure volunteer readers)
- Weekly programming at the intersection of arts, culture, entrepreneurship, education, and wellness
- National Day of Social Action
- Finale showcase (Year-end)

Site Profile

All applicants must complete a site profile. A site profile must be completed with the following information: Site name, address, contact information, grades served, site dates and hours of operation, executive summary, and site staffing.

Program/Project Staff

Freedom school rural sites will be an expansion of the main site in Gainesville, FL. All sites will fall under the umbrella of the Gainesville site led by Executive Director and Project Director of Akwaaba Freedom School-Gainesville. Successfully funded applicants will be required to hire the following staff and volunteers for daily reading and program support.

- 1 Site Coordinator
- 3-4 Servant Leader Interns, TBD (1 Servant Leader Intern per class of 10 scholars)
- 1 Assistant Servant Leader Interns, TBD
- Volunteers

Note: Akwaaba Freedom School interns are considered paid positions.

Target Population:

The target population for Freedom School expansion is children and youth who reside in Alachua County, from rising kindergarteners through rising 12th graders, with 60% of youth from families under 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. Applicants will have the flexibility to select one of the following enrollment options:

- Option 1 - 30 scholars of the following grade levels: Level 1 (K-2), Level 2 (3-5), Level 3 (6-8), Level 4 (9-12)
- Option 2 - 40 scholars of the following grade levels: Level 1 (K-2), Level 2 (3-5), Level 3 (6-8), Level 4 (9-12)

Household/ Family Size	2025 Poverty Guidelines: 48 Contiguous States (Excluding Alaska and Hawaii)					
	Dollars Per Year					
	100%	150%	200%	250%	300%	400%
1	15,650.00	23,475.00	31,300.00	39,125.00	46,950.00	62,600.00
2	21,150.00	31,725.00	42,300.00	52,875.00	63,450.00	84,600.00
3	26,650.00	39,975.00	53,300.00	66,625.00	79,950.00	106,600.00
4	32,150.00	48,225.00	64,300.00	80,375.00	96,450.00	128,600.00
5	37,650.00	56,475.00	75,300.00	94,125.00	112,950.00	150,600.00
6	43,150.00	64,725.00	86,300.00	107,875.00	129,450.00	172,600.00
7	48,650.00	72,975.00	97,300.00	121,625.00	145,950.00	194,600.00
8	54,150.00	81,225.00	108,300.00	135,375.00	162,450.00	216,600.00
9	59,650.00	89,475.00	119,300.00	149,125.00	178,950.00	238,600.00
10	65,150.00	97,725.00	130,300.00	162,875.00	195,450.00	260,600.00
11	70,650.00	105,975.00	141,300.00	176,625.00	211,950.00	282,600.00
12	76,150.00	114,225.00	152,300.00	190,375.00	228,450.00	304,600.00
13	81,650.00	122,475.00	163,300.00	204,125.00	244,950.00	326,600.00
14	87,150.00	130,725.00	174,300.00	217,875.00	261,450.00	348,600.00

[Reference: 2025 Federal Poverty Guidelines](#)

Service locations

The CTAC expects to fund two Akwaaba Freedom School sites, one in Hawthorne, FL and Newberry, FL. The Hawthorne site must serve residents of Hawthorne and Waldo. The Newberry site must serve residents of Newberry and Archer. Applicants must demonstrate their ability to recruit families from all eligible municipalities.

Applicants may provide services in a variety of locations, including but not limited to; schools, city or county parks and facilities, faith-based locations, and community organizations. Best practices indicate providing services at sites that do not charge or charge minimally for space (such as schools, parks, and faith-based locations) results in higher investments in staffing that can support program quality. Applicants must submit a site agreement letter from the facility owners confirming permission for access throughout the duration of the camp.

The physical environment in which a program operates is a foundation for the youth's experience in a program. Indoor and outdoor spaces should be able to accommodate all program activities adequately and safely. Key features of high-quality service locations include:

- Can safely and comfortably accommodate the various activities offered and/or can be rearranged to meet the various needs of the program (e.g., spaces for physical games, creative arts, individual/quiet work, and eating/socializing)
- The outdoor environment is suitable for a wide variety of activities, including physical activity, group games, and individual play
- Alternative plan if an environment is inaccessible due to weather or other external factors

Scheduling, Frequency and Duration

Site schedules must be approved by Akwaaba Freedom School Executive director. Schedules must include the following

- Six weeks of programming from June to August
- Operate for a minimum of eight hours per day
- Operate five days a week with the exception of holidays and unforeseen closures due to weather, etc

Staffing

Highly qualified staff members capable of developing strong, positive relationships with participants are a key component of successful youth programs. Applicants must demonstrate solid staff experience with similar services, including certifications and/or years of service. When possible, programs are encouraged to consider hiring staff from local schools that primarily serve their participants.

- Positions: Each Freedom School Site will be under the direction of Dr. Chonika Coleman-King, Executive Director of Akwaaba Freedom School located in Gainesville, Florida. In addition, each site will have an assigned Project Director. Five to Six additional staff will be needed for implementation. The staff must include 1 site coordinator, 3-4 Servant Leader Interns (1 Servant Leader per class of 10 scholars) and 1 Assistant servant Leader Intern.
- Background Screening: All staff working in CTAC-funded programs must comply with Level 2 background screening and fingerprinting requirements in accordance with § 943.0542, Fla. Stat., § 984.01, Fla. Stat., § 435, Fla. Stat., § 402, Fla. Stat., § 39.001, Fla. Stat., and § 1012.465, Fla. Stat. as applicable. The program must maintain staff personnel files which reflect that a screening result was received and reviewed to determine employment eligibility prior to employment. An Affidavit of Good Moral Character must be completed prior to hiring each employee, volunteer, and subcontracted personnel who work in direct contact with children. Program providers will be required to re-screen each employee, volunteer and/or subcontractor every five (5) years.
- Ratios: Ratios should be designed to meet the needs of the students targeted by the program and should be appropriate to support the efforts in addressing summer opportunity loss. Contractors shall implement a ratio no greater than 1:10 ratio.
- Infant and Child CPR/First Aid: Each summer program must always have at least one staff member on-site and during field trips with a current and valid certification in first aid training and infant and child cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) procedures. CTAC is sponsoring an infant and child first aid/CPR class that camp staff are expected to attend. If staff are not able to attend CTAC's sponsored course, they may attend a class on their own and provide a certificate of completion. CTAC will not cover the cost of classes taken outside of the CTAC sponsored course. If staff choose to take the First aid/CPR on their own, training may be classroom or online instruction and must include an on-site instructor-based skills assessment that is documented by a certified CPR instructor. Documentation of the online course and on-site assessment must be maintained on file at the facility.
- Enrollment Forms: Provider will collect from participants a CTAC developed enrollment form and submit the required data to CTAC (see Data Collection requirements). Freedom school sites may use their own enrollment form, but form must collect information required by CTAC and display CTAC logo.
- Program Consent: Provider will collect from participants a CTAC developed programmatic consent signifying voluntary agreement to the receipt of services and acknowledgement of CTAC as a funder.
- Image Release: Provider will collect from participants a CTAC developed image release for all children who participate in the program to indicate whether or not the parent authorizes photos to be shared and used for publicity purposes to promote the program and its funders. Photos

provided to CTAC must have parental authorization for all children who can be identified in photo. Freedom school sites may use their own image release form, but the form must include language authorizing use of photos by program funders.

- Participant files: Providers will enter enrollment forms, consent forms, and image releases for all participants into SAMIS. Providers will also maintain a physical file on site for each participant containing his/her enrollment form, consent form, and image release.

Budget and compensation

The CTAC has allocated up to \$160,000 for the Akwaaba Freedom School expansion of two additional sites. Each site will be required to incorporate the Freedom School budget components to ensure the program meets CDF requirements. All applicants must complete a site budget and summary budget including the following areas to determine the CTAC funding request:

- Staff Salary & Benefits
 - Servant Leader Interns (3 to 4)
 - Assistant Servant Leader Intern (1)
- Operating Expenses
 - Parent Meetings (6)
 - Special Meals
 - Classroom Supplies
 - Outdoor Supplies
 - Field Trips
 - Transportation (Field Trips)
 - National Training
 - Local Training
 - Staff Retreats/Outings (3)
 - Snacks
 - Afternoon Activities
 - Technology & Equipment

Each site will have the flexibility to select one of the following options based on the number of scholars they intend to enroll.

- Option 1 - 30 scholars of the following grade levels: Level 1 (K-2), Level 2 (3-5), Level 3 (6-8), Level 4 (9-12)
- Option 2- 40 scholars of the following grade levels: Level 1 (K-2), Level 2 (3-5), Level 3 (6-8), Level 4 (9-12)

Training Requirements

Successful applicants will be required to attend and complete the following training:

- Local Freedom School Training
- CDF National Freedom School Training in Knoxville, TN for Site Coordinators and Servant Leader Interns
- Freedom School Kick Off Training

Applicants are also required to attend the following CTAC training: Summer camp kickoff training, training on SAMIS (our data collection tool), and fiscal training. See table below for dates:

Summer Camp Kick Off Training (Required, In Person)	Thursday, May 8, 2025
Training for SAMIS Onboarding and Delivery (Required, In Person)	Wednesday, May 14, 2025 Friday, May 16, 2025
Summer Camp Fiscal Training (Required, In Person)	Wednesday, May 21, 2025
Provider Professional Development Training (Required, In Person)	Tuesday, May 27, 2025 Thursday, May 29, 2025

Data Collection:

CDF Freedom Schools initiate a multiyear assessment of programs annually. This measure has shown that the program has a statistically significant, positive effect on children's reading skills, attitudes toward learning, and belief in themselves and in their ability to make a difference in the world around them. Assessments include one or more of the following: The Basic Reading Inventory, surveys, observations, and interviews/focus groups.

CTAC requires the following data collection from funded Freedom Schools providers:

- Parental consent and image releases
- Participant demographics
- Participant attendance
- CTAC Satisfaction surveys
- CDF Freedom School's parent survey
- Basic Reading Inventory (pre-and-post assessments)

Data collection requirements and tools will be reviewed at the SAMIS onboarding training (see Staff Training above). Data is expected to be entered on a weekly basis throughout the summer.

Collaboration

Applicants will work to identify local entities that help support the development of children to partner with Freedom School. Through these partnerships applicants will collaboratively plan guest speakers and readers, and extracurricular activity facilitators. Applicants should build partnerships to help expose scholars to local historical sites and activities like chess, cultural dance, visual arts, etc. to provide creative and multimodal learning opportunities for scholars.

It is expected that successful applicants will demonstrate effective partnerships with collaborative services that would contribute to positive experiences for youth. CTAC is also devoted to supporting collaborative partnerships by expanding free training. Applicants are strongly encouraged to take advantage of CTAC training opportunities in [CTAC's Learning Management System](#).

A. Evaluation Criteria

Each application will be evaluated against the following set of criteria.

Evaluation Criteria	Review Guidelines	Maximum Points Awarded
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Organizational Capacity and Description	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide a detailed description of your organization below, including: (1) mission, (2) services it provides, (3) history of working on behalf of children, and (4) organizational governance, within Alachua County. 2. Describe your experience working with children and youth in an out-of-school environment. Tell us about any related programming you currently offer. 3. Describe your organization's ability to hire and train qualified staff and comply with the background screening requirement. 4. Describe how your organization supports an environment of safety and inclusiveness for children and youth, staff, and parents/caregivers. 	25
Program Description and Implementation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe how your organization will facilitate the implementation of an Akwaaba Freedom School Site. 2. Select the rural area (Hawthorne or Newberry) will you implement your Freedom School site? 3. Describe how you will identify a site location within Newberry or Hawthorne. 4. How many scholars do you propose to serve? Note: Sites must choose option 1 for 30 scholars or option 2 for 40 scholars. 5. How many children do you estimate serving at each level? Note: Based on the selected option above, sites can choose to serve a maximum of 30 or 40 scholars within any level. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level I (grades K-2)? • Level II (grades 3-5)? • Level III (grades 6-8)? • Level IV (grades 9-12)? 6. Describe how you will recruit participants(scholars). 7. Identify how you will recruit volunteers. 8. Describe your current community collaboration. Include How your community partners can be used to support the implementation of the Freedom School site. 	35

	9. Complete and attach a site profile for site.	
Budget	<p>1. Does your organization have a fiscal team? If so, describe their roles and responsibilities and how they will support your organization with your invoices.</p> <p>2. Complete and upload a budget worksheet aligned with the planned option.</p>	25
Program Video	<p>1. Complete a 3–5-minute video about your organization. The video must include the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of organization and summary of services offered. • Number of years your organization has offered services in Alachua County. • Why is your organization well suited to implement a Freedom School site? 	5
Site Agreement Letter	The applicant must submit a site agreement letter from the facility owners confirming permission for access throughout the duration of Freedom School programming.	10

Applicants with the two highest scores will be recommended for funding

Organization/Agency	Initiative Selection	Title	Total amount (Budget)	Score
I AM STEM	Summer Camp	I AM STEM: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	180095.5	101
GAINESVILLE AREA COMMUNITY TENNIS ASSOCIATION, INC.	Summer Camp	GAINESVILLE AREA COMMUNITY TENNIS ASSOCIATION, INC.: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	56700	97.5
Just for Us Education	Summer Camp	Just for Us Education: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	137120.11	95
GAINESVILLE CIRCUS CENTER, INC.	Summer Camp	GAINESVILLE CIRCUS CENTER, INC.: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	25200	94.75
GIRLS PLACE, INC.	Summer Camp	GIRLS PLACE, INC.: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	153934.46	94
Traveling Art Camp	Summer Camp	Traveling Art Camp: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	291949	93.25
COMMUNITY IMPACT CORPORATION, INC.	Summer Camp	COMMUNITY IMPACT CORPORATION, INC.: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	129299.5	92
BOYS' AND GIRLS' CLUBS OF NORTHEAST FLORIDA, INC.	Summer Camp	BOYS' AND GIRLS' CLUBS OF NORTHEAST FLORIDA, INC.: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	126000	88.75
DEEPER PURPOSE COMMUNITY CHURCH, INC.	Summer Camp	DEEPER PURPOSE COMMUNITY CHURCH, INC.: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	180110.46	88.25
Camp Makerie	Summer Camp	Camp Makerie: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	122750	86.75
IGB EDUCATION CORP	Summer Camp	IGB EDUCATION CORP: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	106468	86
KIDS COUNT IN ALACHUA COUNTY, INC.	Summer Camp	KIDS COUNT IN ALACHUA COUNTY, INC.: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	40001.62	85.25
Behavior Bricks	Summer Camp	Behavior Bricks: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	250182.46	85.25
1000 Voices of Florida, INC.	Summer Camp	1000 Voices of Florida, INC.: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	63540	84

The Concrete Rose Foundation	Summer Camp	The Concrete Rose Foundation: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	50000	83.25
University of Florida	Summer Camp	University of Florida: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	20296.74	82.5
Limitless Adventures, Inc.	Summer Camp	Limitless Adventures, Inc.: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	54025.04	80.75
University of Florida	Summer Camp	University of Florida: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	40000	80
MIRROR IMAGE EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP, INC.	Summer Camp	MIRROR IMAGE EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP, INC.: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	88800	79.75
Star Center Children's Theatre	Summer Camp	Star Center Children's Theatre: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	76440	79.25
HAGIOS EARLY LEARNING CENTER	Summer Camp	HAGIOS EARLY LEARNING CENTER: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	33677.25	78.25
DANCE ALIVE, INC.	Summer Camp	DANCE ALIVE, INC.: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	7000	77.75
Williams Temple	Summer Camp	App ID: 1076Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	39222.24	77.5
CULTURAL ARTS COALITION, INC.	Summer Camp	CULTURAL ARTS COALITION, INC.: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	14000	72.5
Greater Duval Neighborhood Association	Summer Camp	Greater Duval Neighborhood Association: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	113744.63	71.5
Alachua County Board of County Commissioners	Summer Camp	Alachua County Board of County Commissioners: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	40500	65.75
Palm Breeze Youth Services Inc	Summer Camp	Palm Breeze Youth Services Inc: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	67347	63.5
Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church	Summer Camp	Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church: Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP (Submitted)	13020	54.5
			2521424.01	



CHILDREN'S TRUST

OF ALACHUA COUNTY

Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP 2025-01 Award Announcement

Introduction

- The CTAC seeks qualified providers to offer summer camp services to children and youth in Alachua County.
- The CTAC also seeks qualified providers to support the expansion of Freedom School sites to Hawthorne, FL and Newberry, FL.
- Allocation: \$2,000,000
 - Summer Camp \$1,840,000
 - Freedom School \$160,000
- Target: Children and youth
- Service Location: Alachua County
- Terms of Service
 - May 1, 2025– August 30, 2025
 - Renewal opportunities
 - April 1, 2026 – August 30, 2026
 - April 1, 2027- August 30, 2027





Summer Camps

Summer Camp:

- Offer ongoing in-person summer camp services and programming that serve children and families
- Serve low- and middle-income children who reside in Alachua County entering grades K to 12th
- Recruit eligible children for CTAC summer camp scholarships
- Implement creative, innovative programming that meets the needs and interests of children enrolled
- Employ highly qualified staff members capable of developing strong, positive relationships with participants Host summer camp services at sites that are safe and enriching environments
- Staff trained in first aid and infant and child cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) procedures
- Ensure minimum staff ratios are 1:20 and all staff have Level 2 background screenings, approved by DCF
- Ensure required liability coverage requirements are met prior to contract execution



Freedom School

Freedom School:

- Serve low- to middle- income children who reside in Alachua County entering grades K to 12th
- Recruit eligible children to attend Freedom School
- Attend all required Freedom School trainings
- Implement and host Freedom School in Hawthorne, FL and Newberry, FL
- Host Freedom School at a site that is safe and has an enriching environment
- Employ highly qualified staff members capable of developing strong, positive relationships with participants
- Provide Freedom School for six weeks
- Staff trained in first aid and infant and child cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) procedures
- Ensure minimum staff ratios are 1:10 and all staff have Level 2 background screenings, approved by DCF
- Ensure required liability coverage requirements are met prior to contract execution



Target Population

Target Population

The target population for this RFP is children and youth from low- to middle income families living in Alachua County, who are rising kindergarteners through rising 12th graders.

Summer camp providers will recruit and enroll children in summer camp programming under the following criteria:

- Children from families at or below 300% FPL
- Children in foster care
- Children in voluntary and formal kinship care
- Children under in-home case management supervision, and/or
- Children from families receiving SNAP benefits

Freedom School

- 60% of youth from families under 300% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Service Location

Service Locations

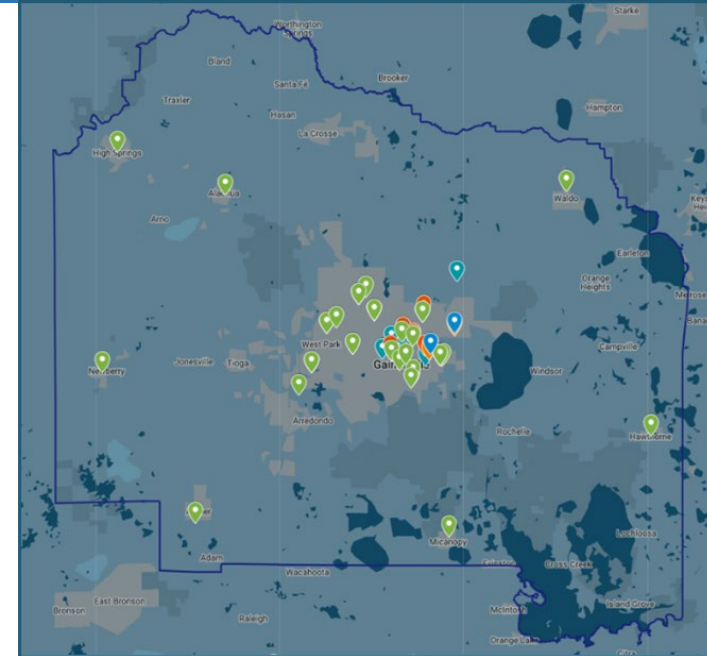
The CTAC expects to fund sites throughout Alachua County.

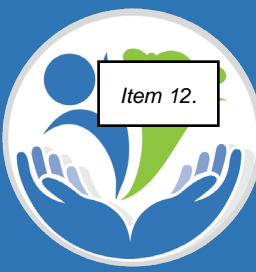
- Alachua
- Archer*
- Hawthorne*
- High Springs
- La Crosse*
- Micanopy
- Newberry
- Waldo*

Freedom School

- Hawthorne
- Newberry

- Applicants may provide services in a variety of locations, including, but not limited to schools, city or county parks and facilities, faith-based locations, and community organizations.
- Indoor and outdoor spaces should be able to accommodate all program activities adequately and safely.





Summer Camp Evaluation Criteria

Organizational Capacity and Description=25points

Summer Camp Description and Implementation=35points

Budget=20points

Provider Video=5points

Site Agreement Letter=15points

Bonus Points (Rural Areas =5pts and Camp Duration=5pts)

Application Score	
80 - 100	Organizations with the highest scores will be recommended for funding, contingent upon available funding
70-79.9	
69.9 and below	Not recommended for funding



Freedom School Evaluation Criteria

Organizational Capacity and Description = 25 Points

Program Description and Implementation = 35 Points

Budget = 25 Points

Provider Video = 5 Points

Site Agreement Letter = 10 Points

Total possible Points = 100

Applicants with the two highest scores will be recommended for
funding

Summer Camp and Freedom School Budget & Compensation



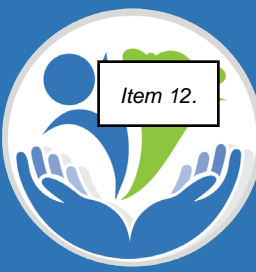
- All applicants must complete a site budget and summary budget
- Traditional Camps \$300 per child per week for traditional camp programs
- Specialty camp \$350 per child per week for programs.
- The CTAC has allocated up to \$160,000 for the Akwaaba Freedom School expansion.

Performance Measures

- Children enrolled
- Program days
- Youth attendance
- Youth and family satisfaction
- Staff training



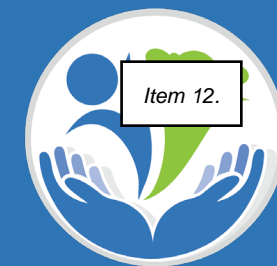
Performance Measures



Item 12.

How Much?	Target
Children enrolled who attend at least 3 days in a week	Based on proposal
Number of program days	Based on proposal
Number of staff training sessions	Based on proposal
How Well?	Target
Children attend for the number of days anticipated	75%
Parents were satisfied with camp communication	85%
Families were satisfied with the camp experience overall	90%
Staff felt training equipped them to succeed in their role	90%
Staff felt training equipped them with skills to maintain a safe environment and handle emergencies	95%
Better Off?	Target
Families were satisfied with the learning activities offered	90%
Families report their children enjoyed their camp experience	90%
Families felt their children were safe while at camp	90%

Performance Measures: Freedom Schools



How Much?	Target
Scholars enrolled who attend at least one day	Based on proposal
Number of program days	Based on proposal
Number of parents who participate in one or more family engagement activity	Based on proposal
Number of volunteers assisting with camp programming	Based on proposal
How Well?	Target
Scholar Attendance (the average number of days attended relative to the number of program days for all scholars enrolled)	85%
Parent/Caregiver Involvement (the percentage of scholars enrolled who had one or more parent/caregiver attend a weekly family engagement activity)	50%
Parents were satisfied with Camp Communication	85%
Families were satisfied with the Overall Camp Experience	90%
Better Off?	Target
Scholars Improve or Maintain Reading Scores	80%
Scholars Gain Confidence	90%
Families were satisfied with Learning Activities Offered	90% <div>458</div>
Families felt their Children were Safe while at Camp	90%

FY 2025 Summer Camp RFP

Scoring & Budget Summary



Organization	Total amount (Budget)	Score	Budget Summary	Total Cost	Request from CTAC	Other Sources	Maximum CTAC Funding
I AM STEM	\$180,095.50	101	Total Cost	\$256,081.55	\$180,095.50	\$75,986.05	\$180,095.50
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	250	150	100	
			Total Program Weeks	8	8	8	
			Cost per child per week	\$128.04	\$150.08	\$94.98	
GAINESVILLE AREA COMMUNITY TENNIS ASSOCIATION, INC.	\$56,700.00	97.5	Total Cost	\$263,647.35	\$56,700.00	\$343,787.64	\$56,700.00
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	27	27	27	
			Total Program Weeks	7	7	7	
			Cost per child per week	\$1,394.96	\$300.00	\$1,818.98	
Just for Us Education	\$137,120.11	95	Total Cost	\$137,120.11	\$137,120.11	\$0.00	\$137,120.11
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	140	130	10	
			Total Program Weeks	8	8	8	
			Cost per child per week	\$122.43	\$131.85	\$0.00	
GAINESVILLE CIRCUS CENTER, INC.	\$25,200.00	94.75	Total Cost	\$88,159.50	\$25,200.00	\$62,959.50	\$25,200.00
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	28	12	16	
			Total Program Weeks	6	6	6	
			Cost per child per week	\$524.76	\$350.00	\$655.83	
GIRLS PLACE, INC.	\$153,934.46	94	Total Cost	\$340,516.24	\$153,934.46	\$186,581.78	\$153,934.46
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	165	110	55	
			Total Program Weeks	9	9	9	
			Cost per child per week	\$229.30	\$155.49	\$376.93	
Traveling Art Camp	\$291,949.00	93.25	Total Cost	\$379,150.00	\$291,945.50	\$87,204.50	\$291,945.50
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	110	85	25	
			Total Program Weeks	10	10	10	
			Cost per child per week	\$344.68	\$343.47	\$348.82	
COMMUNITY IMPACT CORPORATION, INC.	\$129,299.50	92	Total Cost	\$146,105.50	\$129,299.50	\$16,809.00	\$129,299.50
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	75	60	15	
			Total Program Weeks	9	9	9	
			Cost per child per week	\$216.45	\$239.44	\$124.51	
BOYS' AND GIRLS' CLUBS OF NORTHEAST FLORIDA, INC.	\$126,000.00	88.75	Total Cost	\$318,733.61	\$126,000.00	\$192,733.61	\$126,000.00
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	70	70	70	
			Total Program Weeks	6	6	6	
			Cost per child per week	\$758.89	\$300.00	\$458.89	

FY 2025 Summer Camp RFP

Scoring & Budget Summary



Organization	Total amount (Budget)	Score	Budget Summary	Total Cost	Request from CTAC	Other Sources	Maximum CTAC Funding
DEEPER PURPOSE COMMUNITY CHURCH, INC.	\$180,110.46	88.25	Total Cost	\$523,898.10	\$180,110.46	\$343,787.64	\$180,000.00
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	70	60	10	
			Total Program Weeks	10	10	10	
			Cost per child per week	\$748.43	\$300.18	\$3,437.88	
Camp Makerie	\$122,750.00	86.75	Total Cost	\$236,805.00	\$130,697.00	\$106,108.00	\$122,500.00
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	125	50	75	
			Total Program Weeks	7	7	7	
			Cost per child per week	\$270.63	\$373.42	\$202.11	
IGB EDUCATION CORP	\$106,468.00	86	Total Cost	\$179,670.00	\$106,468.00	\$73,202.00	\$106,468.00
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	45	45		
			Total Program Weeks	8	8		
			Cost per child per week	\$499.08	\$295.74	\$0.00	
KIDS COUNT IN ALACHUA COUNTY, INC.	\$40,001.62	85.25	Total Cost	\$40,001.62	\$40,001.62	\$0.00	\$40,001.62
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	35	35	0	
			Total Program Weeks	4	4	0	
			Cost per child per week	\$285.73	\$285.73	\$0.00	
Behavior Bricks	\$250,182.46	85.25	Total Cost	\$251,122.70	\$250,182.46	\$940.24	\$250,182.46
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	80	80	0	
			Total Program Weeks	9	9	0	
			Cost per child per week	\$348.78	\$347.48	\$0.00	
1000 Voices of Florida, INC.	\$63,540.00	84	Total Cost	\$74,325.44	\$63,540.00	\$10,785.44	\$63,540.00
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	50	50	50	
			Total Program Weeks	9	9	9	
			Cost per child per week	\$165.17	\$141.20	\$23.97	
The Concrete Rose Foundation	\$50,000.00	83.25	Total Cost	\$62,589.86	\$50,008.75	\$12,581.11	\$50,008.75
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	25	15	10	
			Total Program Weeks	8	8	8	
			Cost per child per week	\$312.95	\$416.74	\$157.26	
University of Florida Veterinacy Medicine	\$20,296.74	82.5	Total Cost	\$38,630.55	\$20,296.74	\$18,333.81	\$8,750.00
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	25	25	25	
			Total Program Weeks	1	1	1	
			Cost per child per week	\$1,545.22	\$811.87	\$733.35	

← \$1,799,477

← \$1,862,987

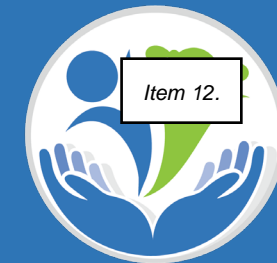
← \$1,912,996

← \$1,921,746

460

FY 2025 Summer Camp RFP

Scoring & Budget Summary



Organization	Total amount (Budget)	Score	Budget Summary	Total Cost	Request from CTAC	Other Sources	Maximum CTAC Funding
Limitless Adventures, Inc.	\$54,025.04	80.75	Total Cost	\$54,025.04	\$54,025.04	\$0.00	\$54,025.04
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	20	20	20	
			Total Program Weeks	8	8	8	
			Cost per child per week	\$337.66	\$337.66	\$0.00	
University of Florida CROP	\$40,000.00	80	Total Cost	\$52,205.49	\$40,373.48	\$11,832.01	\$35,000.00
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	20	20	20	
			Total Program Weeks	5	5	5	
			Cost per child per week	\$522.05	\$403.73	\$118.32	
MIRROR IMAGE EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP, INC.	\$88,800.00	79.75	Total Cost	\$118,444.60	\$88,818.43	\$29,626.17	\$88,800.00
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	74	74	74	
			Total Program Weeks	4	4	4	
			Cost per child per week	\$400.15	\$300.06	\$100.09	
Star Center Children's Theatre	\$76,440.00	79.25	Total Cost	\$111,720.00	\$76,440.00	\$35,280.00	\$76,440.00
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	95	65	30	
			Total Program Weeks	6	6	6	
			Cost per child per week	\$196.00	\$196.00	\$196.00	
HAGIOS EARLY LEARNING CENTER	\$33,677.25	78.25	Total Cost	\$33,760.85	\$33,667.25	\$93.60	\$26,400.00
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	11	11	11	
			Total Program Weeks	8	8	8	
			Cost per child per week	\$383.65	\$382.58	\$1.06	
DANCE ALIVE, INC.	\$7,000.00	77.75	Total Cost	\$7,013.79	\$7,000.00	\$13.79	\$7,000.00
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	20	20	20	
			Total Program Weeks	1	1	1	
			Cost per child per week	\$350.69	\$350.00	\$0.69	
Williams Temple Church	\$39,222.24	77.5	Total Cost	\$40,732.24	\$39,222.24	\$1,510.00	\$39,222.24
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	350	350	350	
			Total Program Weeks	1	1	1	
			Cost per child per week	\$116.38	\$112.06	\$4.31	
CULTURAL ARTS COALITION, INC.	\$14,000.00	72.5	Total Cost	\$30,357.00	\$14,000.00	\$16,357.00	\$3,500.00
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	8	2	6	
			Total Program Weeks	5	5	5	
			Cost per child per week	\$758.93	\$1,400.00	\$0.00	

\$1,975,771

\$2,010,771

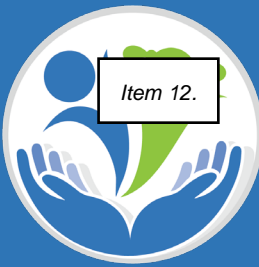


FY 2025 Summer Camp RFP

Scoring & Budget Summary

Organization	Total amount (Budget)	Score	Budget Summary	Total Cost	Request from CTAC	Other Sources	Maximum CTAC Funding
Greater Duval Neighborhood Association	\$113,744.63	71.5	Total Cost	\$52,404.63	\$113,744.63	\$0.00	\$42,000.00
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	20	20	0	
			Total Program Weeks	7	7	0	
			Cost per child per week	\$374.32	\$812.46	\$0.00	
Cuscowilla Summer Camp	\$40,500.00	65.75	Total Cost	\$130,828.80	\$40,463.90	\$90,364.90	\$40,463.90
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	75	75	75	
			Total Program Weeks	7	7	7	
			Cost per child per week	\$249.20	\$77.07	\$172.12	
Palm Breeze Youth Services Inc	\$67,347.00	63.5	Total Cost	\$62,240.00	\$67,347.00	-\$5,107.00	\$67,347.00
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	60	60	60	
			Total Program Weeks	8	8	8	
			Cost per child per week	\$129.67	\$140.31	-\$10.64	
Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church	\$13,020.00	54.5	Total Cost	\$13,020.00	\$13,020.00	\$0.00	\$10,500.00
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	20	15	5	
			Total Program Weeks	2	2	2	
			Cost per child per week	\$325.50	\$434.00	\$0.00	
FY 2025 Summer Camp Totals	\$2,521,424.01	82.804	Total Cost	\$4,043,309.57	\$2,529,722.07	\$1,711,770.79	\$2,412,444.08
			Total Budgeted Enrollment	2093	1736	1159	
			Total Program Weeks	181	181	153	
			Cost per child per week	\$12,039.69	\$9,888.62	\$9,015.48	

Cost



Summer Camp total allocated	Summer Camp total requested	Staff Recommendation total
\$1,840,000	\$2,521,424	\$1,912,996

Freedom School allocated	Freedom School requested	Freedom School requested
\$160,000	\$0.00	\$80,000



Next steps

- Approval to negotiate contracts April 7, 2025
- Preparation for contract negotiation April 8th-11th
- Contract negotiations begin Monday, April 14, 2025, through Friday, April 25, 2025
- Contracts begin Thursday, May 1, 2025



Recommendations

- 1) Approve Resolution 2025-03, Summer Camp and Freedom School RFP award recommendation
- 2) Authorize staff to negotiate and execute contracts with organizations that are within the approved board allocation.
- 3) Integrate all Freedom School allocated funds into Summer Camp allocation or,
- 4) Fund one Freedom School, not to exceed \$80,000. Remaining funds to be added in Summer Camp allocation.



CHILDREN'S TRUST

OF ALACHUA COUNTY

Thank you!

**CHILDREN'S TRUST OF ALACHUA COUNTY
FUNDING RECOMMENDATION
RESOLUTION 2025-03
SUMMER CAMP & FREEDOM SCHOOL RFP 2025-01**

WHEREAS, the Children's Trust of Alachua County (CTAC) developed and approved Resolution 2020-12, Procurement Policies; and

WHEREAS, the Trust seeks to fund qualified providers to offer summer camp services to children and youth in Alachua County. Providers should offer children and youth a summer filled with fun and exposure to a variety of exciting activities. CTAC intends to fund two additional Freedom School sites, expanding Freedom School access to rural communities in Alachua County.

WHEREAS, the Trust approved \$2,000,000 for the Summer Camp and Freedom School allocation for FY 24-25,

NOW THEREFORE, be it ordained by the Board of Children's Trust of Alachua County, in the State of Florida, as follows:

SECTION 1: EFFECTIVE DATE This Resolution shall be in full force and effect from 4.7.2025 and after the required approval and publication according to law.

PASSED AND ADOPTED BY THE CHILDREN'S TRUST OF ALACHUA COUNTY BOARD; this 7th day of April 2025.

	AYE	NAY	ABSENT	NOT VOTING
Ken Cornell	_____	_____	_____	_____
Cheryl Twombly	_____	_____	_____	_____
Dr. Maggie Labarta	_____	_____	_____	_____
Lee Pinkoson	_____	_____	_____	_____
Tina Certain	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mary Chance	_____	_____	_____	_____
Hon. Susanne Wilson	_____	_____	_____	_____
Bullard	_____	_____	_____	_____
Dr. Nancy Hardt	_____	_____	_____	_____
Dr. Kamela Patton	_____	_____	_____	_____

Presiding Officer

Attest

Ken Cornell, Chair
Children's Trust of Alachua County

Marsha Kiner, Secretary
Children's Trust of Alachua County

File Attachments for Item:

13. Business Leadership Institute for Early Learning *V'Locity Masterclass and Accreditation Academy Spring 2024* Overview (Mia Jones)

**Item:**

Business Leadership Institute for Early Learning V'Locity Masterclass and Accreditation Academy Spring 2024 Overview (Mia Jones)

Requested Action:

The Board is asked to receive this update.

Background:

Business Leadership for Early Learning Inc. offers industry specific Master Classes, conferences, alumni trainings, online support, peer-to-peer meetings and advocacy engagement with key industry decision makers, legislators, and community leaders to explore better outcomes with Early Learning Owners and Directors as a larger network of small business entrepreneurs. This report will share the Spring 2024 end of cohort 3 report and one year later report for cohort 2 2023.

Programmatic Impact:

Goal 2- All children and youth can learn what they need to be successful.

Fiscal Impact:

\$294,025.00

Recommendation:

The Board is asked to receive this update.



CHILDREN'S TRUST

OF ALACHUA COUNTY

Business and Leadership Institute

Master Class and Accreditation Academy Spring 2024 Overview

Master Class Cohort 3

- Spring 2024 (January –April 2024)
- 14 Centers and Family Home Based Businesses

2024 Mentors



Carol Foo, Lead
Conway Learning Center

Russell Scoates, Center Based
Small World Daycare and Learning Center

Dietra Sherman, Family Home
Patti-Cake Christian Academy

(Lead Mentor for Fall 2024-2025)

Bonnie Bowman, Center Based
Persimmon Early Learning Academy

Fall 2024 Facilitators



**Maria Gonzalez, Business & Finance
Wells Fargo**

**Shareen Baptiste, Marketing
Xposure Consulting Firm**

**Trisha Roy, Real Estate
Open Spaces International**

**Heather Vogel, Human Resources
Children's Home Society**



V'Locity Master Class - Spring 2024

- Kids Count in Alachua County
-
- Gainesville Empowerment Zone Family Learning Center
- Santa Fe College Little School
- Hawthorne Academy, LLC
- Love -N- Care Preschool
- Kid's Culture Learning Academy, LLC
- Vinson Family Daycare Home
- Little Debbie's Childcare
- Tiny Little Blessing
- Head Family Daycare
- Central Kids Learning Academy
- Lyria Loving Daycare
- E & C Early Learning Center Inc.
- Scott Large Family Childcare Home

Accreditation Academy

- Cohort 1-2022
- Cohort 2-2023
- Cohort 3-Spring 2024
- Cohort 4- Fall 2024-2025

Accreditation Academy Cohorts

2022 Cohort 1



Complete

- Persimmon Early Learning Academy, LLC
- Little People Preparatory Preschool, Inc.
- Hagios Early Learning Center
- Lee's Fun To Learn Daycare & Tutoring Inc

2023 Cohort 2 Center



Complete

- Small Steps Institute, LLC
- The Kidz House
- Granny D's Learning Center
- Morning Meadow Preschool and Kindergarten
- Step By Step Learning Center
- Hand N Hand CCC

2023 Cohort 2 Home-Based



Complete

- Pattie-Cake Christian Academy
- Mitchell Childcare
- Incredible Minds Learning Childcare
- Maria Papallo Large Family Daycare Home
- Simmons home Childcare

Accreditation Academy Cohorts

2024 Cohort 3 Center

In Progress

- Kids Count in Alachua County
- Gainesville Empowerment Zone Family Learning Center
- Santa Fe College Little School
- Kid's Life Academy

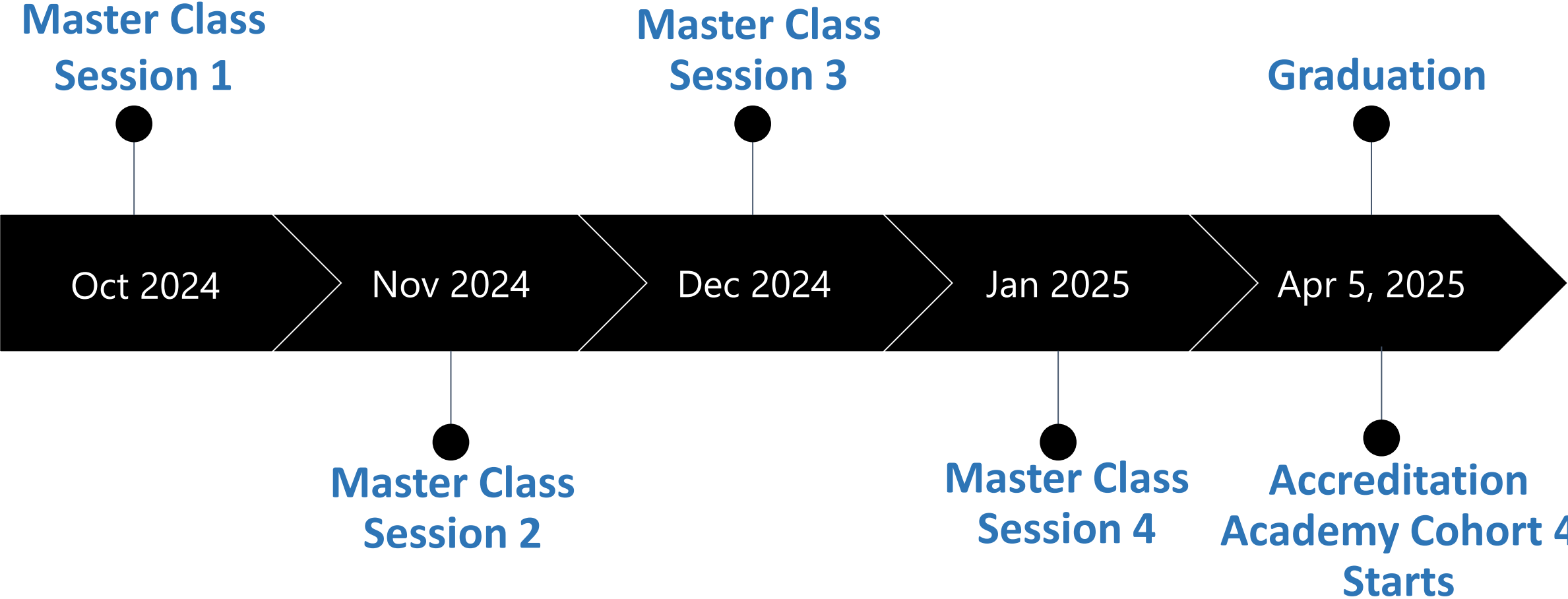


2024 Cohort 3 Home

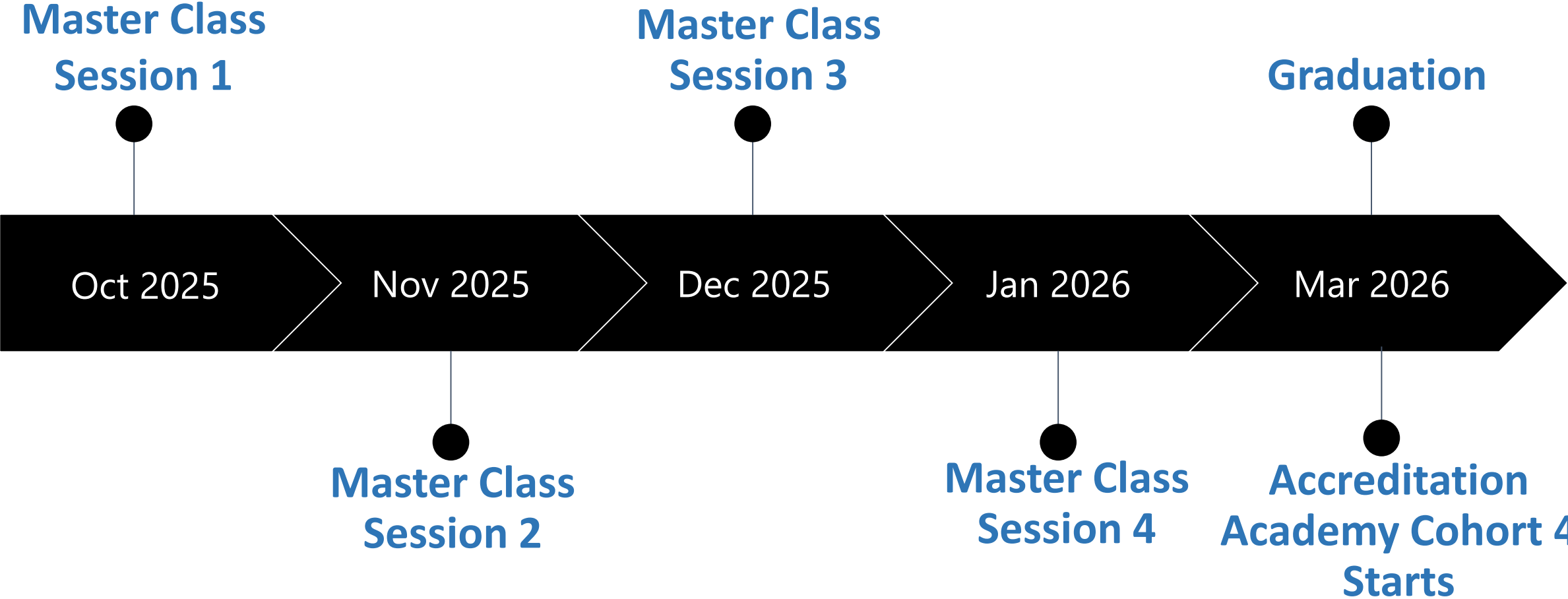
In Progress

- Kid's Culture Learning Academy LLC
- Little Debbie's Childcare
- Tiny Little Blessing
- Head Family Daycare
- Scott Large Family Childcare Home
- Central Kids Learning Academy

Alachua County V'Locity Master Class Cohort 4 Fall 2024-2025 Schedule



Alachua County V'Locity Master Class Cohort 5 Fall 2025-2026 Schedule



Motivating

EARLY LEARNING PROVIDERS TO

Think Smart



BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

ANNUAL REPORT

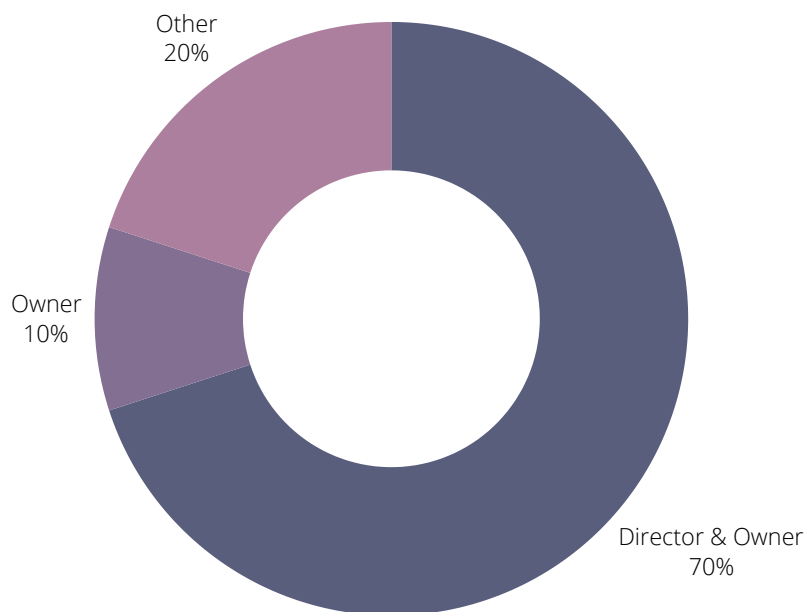


ALACHUA 2024

ALACHUA PARTICIPANTS

We asked Alachua participants, who completed the BLI master class series a year ago, to respond to a few questions about their experiences in the BLI. This report provides information reported by 10 participants.

With individuals leaving the childcare profession at astonishing rates, we asked alumni if they remained in the field. **100% of Alachua alumni reported that they were still working in childcare and 100% reported that they were open for business.**

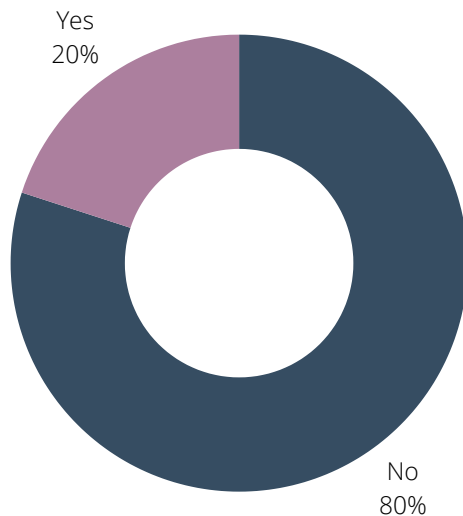


Of the 10 respondents, nearly 70% identified themselves as Directors and Owners. An additional 10% identified as solely owners. An additional 20% identified as “other,” and are typically other serve in other administrative roles or as lead teachers in the center.

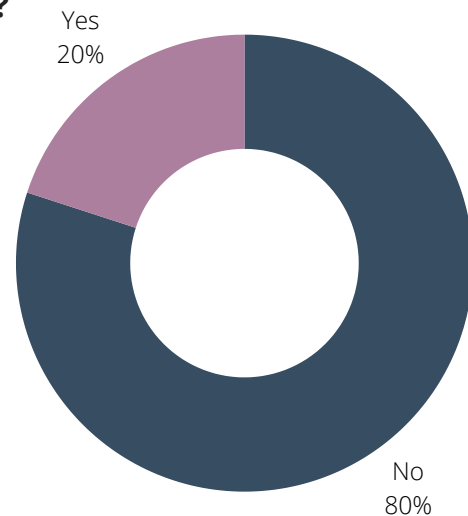
We asked Alachua Alumni about their current experiences, including whether they noticed any changes since participating in the BLI.

We asked:

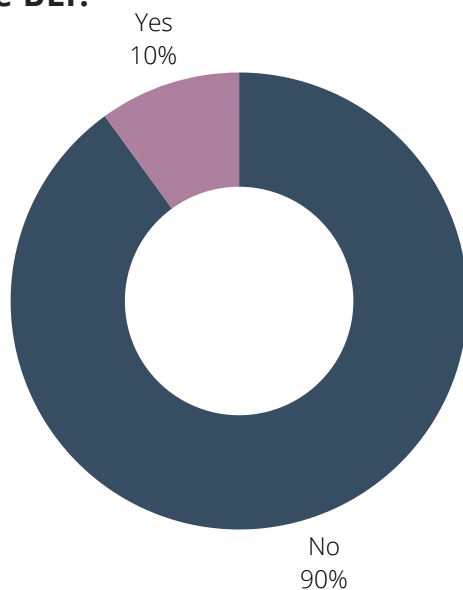
Has the shortage of Early Learning teachers affected your business?



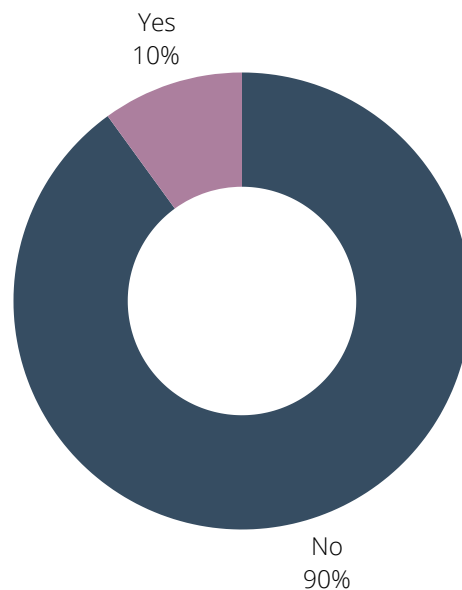
Have you increased your business revenue since participating in the BLI?



Have you been able to increase your salary since participating in the BLI?



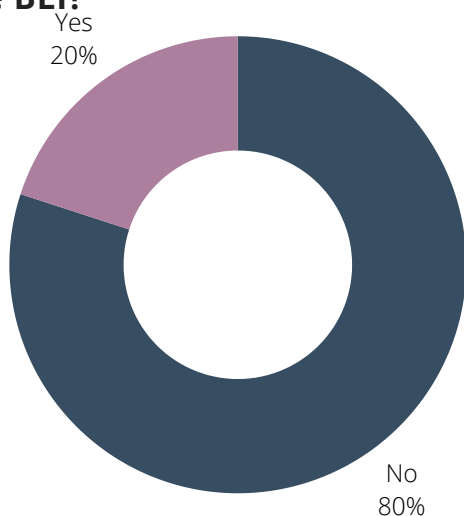
Have you increased enrollment since participating in the BLI?



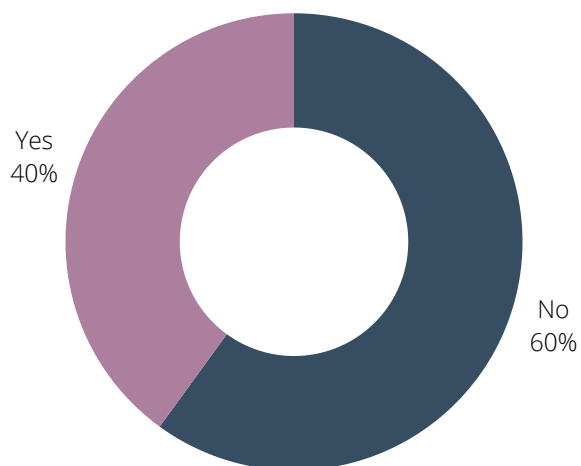
Overall, few participants reported increasing their revenue and enrollment. As businesses finally rebound from COVID, implementing changes from the BLI may be taking longer than one year to experience positive outcomes. As such, these outcome may be appropriate.

We asked additional questions about their current business practices:

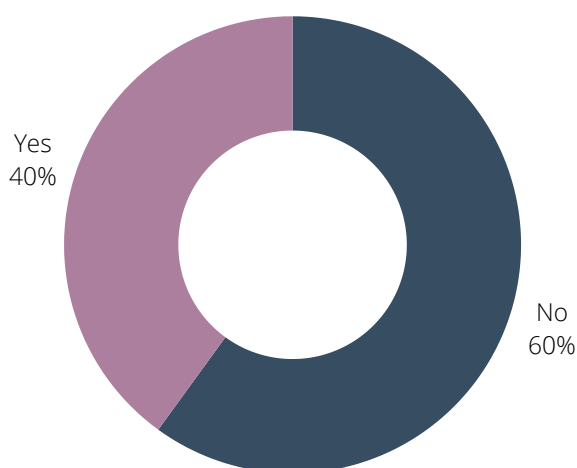
Have you hired additional employees since participating in the BLI?



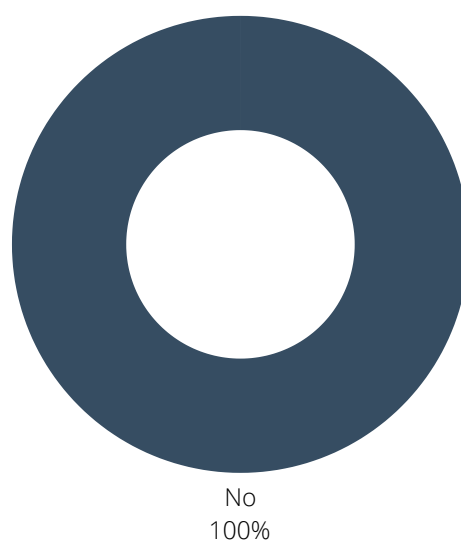
Have you increased teacher salaries since participating in the BLI?



Have you obtained any new accreditations since participating in the BLI?



Have you negotiated or renegotiated a lease or with a vendor since participating in the BLI?



Most participants reported that they did not hire new employees. However, nearly half reported investing in their teachers with increased salaries. Many also placed their resources toward obtaining new accreditations. Alumni did not renegotiate leases or vendor contracts.

VOICES

Tell us how the BLI helped you improve your business:

- *Changed my view not only are we a child care but a business to grow revenue.*
- *Helped immensely getting APPLE accreditation. Was only accredited at end of June so have not seen effects yet.*
- *It was about myself and the business. I learned a lot as well it refreshed my memory.*
- *We are starting the Apple accreditation process!*
- *BLI has help me improve my business by letting me take the training and it learn me how to be a better business owner.*
- *I'm so grateful for the BLI, it has helped in every aspect of the childcare industry. I'm thankful for Ms. Robin reaching and encouraging me to take the course. The course was very informative and has helped me to see things differently. A special Thanks to Ms. Stephanie, my mentor I can't thank her enough she's has been a BLESSING to me during this process of preparing me for accreditation.*
- *The school I was working with has definitely benefitted from BLI including staff acquisition, living wages, vendor negotiations, and overall financial learning.*
- *I really enjoyed taking the BLI class even those things are still the same because I am a regular home childcare and I do use some of the strategy that I have learned. I just wish I knew about this class when I had my center because it would have help me out a lot.*
- *BLI has help improved my business by making me aware of the different platforms that I can use to market and manage my business.*

File Attachments for Item:

14. Gun Violence Initiative Update

Children's Trust of Alachua County

Gun Violence Prevention Program Funding

City of Gainesville

Report #1 – April 2025

The funding agreement between the Children's Trust of Alachua County and the City of Gainesville was executed on February 12, 2025. Please find in this report the details of the project that have been completed since then.

Violence Interruption - \$150,000

a. Operations, Policies and Procedures

A collaborative effort between various City Departments, Community Stakeholders, and the Sherriff's Department worked to establish effective policies and procedures for the Violence Interrupters prior to their start date.

b. Onboarding

The City of Gainesville initiated the onboarding process of four Violence Interrupters and one Program Coordinator to manage the initiative. All candidates successfully completed the hiring screening process and started employment with the City of Gainesville on March 24, 2025.

c. Training

The Program Coordinator and Violence Interrupters are receiving training over the next two weeks in order to ensure they are efficiently knowledgeable of the established procedures, safety guidelines, de-escalation methods (both verbal and physical), mental health concerns, life-saving procedures such as Narcan and CPR/First Aid, and more. After the core necessary trainings are completed, the program will be fully operational and cleared for community engagement.

Technology Hub Carts - \$50,400

The Technology Hub Carts are in the planning phase. Crime data will be used to identify areas throughout the county that have been disproportionately impacted by gun violence to determine cart locations. We will then work with stakeholders and community-based programs in those communities to gather feedback on locations where the carts can be effectively leveraged as a resource. This work will be done with input from Alliance stakeholders throughout the project.

In an effort to engage stakeholders county-wide the Alliance is meeting in locations throughout the Alachua County to encourage diverse participation and ensure inclusivity and access for neighbors in outlying areas. The first county-based meeting was held on March 10, 2025, in the City of Alachua.

The next Alliance meeting will be April 14, 2025 in High Springs, FL.

Additional Facilitator for the City of Gainesville Youth Steering Committee - \$4,750

Corey Collins was selected as the Additional Facilitator for the Youth Steering Committee given his specialized experience and knowledge of youth engagement practices, including connecting with youth who are at high risk or have been impacted by youth gun violence, his abilities to utilize a trauma informed approach, and experience working with youth and communities at high risk of gun violence.

The contract with Mr. Collins was executed on March 17th, 2025. His first Youth Steering Committee under contract was March 19th, 2025.

a. Time Log

Date	Task	Start Time	End Time	Daily Total
3/19/2025	Youth Steering Committee (YSC)	4:00	6:00	2
3/24/2025	Planning	3:15	4:15	1
3/27/2025	CommuniTEEN Kickback planning	2:00	3:00	1
				TOTAL: 4 hours

b. Summary of facilitator recruitment efforts to expand the committee

Mr. Collins spoke with youth at AMI Kids regarding membership in the City's Youth Steering Committee.

c. Report of discussion topics led by facilitator

At the March meeting of the Youth Steering Committee, discussion topics included finalizing the onboarding paperwork for new members. Additionally, facilitators received input from members about CommuniTeen Kickback event. This event will be held in partnership with the Residences at Oakview to gather information from teens on youth gun violence and is being planned by the City of Gainesville Youth Steering Committee.

d. Number of attendees of the Youth Steering Committee per month

There were four members in attendance at the March meeting of the Youth Steering Committee.

Strategic Planning Consultant - \$30,000

With recommendations from multiple Gun Violence Prevention Alliance stakeholder meetings, a Scope of Work and a Request for Proposals Solicitation for a Strategic Planning Consultant was drafted. City of Gainesville staff, Alachua County Staff, and Santa Fe College Staff also provided input and approved the final draft.

On Wednesday March 12th, 2025, the Request for Proposals for the county-wide gun violence strategic plan was posted and the notice of the imposition for the cone of silence was issued. Scope of work is attached.

The City of Gainesville will oversee procurement for the strategic planning process and report progress to the CTAC board.

Gun Violence Prevention Alliance - Strategic Plan

Scope of Work

The Gainesville City Commission, the Alachua County Commission, and the United States Surgeon General all declared gun violence a public health crisis. Community and government participants in an August 2023 summit discussed gun-violence related topics and recommended a partnership anchored by a central clearinghouse, convener, and collaborator to share data pertaining to gun violence. In response, Alachua County (“the County”), the City of Gainesville (“the City”), and Santa Fe College (“the College”) formed the Community Gun Violence Prevention Alliance (“the Alliance”), to enhance cooperation and strengthen efforts to address gun violence, to improve systems and collaborative strategies to produce better outcomes for survivors of gun violence and those at risk, and to spearhead a collaborative group of community stakeholders.

The Alliance (GVA) is a collaborative initiative focused on addressing gun violence in Alachua County. This proposal seeks a qualified consultant or organization to develop a three to five-year comprehensive strategic plan to prevent and reduce gun violence using a public health approach, targeting all major causes and manifestations, including homicide, community-based violence, domestic/interpersonal violence, suicide, and accidental shootings. The plan will emphasize collaboration, community involvement, evidence-based approaches, and performance measurement. All activities will be conducted in a trauma-informed manner.

****Objectives:****

- Develop a county-wide strategic plan that addresses gun violence in all forms; homicide, community-based violence, domestic violence, suicide, and accidental shootings.
- Engage with community stakeholders throughout Alachua County municipalities; including Gainesville, Alachua, High Springs, Archer, Micanopy, Waldo, LaCross, Hawthorne, and Newberry as well as unincorporated areas to ensure the plan is informed by those most impacted, including youth.
- Align the plan with existing prevention and intervention efforts by the City of Gainesville, Alachua County, and Santa Fe College.
- Provide actionable recommendations that are feasible, sustainable, innovative, and culturally appropriate.
- Establish performance metrics to measure the effectiveness of implemented strategies.
- Identify opportunities for skill development for the workforce, policymakers, and others with respect to gun violence prevention
- Through the planning process strengthen the Alliance and Stakeholder group with respect to collaboration, coordination, and communication

- All community engagement activities need to be conducted in a trauma-informed manner.

****Scope of Work:****

Phase 1: Assessment and Data Collection

- Review Existing Literature and Initiatives: Assess current strategies, initiatives, and policies related to gun violence prevention within Alachua County and beyond. Identify gaps and areas for improvement.
- Data Analysis: Collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data on gun violence incidents, patterns, and demographics from local law enforcement, healthcare providers, and community organizations. Collect and analyze data related to local resources for gun violence prevention to identify gaps, over and under utilized programs and activities. Utilize an equity lens in conducting all data analyses.
- Community Engagement: Use the design thinking process to conduct focus groups, interviews, and surveys with stakeholders, including residents, law enforcement, youth, healthcare providers, educators, faith-based organizations, and advocacy groups, to gather input and insights. Engagement will provide an opportunity for multiple ages and perspectives to be represented.

Phase 2: Plan Development

- Strategic Framework Design: Develop a framework that integrates violence prevention models, such as public health approaches and place-based policing, adapted to the context of Alachua County. Include primary, secondary, and tertiary approaches to prevention.
- Identifying Priority Areas: Based on data and stakeholder input, identify key focus areas for intervention, such as youth engagement, mental health, domestic violence prevention, and community policing.
- Drafting Actionable Strategies: Propose evidence-based actions, programs, and initiatives tailored to the priority areas. Ensure strategies are inclusive and considerate of cultural and socioeconomic factors.
- Partnership and Resource Mapping: Identify potential partners and resources, including federal, state, and local funding sources, that can support plan implementation.

Phase 3: Implementation and Monitoring Plan

- Implementation Timeline: Develop a phased implementation timeline that outlines short-term and long-term goals.

- Performance Metrics: Establish clear metrics and indicators to evaluate the success of the plan. Include mechanisms for regular review and adjustment based on outcomes.
- Capacity Building: Recommend capacity-building measures for local organizations and stakeholders involved in plan implementation.

****Deliverables:****

- A comprehensive report detailing findings, strategic framework, actionable strategies, implementation timeline, and performance metrics.
- Executive summary of the strategic plan for distribution to community stakeholders.
- Presentation materials for stakeholder meetings and public forums.
- Communication and engagement plan for ongoing collaboration with community partners.

****Proposal Requirements:****

- Qualifications: Provide relevant experience in developing strategic plans, particularly in public safety or public health contexts.
 - To include examples of past relevant work with clients (i.e., Youth, mental health, working with government entities and community stakeholders, addressing violence or other social issues)
- Approach: Outline the methodology and approach for each phase of the scope of work.
 - To include details around the community engagement methodologies
- Timeline: Include a proposed timeline for completing the project including an anticipated start date.
- Budget: Detail a budget, including a breakdown of costs for personnel, materials, and other expenses.

****Evaluation Criteria:****

Proposals will be evaluated by a representative from Alachua County, the City of Gainesville, and Santa Fe College based on:

- Demonstrated experience and expertise in similar projects.
- Understanding of community dynamics and local context.
- Feasibility and clarity of the proposed approach.
- Capacity to engage diverse stakeholders effectively.
- Cost-effectiveness.
- Anticipated start date and timeline.
- Familiarity with and knowledge of Alachua County, FL.

