



FIE Annual Report 2008

"A great wind is blowing and that gives you either imagination or a headache."

~Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia

Mission Statement

The Florida Institute of Education (FIE) provides statewide leadership to improve education at all levels by working collaboratively with Florida's universities, community colleges, public schools, school readiness agencies, and communities to:

- Foster collaborative programs that address critical educational needs by supporting innovation and engaging in problem-focused research;
- Increase access to and use of the knowledge and skills needed to improve practice and inform decision-making; and
- Enhance achievement for all students, especially those at-risk.

"Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world."

~Harriet Tubman, Abolitionist and humanitarian

Vision

FIE's vision for education excellence is embodied in the following statements:

1. **Every child** will enter kindergarten eager and ready to read, ready to learn, and ready to succeed in school regardless of the geographical location where he/she lives;
2. Florida's prekindergarten through postsecondary students will **rank at the highest levels** of academic performance and achievement, and will not be differentiated by race, gender, or socioeconomic status;
3. Practitioners and researchers will view themselves as members of **active learning communities** committed to collaboration, ongoing learning, inquiry, and continuous improvement; and
4. **Families and communities** will be fully engaged partners committed to improving children's learning and social, emotional, and healthy development.

Readying this vision will require dramatic educational improvements on many fronts. FIE works toward achieving this vision using a systematic approach for improving practice and informing policy, an approach which embraces a sustained commitment to research, to university/practitioner collaboration, to innovation and development, to dissemination of evidence-based tools and strategies, and to data-informed decision- and policy-making.

"The art of progress is to preserve order amid change and to preserve change amid order."

~Alfred North Whitehead, English mathematician and philosopher

Dear Friends,

The year 2008 has to go down as THE YEAR OF CHANGE. Dramatic changes occurred in politics, economics, and education. New words entered our vernacular like meltdown, bailout, and too big to fail. CHANGE—it was the mantra for a momentous presidential race, resulting in the election of the nation's first African American president. It was definitely an exciting and change-filled year!

As unnerving as it can sometimes be, change can also serve as the catalyst for improvement. Increasing attention and effort is focused on developing innovative strategies to improve achievement for all students, at local, state, national and international levels. The Florida Institute of Education contributed to the improvement discussion at a conference held jointly in Tallinn, Estonia and Helsinki, Finland. FIE researchers addressed the challenge of strengthening student cognition and developing instructional strategies to build and assess conceptual knowledge beginning in the preschool years continuing with the middle school years and extending to also build teachers' conceptual knowledge.

At the same time, statewide changes were occurring in Tallahassee. Curriculum committees worked to revise the content of the Sunshine State Standards in mathematics and science, making the content more rigorous and resulting in the creation of the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards. The standards for Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) programs and standards for birth to five-year-old children were also revised and strengthened. The ultimate goal of these initiatives was to raise the academic bar so that Florida's children and youth are better prepared to meet the needs of a dynamic and international 21st century society. FIE remained committed to these same goals and began revisions to its Early Learning and Literacy Model/Plus (ELLM/Plus) materials which are approved by the Florida Department of Education for use in Florida's low-performing VPK providers.

Over the past year, we, with our colleagues in the school readiness, K-12 and higher education sectors, have grappled with challenges and opportunities that have come about because of change. Now more than ever, we need to keep efforts clearly focused on our most precious resource – our children. For today's children will become tomorrow's leaders, who must be well educated, capable of overcoming adversity, and capable of taking advantage of yet-to-be-seen challenges and opportunities. For our children to succeed in this newly emerging world, significant improvements will be required today. Now more than ever we need to provide our children with an education that will prepare them to succeed in the realities of tomorrow. The Florida Institute of Education is committed to working with our partners to take advantage of the opportunities change can bring.

The following pages provide a snapshot of program highlights of 2008. They are presented here in three educational categories—School Readiness, K-12 Education, and Postsecondary Education.

Sincerely,

Cheryl A. Fountain, Ed.D.

Executive Director

School Readiness

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

~Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa



Research supports, and FIE firmly believes in the critical importance of family involvement in a child's education. However, families are sometimes unclear as to what they should or could be doing to help their children flourish. To address this need, FIE refined and now distributes on its website, a series of family-friendly instructional materials. Designed for families of preschool and kindergarten age children, eight workshops include—Family Conversations and Literacy Learning strategies and activities. Titled ***Families Learning Together Workshop Series***, the materials are easy to use, complete with instructions, discussion points, and fun-filled activity pages ready for immediate use.

Funding from the UNF Foundation enabled FIE to continue implementing concept mapping as a tool to help young children and adults make their thinking more explicit. Results of a previous grant, the Young Florida Naturalists project (funded by the UNF Environmental Center) documented preschool children's conceptual development using science and the environment as the content focus. Building on these successful first efforts, the ***Healthy Habits through Literacy*** project (funded by the UNF Foundation and FIE) was developed and implemented with preschool children. One important aspect of the instructional pedagogy has been to document children's development of conceptual connections based on information obtained from non-fiction books and hands-on learning experiences. The Healthy Habits project uses a three-pronged approach to combating childhood obesity:

- Increasing children's knowledge of the food pyramid and food groups;
- Increasing families' understanding of nutrition education and physical activities that promote child health; and
- Providing daily physical activity (teacher-guided) on a continuum of physical skills and abilities appropriate for preschool children.

Having been approved by the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) as one of the research-based curricula for use by low-performing early care and learning programs offering Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) services, FIE began revisions to its ***ELLM/Plus*** preschool curriculum to realign with the newly published 2008 Florida VPK Education Standards. The revised ELLM/Plus curriculum will be ready for use in the Fall of 2009.

Print concepts and knowledge, an important predictor of early reading achievement, help children understand how language looks in printed form and that print carries a message. Print knowledge also plays a critical role in early reading and writing development. FIE's **Print Concepts Intervention** materials were pilot tested with approximately 2900 preschoolers and provided evidence of improved print concepts knowledge by at-risk preschool children. As a result, Print Concepts learning packets have been expanded into a full-year intervention. Using these materials, teachers can engage children in small-group, print concepts lessons each week throughout the year, using intentional, hands-on instruction.



The **Enhancing Leadership and Early Learning Services** (ELELS) project produced a research-based professional development series for childcare directors to develop leadership skills and increase their capacity to run an effective and efficient small business. The series was piloted with preschool directors in Duval County and then refined and offered for a second time working in collaboration with the Jacksonville Early Literacy Partnership, the Early Learning Coalition of Duval, and FIE. The six-month series included over fifty hours of research-based training on leadership, assessment, curriculum, the learning environment, family involvement, and small business development. The final evaluation report may be found online on the FIE website.

FIE continues to host the **Florida Head Start State Collaboration Office** in Tallahassee. The State Collaboration Office fosters corporation among Head Start and other providers of educational, medical, and social services for young children in Florida.



Several researcher/practitioner partnerships are in place with: 1) Agency for Workforce Innovation/Office of Early Learning; 2) Early Learning Coalition of Duval; 3) Florida Department of Education/Office of Early Learning; 4) Florida Mentoring Partnership; 5) Jacksonville Urban League Head Start Program; and 6) Volunteer Florida Foundation. Outcomes from these partnerships result in

improved learning opportunities for young children as well as data to monitor progress and inform future actions.

FIE's continuing partnership with the Florida Department of Education/Office of Early Learning resulted in the production and distribution of the 2008 Florida VPK Education Standards. Our partnership with Agency for Workforce Innovation/Office of Early Learning resulted in the continued production and distribution of *Florida Birth to Three Learning and Developmental Standards*, *Florida Birth to Three Screening and Assessment Resource Guide*, and *Florida School Readiness Performance Standards for Three-, Four-, and Five-Year-Old Children*.

PreK-3 and K-12 Education

"Become a student of change. It is the only thing that will remain constant."

~Anthony J. D'Angelo, Chief Visionary Officer of Collegiate EmPowerment

PreK-3 EDUCATION

FIE partners with Duval County Public Schools in the **PreK-3: Success by Design** initiative to develop a well-coordinated early learning and transition system to improve PreK-Grade 3 children's achievement, promote meaningful family involvement, and provide professional learning opportunities for PreK-Grade 3 practitioners. Staff examined standards alignment and current curriculum and instructional practices, teacher-child interactions, instructional support, organizational support, family-school connections, and transition practices. Additionally, a summer learning program pilot was implemented that focused on conceptual development in science with the aim of minimizing summer learning loss. Eight Neighborhood Learning Networks have been identified and collaboration among school staff, Family Engagement Liaisons, the Jacksonville public libraries, and community center partners has begun.

K-12 EDUCATION

The **UNF/FIE CROP: PreCollegiate Connections Program** had an excellent first year of implementation. Sixth grade students from two high-needs schools, Eugene Butler and Paxon Middle, developed bonds with UNF undergraduate students serving as learning guides/mentors. The goal of the project is to prepare middle school students for success in middle school, high school, and to create and inspire a college-going culture. Students experimented with multiple technologies – digital/video cameras, movie making, concept mapping, Google Earth, and other computer programs embedded in Human Geography content. Students participated in the African-American historical tour of Jacksonville, including a visit to LaVilla Museum. The FCCJ ropes course, UNF campus tour, their End-of-Year Celebration, and participation in the UNF/ECO Summer Camp were some of the program highlights. The 2008-09 academic year welcomed both sixth and seventh graders into the program.



The ***Sunshine State Scholars Program***, working in collaboration with the Florida Department of Education, the Governor's Office, and community college, university, and K-12 science and mathematics faculty across the state, successfully implemented the 11th annual statewide competition. Florida Education Commissioner Dr. Eric Smith served as keynote speaker and announced **Mr. Karan Sagar** of Palm Harbor University High School in Pinellas County as the *2008 Sunshine State Scholar in Mathematics and Science*. Other guests at the ceremony included Florida's K-12 Chancellor, Florida Legislators, and representatives of the Florida Lottery. The 10 *Regional Sunshine State Scholars in Mathematics and Science*, along with their teachers and families, were recognized and presented with Resolutions at the Governor's Cabinet Meeting. Scholars also received generous gifts from corporate sponsors Casio, Maplesoft, and Microsoft.



FIE continued its partnership with the Florida Department of Education and all 67 school districts through the ***Safe, Disciplined, and Drug-Free Schools Technical Assistance Project***. The project works to collect data, inform policy, and educate the community and K-12 public schools about the harmful effects of drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and bullying to the health, safety, and education of Florida's students.

Postsecondary Education

“Change alone is eternal, perpetual, immortal.”

~Arthur Schopenhauer, German philosopher

FIE supported the work of Angela Shoe and James Young, UNF/College of Education and Human Services (COEHS) doctoral students. **James Young** graduated with his doctorate in Educational Leadership and received the 2008 COEHS Mulkeen Award for Excellence in Practice Centered Research. **Angela Shoe** is completing her dissertation research and will graduate in the Spring of 2009. **Kristi Howard**, FIE Student Assistant for three years, began work on her Masters in English Literature.

FIE continued its partnership with **ENLACE** Florida, based at the University of South Florida. Dr. Cheryl Fountain serves on the ENLACE Florida management team. ENLACE is a statewide network advocating for and promoting college readiness, access, and success for Latinos, African-Americans, and other underrepresented students. Eight UNF undergraduate students, who serve as learning guides/tutors for the *UNF/FIE CROP: PreCollegiate Connections Program*, will represent UNF at a mock legislative session to be held in Spring 2009. The students were assigned the task of identifying, researching, and recommending policy to address the issue of “adding rigor and relevance to Florida’s high school curriculum.” The students will be part of a group of 64 students from eight SUS institutions to debate and present policy issues at the first ever Florida Student Education Policy Conference to be held in 2009.



FIE partnered with the **Jacksonville Commitment Program** in its first full year of implementation. The *Jacksonville Commitment (JC)* is a unique citywide partnership among Jacksonville’s four postsecondary institutions (Edward Waters College, Florida Community College at Jacksonville, Jacksonville University, and the University of North Florida), the Duval County Public Schools, and the City of Jacksonville to:

- increase the percentage of students from low-income families who are prepared for success in high school, graduate from high school, and are then admitted to and successfully complete a postsecondary education program
- create a “college-going” culture in Jacksonville and its public schools that helps participating middle and high school students and their families prepare for college eligibility, cover college costs, and continue to support students’ success in their postsecondary education programs.

Budget Report

"It takes a lot of courage to release the familiar and seemingly secure, to embrace the new. But there is no real security in what is no longer meaningful. There is more security in the adventurous and exciting, for in movement there is life, and in change there is power."

~Alan Cohen, American businessman

The Florida Institute of Education leverages resources to advance knowledge, address educational challenges, and improve learning outcomes. The state-funded operating budget for the year was \$928,175. Proceeds generated from FIE developed curriculum materials and provided training and evaluation services valued at \$373,000. Grants awarded for 2007-2008 totaled \$2,250,907.

FIE continues to play an important role in helping UNF fulfill its objective of increasing external funding to support research and address community needs. In 2007/08, seven major grant proposals were developed and submitted to the USDOE and the FLDOE. Over the last five years, FIE produced between 21% and 49% of the total grant and contracts awarded to UNF—the highest contribution of any single entity on campus. The research and grant portfolio for FIE remains diverse covering an array of projects addressing the educational needs of all Florida students—prekindergarten through the postsecondary level.



FIE Strategic Partnerships

"In a progressive country change is constant; change is inevitable."

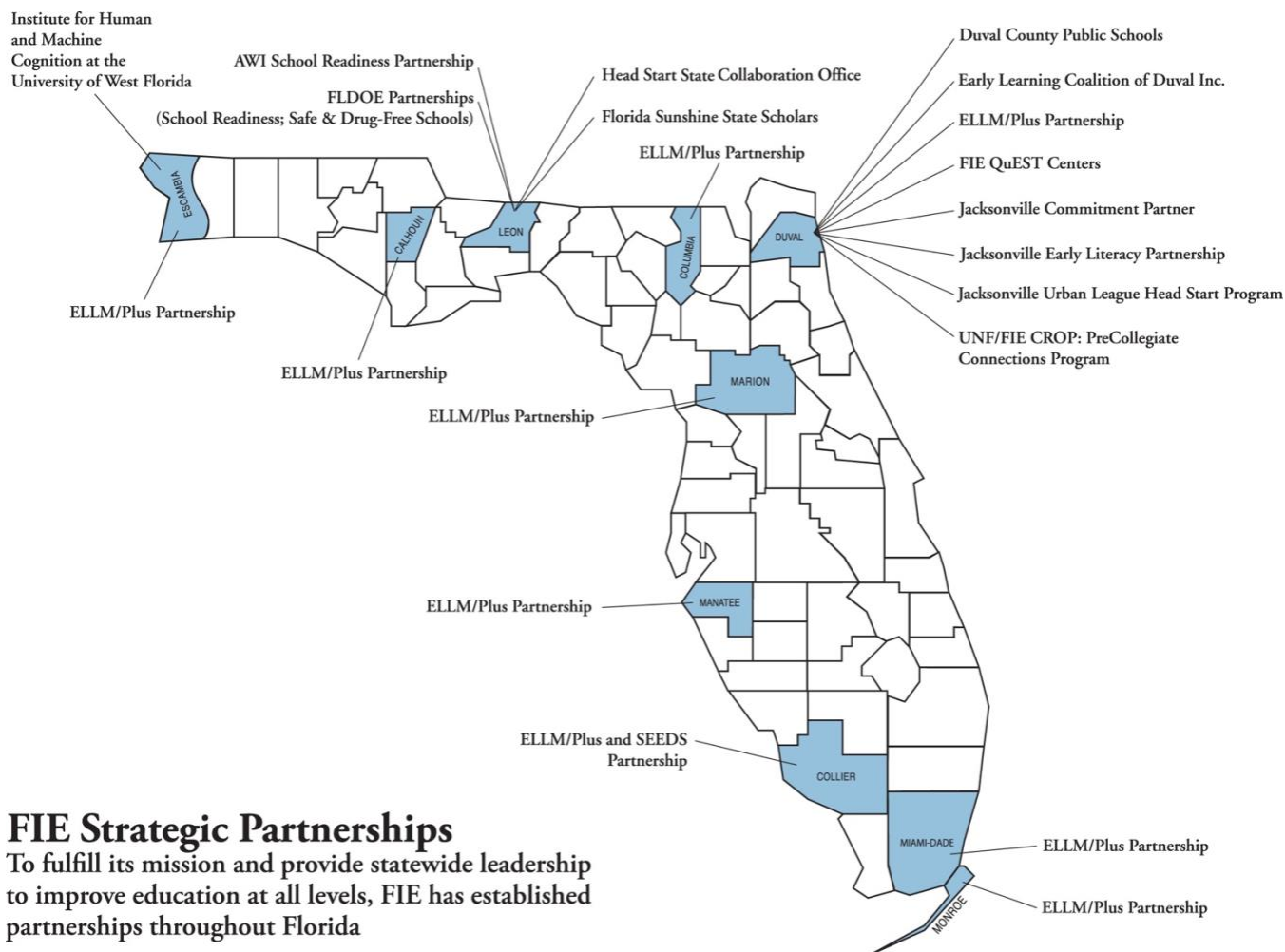
~Benjamin Disraeli, former British Prime Minister, parliamentarian, and author

To fulfill its mission and provide statewide leadership for improving education all levels, FIE continued to grow its individual and organizational partnerships throughout Florida. Understanding that success does not happen in a vacuum, FIE faculty and staff researchers contributed time and expertise in the following areas.

Dr. Cheryl Fountain served on the Advisory Board for Early Childhood/Parents as Teachers; Florida Educators Academy, Florida Community College at Jacksonville; and the Don Brewer Early Learning and Professional Development Center. She was co-chair of the Jacksonville Commitment design team, served on the Steering Committee for the Sunshine State Scholars Program, and was a member of the Agency for Workforce Innovation/Office of Early Learning Early Learning and Development Standards revisions work team. Additionally, Dr. Fountain was an active member of the Florida Department of Education task force to revise VPK Mathematics Performance Standards, a member of the Jacksonville Early Literacy Partnership (JELP), and a member of the Florida Head Start Research Committee.

Dr. Afesa Adams served on the Board of Directors for the Women's Center of Jacksonville. Dr. Madelaine Cosgrove served as a member of the Early Learning Coalition of Duval, Inc. Board of Directors and as a member of the statewide Head Start Research Committee. Dr. Linda Goudy partnered with the UNF Northeast Florida Center for Community Initiatives for the daily publication of the UNF e-News. Dr. Janice Hunter served as Associate Member of the UNF Environmental Center Executive Board. Dr. Janice Wood served as a chair of the Jacksonville Urban League Head Start Advisory Board.

FIE's organizational partnerships are depicted in the following state map.



Presentations and Publications

"Since changes are going on anyway, the great thing is to learn enough about them so that we will be able to lay hold of them and turn them in the direction of our desires. Conditions and events are neither to be fled from nor passively acquiesced in; they are to be utilized and directed."

~John Dewey, American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer

Refereed Presentations, Posters and Conference Proceedings

England, R., Adams, A., Wehry, S., & Fountain, C. (2008, June). Characteristics of participants and non-participants in a literacy-oriented family involvement program. Poster presented at the Head Start's Ninth National Research Conference, Washington, DC.

Goudy, L., Fountain, C. & Monroe-Ossi, H. (2008, Sept.) Professional Learning of Middle School and Preschool Teachers Using Concept Mapping. Paper presented at the 3rd International Conference on Concept Mapping: Helsinki, Finland and published in the Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Concept Mapping, v2, 564-570.

Hunter, J., Monroe-Ossi, H., & Wehry, S. (2008, June). The young naturalists: Concept mapping as an instructional tool for conceptual development of preschool children. Poster presented at the Head Start's Ninth National Research Conference, Washington, DC. And published in the Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Concept Mapping, v2, 756-763.

Hunter, J., Monroe-Ossi, H., & Fountain, C. (2008, Sept.). Young Florida naturalists: Concept mapping and science learning of preschool children. Paper presented at the 3rd International Conference on Concept Mapping: Helsinki, Finland.

Monroe-Ossi, H., Wehry, S., Algina, J., & Hunter, J. (2008, Sept.). Healthy habits through literacy: A concept mapping and health curriculum for preschool and kindergarten children. Paper presented at the 3rd International Conference on Concept Mapping: Helsinki, Finland and published in Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Concept Mapping, v2, 422-429.

Wehry, S., Algina, J., Hunter, J., & Monroe-Ossi, H. (2008, Sept.). Using concept maps transcribed from interviews to quantify the structure of preschool children's knowledge about plants. Paper presented at the 3rd International Conference on Concept Mapping: Helsinki, Finland and published in the Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Concept Mapping, v2, 4732-739.

Wood, J., Cosgrove, M., Wehry, S. & McLemore, B. (2008, June). Print concepts: Building a strong foundation for future reading success. Poster presented at the Head Start's Ninth National Research Conference, Washington, DC.

Young, J., Fountain, C. & England, R. (2008). Assessing the Impact of Family Coaching on Parental Attitudes and Behaviors. Poster presented at the Head Start's Ninth National Research Conference, Washington, DC.

Creative Works: Instructional Materials

Wood, J. (2008). 2008-2009 ELLM family calendar. (Available from the Florida Institute of Education, 12000 Alumni Drive, Jacksonville, FL 32224).

Adams, A. & England, R. (2008). Families Learning Together Workshop Series. (Available from the Florida Institute of Education, 12000 Alumni Drive, Jacksonville, FL 32224).

Other Publications

Wehry, S. (2008). Early Learning Coalition of Duval 2007-08 report. Jacksonville: University of North Florida, Florida Institute of Education.

Wehry, S. (2008). Florida kindergarten readiness across the Jacksonville community: Fall 2008. Jacksonville: University of North Florida, Florida Institute of Education.

Wehry, S. (2008). United Way Success by 6 Final Evaluation report 2007-08. Jacksonville: University of North Florida, Florida Institute of Education.

Jacksonville Faculty and Staff

"In times of profound change, the learners inherit the earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists."

~Eric Hoffer, American writer and philosopher

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