Early Childhood Workforce Landscape

- The Jacksonville Children’s Commission (JCC), an autonomous entity of the City of Jacksonville, provides community training and workforce development to help teachers obtain credentials. JCC also educates parents on what a quality star rating means.
  - The JCC began as monitors of providers’ training and credentialing. They began providing training to support providers to meet the state of Florida’s credential requirements, which have increased over the years. Eventually, part of JCC became a coaching team that works in classrooms with teachers. This is helping raise the industry in the eyes of the community.
  - When JCC stepped out of the monitoring role and moved to a coaching role, it helped that they already had long-standing relationships with providers.

- Coach Jax!, a program of the Jacksonville Children’s Commission, is a formal partnership of local agencies providing coaching services to the child care centers participating in the regional quality rating system. Coaches are trained by the Lastinger Center for Learning at the University of Florida. Coaches work in centers and family child care homes.
  - Some coaching is provided directly through the JCC, while other coaching is offered by partners that the JCC funds to provide coaching. This funding comes from city taxpayer dollars. The Early Learning Coalition and Head Start have leveraged these dollars through in-kind matches.
  - JCC’s funding for coaching has done well surviving through various city administrations and varying funding priorities.
  - Coach Jax currently has a network of about 700-750 licensed family child care homes and centers, about equally split between centers and family child care homes.
  - In a few centers, Coach Jax has been able to train the center director to become coaches and help the center itself take a strength based approach to teacher development.
• The Early Learning Coalition of Duval, a state agency, administers the regional quality rating system, provides community training and workforce development, and funds a professional development incentive program. Coach Jax coaching helps providers meet the guiding stars measures.

• The Duval County Public Schools works with community PreK providers to support kindergarten transition.

• Florida State College at Jacksonville honors an articulation agreement with JCC’s CDA credential training course for transferring successful completion into college credit.

• The Schultz Center for Teaching and Training is a new partner that provides professional development.

• JCC is partnering with the police department to offer trauma-informed trainings. JCC is extensively doing trauma-informed work with providers. They have a certification around trauma-informed training. This training is extremely popular with providers. When providers have this certification, they become a preferred provider for child welfare agencies and can use this training to gain a wage incentive.

• In terms of governance, JCC being a semi-independent agency gives them the flexibility to design their work and design their budget that supports their work products. They do still have to document their work to show the value of it, and must go through the budget development and approval process with city council each year. City priorities can change quickly and they are vulnerable to budget cuts.

Challenges

• Low wages, benefits, minimal education requirements, no paid time for training and less than optimal work environments are systemic barriers to professional development for the workforce.

• Staff turnover is a significant problem.

• A lack of training and career ladders for the early childhood workforce due to a lack of scholarships and directors not being able to give paid time off for classes, or educators who are not able to take time off without losing wages.

• Center directors with a lack of training in adult learning theory and staff management.

• There are several initiatives that the JCC has done in the past that they don’t have the funding to continue, such as convening center directors for coaching and bringing together kindergarten teachers and PreK teachers to have a discussion about what children need to be kindergarten ready.

• The requirements for teacher training hours and credentialing in Florida are lower than in other states, which contributes to the undervaluing of the early childhood workforce and is a challenge in the effort to make the case for investing in the workforce.