



# QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION SYSTEM

## Year 1 Evaluation Report



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**Children's Board Hillsborough County**  
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# Quality Early Education System

*Year 1 Evaluation Report*

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QEES supports children's foundation for school success by supporting the people who shape children's experience.

## The QEES Story

No two children arrive in kindergarten with the same life experiences.

Sometimes the differences are stark. Some children arrive with the benefit of experiences over days, months, and years that have enabled them to develop high levels of cognitive, social, and emotional skills for navigating the complex environment and challenges of schools. Other children arrive with less-developed skills because their life experiences have been less ideal for stimulating positive growth in one or more areas of brain development. Decades of educational research support the maxim **“experience shapes the brain”** and this body of research also confirms that both the quantity and quality of a child's experiences matter—beginning at birth.

The **Quality Early Education System (QEES)** program is based on a vision where all children arrive at school with the benefit of high-quality positive life experiences that matter for brain development in all of the areas that play critical roles in school success. This vision is greatly needed in Hillsborough County, Florida, where data from 2018 indicate that only 50% of children arrive ready for school (Sokol, 2018).<sup>1</sup> The key strength of the QEES program lies in its ambitious commitment to dramatically impact the quality of children's experiences prior to school at a level that can significantly improve children's chance for school success.

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<sup>1</sup>Data from the district's i-Ready assessment indicated that 50% of children were kindergarten ready in the 2018 school year. Data from the Florida Department of Education's 2018 Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (available at <http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/k-12-student-assessment/flkrs/>) indicated that 53% of children in Hillsborough County were kindergarten ready.

Comprehensive support is crucial for promoting positive experiences and preventing negative experiences.

Children need comprehensive support for school success.

Teachers and directors need support creating a satisfying professional life.

QEES recognizes that if experience shapes the brain, then the only way to dramatically impact children's experiences prior to school and significantly improve all areas of brain development contributing to children's school success is to create a solution that will comprehensively support the people who shape children's experiences prior to school. **These key people are the children's families, teachers, and childcare and preschool directors.**



Families



Teachers



Directors

To help these people support the key areas of brain development that are critical for school success, **QEES provides training in early cognitive, social, and emotional growth as well as factors related to children's healthy and safe physical development.**



Cognitive



Social



Emotional



Physical

In addition, QEES programming recognizes that early childhood education teachers and center directors need greater support creating a satisfying professional life that will encourage them to remain in their field and continue to grow their skills. **All training that staff participate in through QEES can become either certificates or stackable credentials toward a degree at Hillsborough Community College.** In addition, QEES provides business training to center directors in areas such as budgets, finance, and management.



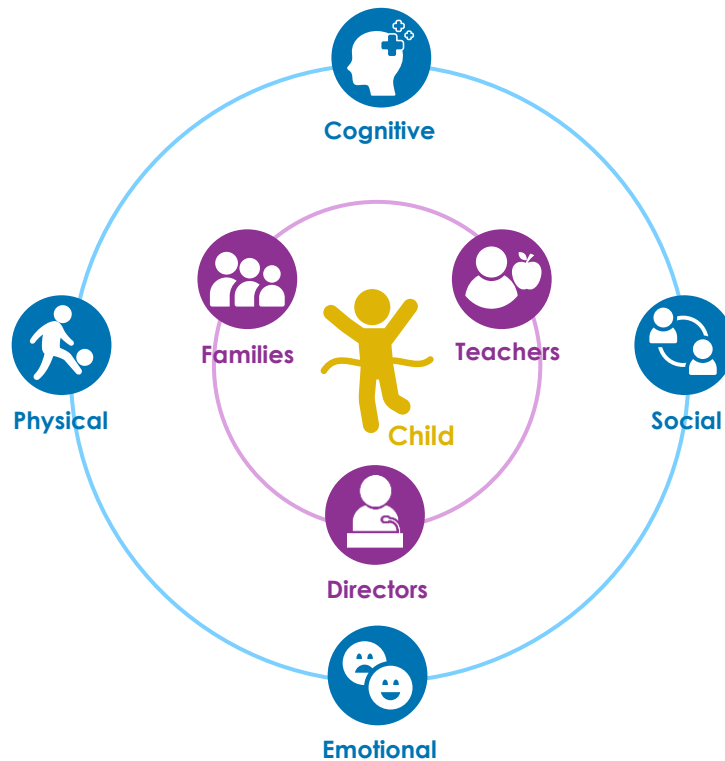
Advancement

The comprehensive scope of the QEES approach to kindergarten readiness is its great strength.

QEES was funded in FY18, developed through a competitive proposal process released by the Children's Board of Hillsborough County.

The purpose of the Children's Board funding is to support systems of care and expand the accessibility of services to children and their families. The focus area for QEES is *Children are Ready to Learn and Succeed*.

The collaborative (multi-tiered) approach of QEES is designed to reduce barriers and increase access to professional development opportunities, support families as they increase their knowledge of early education, and strengthen home-school connections.



QEES is based on the belief that quality early education must address the needs of the school, educator, family, and child. Teaching and developing young minds cannot be done in isolation. Early education lays the foundation for development and future learning, and everyone in the child's life has an influence. Teachable moments are everywhere and the child's physical and social environments have a tremendous impact on how children relate to and learn about the world.

The unique and collaborative partnerships of agencies involved in the QEES initiative represent a bold and forward-thinking approach to changing the landscape of early learning. QEES programming promises to build a quality early childhood workforce and, in turn, to enhance socio-economic development. With Hillsborough County as the 8<sup>th</sup> largest school district in the country, the potential reach of QEES is significant, and its potential as a nationwide model is high.

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**Breadth** refers to the **quantity** of the objective.

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**Effectiveness** refers to the **quality** of the objective.

The **Effectiveness** targets appear in the Expected Outcomes column of the matrix.

## The QEES Evaluation

This Year 1 report tracks the progress of the initial objectives set by the QEES program using measures and data developed and collected by the QEES team, led by Program Director Marni Fuente. **The report presents each objective with an analysis of the breadth and effectiveness of the services provided.** Breadth refers to the quantity of the objective, whereas effectiveness refers to the quality of the objective. To be considered a success, the breadth and effectiveness targets of each objective need to be fulfilled.



Breadth



Effectiveness



# Objective 1

Access to countywide training and technical assistance to 850 early childhood education staff in community-based locations.



Teachers



Directors



Cognitive



Social



Emotional



Physical



Advancement

This objective refers to training and follow-up training and technical assistance across CALM, ELM, HCC-Pathways, and Childcare Licensing. This objective does not include more intensive coaching, which is conducted with a subset of participants and is covered by other objectives.

## Year 1 Findings



EXCEEDED TARGET



Breadth

**166%** of target

**1,409** teachers provided with training and technical assistance

Year 1 target = 850 teachers



Effectiveness

**119%** of target

**95%** of the teachers trained for whom data were submitted demonstrated increased knowledge from pretest to posttest by achieving at least 70% correct on the posttest

Year 1 target = 80% of the teachers trained



EXCEEDED TARGET



CALM creates an environment for positive learning, constructive problem-solving, and self-regulation, allowing children to be successful in their early years and ready for kindergarten.



# Objective 2

Provide coaching to 165 countywide early childhood education practitioners participating in CALM.



Teachers



Directors



Social



Emotional

CALM provides universal training to early education providers and families in social-emotional learning, using Conscious Discipline® as a framework while integrating positive psychology, mindfulness, emotional-intelligence theory, and self-care strategies. Coaching is more intensive and extensive than training and occurs weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly for a subset of people who attend the trainings. The program builds a connected early-childhood community of caring and compassionate educators who support each other and the children and families they serve.

## Year 1 Findings



Breadth

87% of target

144 teachers and directors coached

Year 1 target = 165 teachers and directors



Effectiveness

124% of target

93% of the teachers and directors coached demonstrated developmentally appropriate practices on the Conscious Discipline® Progress Assessment

Year 1 target = 75% of the teachers and directors

## ONSITE SUPPORT

Assessing each classroom allows for individualized supports and a more complete view of center and teacher practices.

## PAS/BAS

Program Administration Scale/Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care

## PQA

Program Quality Assessment

# Objective 3

Provide 250 nonsystem early childhood education centers and family child care homes onsite support.



Teachers



Directors



Cognitive



Physical

This objective refers to support provided by Child Care Licensing and includes support on topics such as budget, finance, record keeping, management, communication, and indoor/outdoor safety. Support includes training (over 30 hours) and coaching (provided in 20- to 30-minute sessions) for the highest need centers. Also included is support provided by the Hillsborough Community College Pathways team whose staff visit centers and homes to provide coaching on setting up basic structures for learning related to the environment, daily routines, curriculum planning, approaches to learning, and assessment. This support helps centers and homes achieve a baseline of quality instruction by assessing each individual classroom. This evaluation is necessary before a center can successfully implement additional, more specialized support elements provided by CALM and ELM.

## Year 1 Findings



Breadth

**53%** of target

**140** centers and homes supported onsite

Year 1 target = 250 centers and homes



Effectiveness

**143%** of target (*partial*)<sup>†</sup>

**100%** of the 100 centers and homes that submitted data completed the pre-post PAS/BAS and PQA assessments, involved observations and interviews, and showed improvement over time

Year 1 target = 70% of at least 200 centers and homes<sup>†</sup>

## Objective 4

Provide supported services for social-emotional development of 135 countywide children aged 3–5 in classrooms where early childhood education staff receive coaching and resources.



Families



Teachers



Social



Emotional

This objective refers to on-site supports and intervention activities for children in identified classes. Coaches model and implement lessons and strategies on self-regulation and prosocial behavior. The classroom strategies are shared with families to encourage the implementation of practices at home. Parent and family engagement are promoted by providing information, materials, and take-home activities.

### Year 1 Findings



EXCEEDED TARGET



Breadth

**399%** of target

**538** children provided with social-emotional support services

Year 1 target = 135 children



Effectiveness

**117%** of target

**89%** of the 507 children for whom data were submitted demonstrated increased social-emotional competence from pre- to posttest

Year 1 target = 75% of at least 135 children



EXCEEDED TARGET

# Objective 5

Provide 200 countywide parents/caregivers of engaged early childhood education sites with CALM strategies.



Families



Social



Emotional

This objective refers to providing families with information from the CALM program on self-regulation and social-emotional development. Parent resource centers are established at the preschools of participating children. Additional resources and materials are offered through outreach, forums, and website links to support services.

## Year 1 Findings



EXCEEDED TARGET



EXCEEDED TARGET



Breadth

**251%** of target

**502** families provided with CALM strategies

Year 1 target = 200 families



Effectiveness

**129%** of target

**97%** of the 325 families for whom data were submitted attended events and demonstrated increased knowledge on surveys administered at the beginning and end of events by achieving at least 70% correct on the postsurvey

Year 1 target = 75% of at least 200 families

## Objective 6

Provide 445 parents/caregivers, at engaged early childhood education sites, support developing strategies for emergent literacy and home-school engagement.



Families



Cognitive

This objective refers to parent support and information provided through the ELM program. Literacy activities include family trainings, lending libraries, events, distribution of family tips and calendars of readiness activities, access to myON digital library, and forums.

### Year 1 Findings



EXCEEDED TARGET



Breadth

**152%** of target

679 parents/caregivers provided with support developing literacy and engagement strategies

Year 1 target = 445 parents/caregivers



Effectiveness

**115%** of target (*partial*)<sup>†</sup>

98% of the eligible 395 parents/caregivers for whom data were submitted earned a score of at least 20 on a home literacy checklist administered at the end of the year

Year 1 target = 85% of 445 parents/caregivers<sup>†</sup>

# Objective 7

Provide technical assistance to 60 early childhood education staff in 25 sites countywide.



Teachers



Cognitive

This objective refers to coaching on literacy in classrooms, using the Nemours BrightStart! Literacy Curriculum as a framework. The Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation is conducted to determine the quality of instructional strategies and the literacy environment. Results are used to tailor coaching to meet the specific needs of teachers in their classrooms.

## Year 1 Findings



EXCEEDED TARGET



EXCEEDED TARGET



Breadth

**135%** of target

**81** staff served—number of sites not known  
Year 1 target = 60 staff across 25 sites



Effectiveness

**111%** of target

**91%** of the 75 staff for whom data were submitted demonstrated increased literacy skills on the ELLCO from pre- to posttest  
Year 1 target = 85% of at least 60 staff

## ELLCO

Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation

ELM encourages the home-school connection by providing families with books, literacy activities, and materials.



EXCEEDED TARGET



EXCEEDED TARGET

## Objective 8

Provide 615 children aged birth to 5 in early childhood education centers countywide with emergent literacy skills support.



Families



Teachers



Cognitive

This objective refers to on-site, small-group literacy intervention provided by ELM. The Early Literacy Skills Assessment or the Get Ready to Read! Assessment tool is used to guide individual, targeted literacy intervention. Coaches work with children to strengthen early literacy skills through various modalities and multi-sensory instruction.

### Year 1 Findings



Breadth

**129%** of target

**796** children supported in emergent literacy skills

Year 1 target = 615 children



Effectiveness

**106%** of target

**90%** of the 606 children for whom data were submitted demonstrated increased literacy skills on the Early Literacy Skills Assessment or Get Ready to Read (as appropriate for age) from pretest to posttest

Year 1 target = 85% of at least 495 children

# Objective 9

Provide ELM activities to 225 children aged 3–5 to carryover classroom literacy strategies into the home environment.



Families



Cognitive

This objective refers to an enhanced home reading program supported by ELM. Books, reading tips, and supplemental activities are sent home monthly with each participating child to encourage at-home reading.

## Year 1 Findings



EXCEEDED TARGET



Breadth

**112%** of target

**253** children provided with literacy strategies for home

Year 1 target = 225 children



Effectiveness

**91%** of target

**73%** of the 237 children for whom data were submitted had documentation of being read to at home at least 4 times per week

Year 1 target = 80% of 225 children



# Conclusions and Recommendations

## How well did QEES meet its first-year targets?

The QEES program set ambitious targets for its first year. Breadth targets were set to record the total number of unique participants served. Effectiveness targets were set to conservatively measure gains only for participants who received sufficient dosage to warrant testing, and these goals were also usually worded to set a target for a minimum number of participants who would qualify for testing.

Overall, the QEES program demonstrated impressive success for both breadth and effectiveness targets. For 6 of the program's 9 objectives, the breadth and effectiveness goals met and exceeded, and in many cases the target was greatly exceeded. For example, Objective 4 (provide support services for social-emotional development of 135 countywide children aged 3–5 in classrooms where early childhood education staff receive coaching and resources) was exceeded in breadth by almost 400%, serving 538 children. The effectiveness goal was also exceeded in that 88% of children tested (506 of the 538 children) showed increased social-emotional competence, over and above the target that 75% of tested children would show this increase.

Not all of the targets were reached, but even in those cases the results illustrate large numbers of participants served effectively. For 2 of the program's objectives (Objective 2, Objective 3) the breadth targets were not met. In one case (Objective 2) the program served 87% of its target participant number (144 practitioners instead of 165) and in the other case (Objective 3), the program served 140 centers rather than the goal of 250 centers. Notably, in the case of Objective 2, even though the breadth target was not reached, the effectiveness target was exceeded, with 93% of the 144 teachers demonstrating developmentally appropriate practices on the Conscious Discipline® Progress Assessment. In the case of Objective 3, 100 of the 140 centers served received enough services to be assessed for improvement, and in this case 100% of them demonstrated improvement. However, the wording of the original effectiveness target required 140 centers to be tested, making it difficult to label this target as successfully reached,

Overall the QEES program demonstrated impressive success for both breadth and effectiveness targets.

even though the outcome arguably demonstrates success of the program for the 100 centers who were tested.

One program objective exceeded its breadth goal but not its effectiveness goal. Objective 9 sought to provide ELM activities to 225 children aged 3–5 to carryover classroom literacy strategies into the home environment. QEES provided the strategies to 253 children (112% of the target). The results showed that an impressive 73% of the eligible participants' children were being read to at least 4 times per week at the end of the study, but this was short of the 80% goal for this target. Conversations with the parents suggest that the self-reporting process of the reading logs to document home reading was sometimes forgotten, likely leading to an underrepresentation of the program's effectiveness. Moving forward, QEES staff plan to adjust and streamline this process, which will likely result in a more accurate reflection of the effectiveness of this QEES component and enable the program to fully meet this effectiveness target.

Only one program objective fell short in both breadth and effectiveness targets. Objective 3 stated that the program would provide 250 nonsystem early childhood education centers and family childcare homes with onsite support (Objective 3). QEES served 140 centers (53% of the target) with this onsite support. Of these 140 centers, 100 received sufficient services for the quality measure and all 100 demonstrated improvement. Because the effectiveness objective was worded to require 140 schools to qualify for effectiveness measurement, the objective technically fell short due to this wording. However, the demonstrated improvement of the 100 centers that were tested validates the positive impact of the program, which is further illustrated in the testimonials provided in Appendix D.

### **In the cases where the targets were not reached, what types of improvements do the results suggest are needed?**

The high numbers of participants served across all objectives, combined with the high level at which other targets were exceeded, suggest that the cases where targets were not reached were likely due to overly ambitious or conflated goal-setting for those targets rather than program weaknesses. Revisions in the target-setting strategies for breadth may be warranted for some objectives based on lessons learned about realistic reach for certain objectives. Revisions in defining the effectiveness targets may also be needed because the current

strategy resulted in one objective (Objective 3) being labeled as missing the effectiveness target even though 100% of those served showed improvement. Teasing out the differences between the quality of improvement and the quantity of those who received enough training to be tested for improvement could allow for better definitions of effectiveness in future iterations of QEES.

## How does the structure of the QEES partnership impact its effectiveness?

The qualitative data (see Appendix C and Appendix D) collected to supplement the project's target quantitative data suggest that QEES is achieving its success through deep and meaningful connections with the teachers and center directors served by the project. A key factor underlying the success of these connections is undoubtedly the bottom-up, locally driven, and locally supported nature of the QEES partnerships. The innovative combination of a local higher education institution (Hillsborough Community College), a local government agency (Hillsborough Childcare Licensing), and a local funder (The Children's Board) offer the early education landscape in Hillsborough County a unique and deeply collaborative approach to streamlining high-quality support of early childhood professionals and families with services that are highly responsive to local needs.

The QEES project grew out of an intensive familiarity with the types of supports directly requested by local early childhood providers and an understanding of the need for a systematic professional pathway that would allow the early childhood workforce to attract and retain skilled caregivers who could develop greater personal fulfillment and increased public respect in their careers. The QEES project also benefits from its strong local connection to Hillsborough County Public Schools. Sandy Show, in her role at the school district as Supervisor of Family, Child, and Provider Services, communicates closely with QEES Director Marni Fuente (Hillsborough Community College) and with QEES partner Angela Chowning (Hillsborough Childcare Licensing) in coordinating QEES work with the shared vision of the school district for increasing kindergarten readiness. Sandy Show's input helps to increase QEES connections to high need areas and supports the district's work to facilitate connections between kindergarten teachers and surrounding preschool providers in those areas. In turn, QEES provides additional district support when possible. For example, QEES

### HCPS

Hillsborough County  
Public Schools

provided a training session in August 2019 for district paraprofessionals.

### **What was the most surprising aspect of the project that QEES leaders encountered in the first year of the project?**

Marni Fuente and Angela Chowning found the volume of demand for QEES services to be remarkable and unexpected. Both QEES leaders knew of the need for services, but they did not anticipate such a high level of interest in the first year. Notably, the engagement and commitment of the early learning providers throughout the year was extremely high, and their voices drove the high demand.

### **What other national research efforts should be considered in further developing the QEES project?**

Four major research efforts directed at improving outcomes for low-income children can provide important context, lessons, and recommendations for the QEES project.

First, in one of the largest studies ever conducted on the impact of professional development on early childhood classroom practices and children's outcomes (Piastra et al., 2019), researchers from Ohio State University randomly assigned 546 early childhood educators to receive professional development on emergent literacy with coaching, professional development on emergent literacy without coaching or professional development on nonliteracy topics. The professional development included 30 hours of in-person workshops designed in collaboration with university researchers to incorporate elements of effective professional development recommended by research literature. The coaching component included monthly one-on-one mentoring for an academic year. Despite intensive efforts from the professional development providers to adhere to widely accepted principles of effective professional development, the study revealed only minimal effects on the teachers' classroom practices regardless of whether the teachers experienced workshops alone or workshops with coaching. Moreover, no differences were detected in the literacy outcomes of the 1,953 children tested across the 3 conditions, either in assessments given by the researchers or in the state's kindergarten readiness

assessment (focused solely on language and literacy) administered to the children upon kindergarten entry.

This study serves as a cautionary tale about the difficulty of impacting children's kindergarten readiness skills through large-scale efforts of professional development and coaching. The researchers could not identify the cause of the disappointing results, but they recommended that future efforts consider what might have gone wrong and how to avoid similar costly and futile efforts. Notably this effort to raise kindergarten readiness was much less comprehensive than the QEES approach. For example, unlike QEES it focused solely on children's cognitive development in literacy and did not support teachers around children's social-emotional growth or provide support to center directors around children's health, safety, and physical development. The effort also did not support families as key adults in the children's lives and key stewards of children's early educational experiences.

These limitations in scope and the corresponding failure to improve outcomes are consistent with the findings from a second large-scale and highly influential investigation conducted by researchers in Chicago who wanted to discover why some elementary schools successfully improved the outcomes of low-income children and others did not (Bryk et al., 2010). In a long-term study of 200 Chicago elementary schools the researchers found that successful schools were rated high on 5 essential supports:

- Leadership.
- Professional capacity.
- Parent community ties.
- Instructional guidance.
- School learning climate/student-centered climate.

A low rating on even one of these 5 essential supports could reduce the chances of a school's success to less than 10%. The Bryk et al. (2010) findings argue strongly that only comprehensive approaches to improving children's educational outcomes will succeed, and they underscore why the comprehensive approach of QEES is such an important feature.

Recently, a third major effort has emerged as researchers have adapted the findings of the Bryk et al. (2010) study to early education classrooms. These researchers (Ehrlich et al., 2019) have developed a framework for the successful organizational quality of early education schools, which includes the following 6 essential features:

- Effective instructional leaders.
- Collaborative teachers.
- Involved families.
- Supportive environment.
- Ambitious instruction.
- Parent voice.

These features, called Early Education Essentials, appear to map onto the targets of the QEES program and reflect the multidimensional approach of QEES to impacting kindergarten readiness. Importantly, researchers have released this year a set of rigorously evaluated teacher and parent surveys that are newly available as measurement tools to diagnose strengths and weaknesses of early education providers and predict successful childhood outcomes (<https://www.theounce.org/early-education-essentials/>). These surveys could potentially provide QEES with another research-validated tool for providing targeted and comprehensive support and for tracking the impacts of the program on participating schools.

Finally, researchers at the Education Development Center who were influenced by the work on Early Educational Essentials recently released a formative study of some of the nation's most highly ambitious and comprehensive approaches to improving the quality of education and care for young children and their families (Jacobson, 2019). These so-called First 10 initiatives are a response to the research on the need for ambitious and comprehensive approaches to closing achievement gaps related to poverty. Included in these initiatives is the creation of a strong bridge between private early education providers and the school district. This work is already taking place in Hillsborough County thanks to the insights of QEES director Marni Fuente and community-based partners Angela Chowning and Sandy Show.

Additional components of First 10 initiatives that could serve as aspirations for the future of QEES and Hillsborough County include the following:

- Expansion of project scope to the entire first decade of a child's life.
- Prenatal medical care.
- Home visiting.
- Wraparound connections to medical and social services, including behavioral health programs.
- Deeper connections to libraries.

- Coordinated after-school and expanded learning opportunities starting in kindergarten.
- Weekly play and learn groups for children not in childcare.

QEES already has the potential for success that could enable it to be a driving force in bringing Hillsborough County and others to the leading edge of First 10 initiatives.

## Summary of Recommendations for the Future of QEES

The evaluators offer the following recommendations for the future of QEES based on the findings of 4 major research efforts (Bryk et al., 2010; Erlich et al., 2019; Jacobson, 2019; Piasta et al., 2019):

- **Continue to view the comprehensive, complex, and ambitious scope of the QEES project as a critical strength for addressing the multidimensional nature of factors impacting the kindergarten readiness and later school success of children from low-income families.**
- **Explore the potential for use of the Early Education Essentials surveys to further strengthen early childhood programs.**
- **Document important insights and lessons learned by QEES leaders as the program evolves. With these insights, QEES has the potential to be a leader as other cities and states strive to better understand the complex and comprehensive development of children aged birth to 5 and respond with integrated supports that will allow key adults in children's lives to be strong and positive stewards of children's brain development.**
- **Look to the First 10 initiatives for elements to further strengthen the comprehensive scope of QEES. Communicate and collaborate with communities across the nation that are pushing for comprehensive and ambitious efforts to enable all children to arrive in kindergarten prepared for success, with supports that will carry them through their first decade, cherished and ready to soar.**

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# Appendix A

## Program Description

The QEES initiative achieves its vision through a comprehensive system of supports. This system promotes increased awareness of the importance of early learning while providing a holistic approach to teaching young children. The system is delivered through four primary program components.

**HCC-Pathways.** This program component is for teachers and directors of childcare homes and centers who need support in establishing strong foundational elements for a successful early learning environment. The program uses HCC-trained coaches who provide bi-weekly, one-to-one coaching and monthly training on topics such as Learning Environment, Daily Routines, Curriculum Planning, Approaches to Learning, and Assessment. HCC-Pathways ensures that teachers and directors can more easily and successfully implement what they learn about from the Early Literacy Matters (ELM) and Conscious Awareness Learning Model (CALM) components of QEES. After completing HCC-Pathways, teachers' classrooms have threshold levels of quality that can support the introduction of new classroom strategies and structures from ELM and CALM around cognitive and social-emotional development. The basic classroom quality features that HCC-Pathways supports are essential for giving teachers and directors the confidence and foundation for greater and earlier success as they participate in other QEES programs. All HCC Pathways support for teachers and directors is provided on-site at their learning centers.

**Conscious Awareness Learning Model (CALM).** CALM is based on the framework of Conscious Discipline® as outlined by Dr. Becky Bailey. The program integrates positive psychology, mindfulness, emotional intelligence, social-emotional skills, and child development into every training. Trainings are offered in a series of 10 or more sessions that articulate into a college course credit after successful completion of the series. Other delivery formats are available that offer in-service hours and continuing education units (CEUs). Additional CALM support is provided to teachers and directors through on-site coaching throughout the year. Parents also receive training in Conscious Discipline® approaches on-site at participating preschools. CALM provides materials and activities to families throughout the year.

Conscious Discipline® teaches adults to adopt new mindsets about children's behavior, encouraging early learning practitioners and family members to develop greater empathy toward children as they encourage children's strong connections to their peers and the adults in their lives. Drawn from well-established scientific findings from brain and psychological research, Conscious Discipline® empowers teachers and other adults with the Seven Powers and Skills for self-control. These powers and skills change adults' perceptions and relationships with conflict, empowering them to be proactive instead of reactive, and to build relationships with children that support greater

cooperation from children and more positive, loving experiences throughout the child's day. The program stresses increased self-regulation, along with strategies and classroom structures for resolving conflict through a greater understanding of children's fears, emotional needs, and explicit language and modeling of helpful, cooperative interactions. CALM is critical for addressing the complexity of early education and the skills needed for quality instruction, and its integrated approach aims to change the culture, perception, and mindset of early learning in Hillsborough County.

In 2017, a team of researchers from the Harvard Graduate School of Education included Conscious Discipline® in its report of 25 leading social-emotional learning and character education programs (Jones et al., 2017). The researchers noted that multiple studies of the program have been conducted, and reported outcomes have included reductions in aggression, hyperactivity, and conduct problems.

**Early Literacy Matters (ELM).** ELM is an early literacy intervention program that focuses on building emergent literacy skills: concepts of print, phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, and comprehension. ELM coaches work with preschool teachers and families to strengthen their knowledge and use of effective, developmentally-appropriate practices for strengthening early literacy. At intake, coaches conduct an Early Learning Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO). Coaching is guided by the results of the observations to best meet the individual needs of the teacher and classroom environment. While working in partnership with the teachers, ELM coaches provide targeted small group literacy intervention to the children. Each child is assessed using the Early Literacy Skills Assessment (ELSA) or Get Ready to Read! (GRTR) to establish their individual skills level. Small group literacy intervention is guided by these results. Families of these children receive books, information, materials, and take-home activities for supporting literacy development. ELM specialists working in classrooms also use the myON digital literacy library in their work. The ELM program has designed and offers over 20 workshops on diverse topics related to supporting literacy in children from infancy to the start of kindergarten. Trainings take place in the community, on-site and in the evenings at Hillsborough Community College.

#### **Hillsborough County Child Care Licensing: QEES management and operational support.**

As a subcontracted partner, Hillsborough County Child Care Licensing standards require initial consultation prior to licensure and ongoing inspections and training thereafter. However, the need for additional operational support has been recognized. Through QEES, Hillsborough Child Care Licensing offers center directors additional, more specific and advanced training on organizational and operational topics that include: staff management, communication skills, record keeping, indoor/outdoor health and safety. Continuing Education Units (CEUs) are issued and tracked through HCC, as are CEUs from the other QEES program components (HCC-Pathways, CALM, and ELM).

These Operational Support services are provided through coaching and training sessions built on evidence-based practices and tailored to site needs. Using information from an initial assessment, HCCCL works with home or center directors to create Action Plans for raising low scores and maintaining a safe and professional environment. For non-established or inexperienced early childcare homes and centers, HCCCL provides coaching and training sessions that establish a strong foundation for quality early care

and education from the point of inception. For established homes and centers, coaching addresses imminent needs with mentoring support and coaching. Individual sessions occur on-site, and group sessions take place at off-site locations such as The Children's Board and public libraries. Once the providers have completed 30 hours of training, with CEUs attached to each section, they receive a certificate of completion and Specialized Certification.

HCCCL further supports the creation of collaborative partnerships among early childhood professionals through the QEES Association for Early Learning Leaders. This group of home and center administrators from across the county meets regularly, operates a Facebook page, and may provide peer mentoring opportunities in the future.

# Appendix B

## Assessment Instruments

This section summarizes the assessment instruments used to gather data about the effectiveness of QEES activities and the overall impact from achieving the QEES objectives. Following is a list of the 9 QEES objectives.

### QEES Objectives

Objective	Objective text	Assessment(s)	Constituent(s) Impacted
1	Access to countywide <u>training and technical assistance (TA)</u> to 850 Early Childhood Education (ECE) staff in community-based locations	Knowledge Assessments (HCC-created)	Teachers, Directors
2	Provide <u>coaching</u> to 165 countywide Early Childhood Educational Practitioners participating in CALM.	Conscious Discipline Progress Assessment	Teachers
3	Provide <u>onsite support</u> to 250 non-system ECE Centers and Family-Child Care Homes (FCCH)	Business Administration Scale (BAS) for Family Child Care Program Administration Scale (PAS) for Early Childhood Programs Preschool Program Quality Assessment (Preschool PQA) Infant-Toddler Program Quality Assessment (Infant-Toddler PQA) Family Child Care Home Program Quality Assessment (FCCH PQA)	Directors, Teachers
4	Provide <u>support services for social-emotional development</u> of 135 countywide children (ages 3-5) in classrooms where ECE staff receive coaching and resources.	Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) Rating Scales: Prosocial Behavior Skills Scale	Children
5	Provide <u>CALM strategies</u> to 200 parents/caregivers of engaged ECE sites countywide	Knowledge Assessments (HCC-created)	Families

6	At engaged ECE sites, provide <u>strategies for emergent literacy and home-school engagement</u> to 445 parents/caregivers countywide.	Get Ready to Read (GRTR) Home Checklist	Families
7	Provide <u>technical assistance</u> to 60 ECE staff in 25 sites countywide.	Early Language and Literacy Observation (ELLCO)	Teachers
8	Provide <u>emergent literacy skills support</u> to 615 children (ages birth-5) countywide in ECEs.	Early Literacy Skills Assessment (ELSA) Get Ready to Read Screening Tool (GRTR)	Children
9	Provide <u>ELM activities</u> to 225 children (ages 3-5) <u>to carryover classroom literacy strategies into the home environment.</u>	Reading log	Families

The assessment instruments used to measure the impact of the activities embedded in the 9 objectives are summarized in Tables 1–4. These tables are organized to show whether the assessment data are tied to the program's impacts on teachers, center directors, families, or children.

Descriptions of each assessment, organized alphabetically, are below.

**Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care (BAS).** The BAS is a valid, reliable tool for assessing the quality of business and professional practices in family child care settings. The tool is comprised of ten areas assessed on a seven-point scale by a trained early childhood coach. The ECE/FCCH score is the average across the ten areas with a seven being the highest possible score. The ten areas covered by the tool include:

- Qualifications and Professional Development
- Income and Benefits
- Work Environment
- Fiscal Management
- Recordkeeping
- Risk Management
- Provider-Family Communication
- Family Support and Engagement
- Marketing and Community Relations
- Provider as Employer

**Conscious Discipline® Progress Assessment.** This tool assesses the implementation of Conscious Discipline® skills and structure through a self-assessment rubric created on a four-point scale (one, lowest; four, highest). Tool materials assist in determining each level of proficiency and include specific verbiage and perceptual shifts related to the Seven Skills of Conscious Discipline®, which include: composure, encouragement,

assertiveness, choices, positive intent, empathy, and consequences. A composite score is not used with this assessment rather this evaluation looks at scores in each of the mentioned subdomains.

**Early Language and Literacy Observation (ELLCO).** The ELLCO Pre-K assessment toolkit covers five areas: Classroom structure (scores range from four at lowest to 20); Curriculum (score ranges from three at lowest to 15); Language environment (scores range from 4 at lowest to 20); Books and book reading (scores range from 4 at lowest to 25); and print and early writing (score ranges from three at lowest to 15). The ELLCO requires approximately 3 hours and 30 minutes for early literacy coaches to complete. Components of the toolkit include a literacy environment checklist for use in observing the classroom layout and content; a classroom observation tool and teacher interview that target language, literacy, and curriculum; and a literacy-activities rating scale geared toward book reading and writing behaviors. Scores from each of the five areas of the ELLCO are analyzed separately.

**Early Literacy Skills Assessment (ELSA).** The ELSA measures children's skill levels across four areas of early literacy (score range from low to high): alphabetic principle (0, 60), phonological awareness (1, 18), reading comprehension (integer), and concepts of print (1, 21). Designed as an authentic assessment for children ages three to six, the ELSA is conducted with a children's storybook (e.g., Violet's Adventure). A teacher reads the story to the child and stops periodically to ask questions. Each of the four scores in the literacy areas is used to analyze a child's performance.

**Get Ready to Read Screening Tool (GRTR).** The GRTR consists of 25 questions for three- to five-year-old children who have not yet entered kindergarten, to assess their skills and understanding related to print knowledge, book knowledge, phonological awareness, and phonics. The assessment is graded by hand and children receive scores on a continuous scale from 0 (low) to 25 (high). Scores correlate to steps, which describe the child's relative ability in each reading concept.

**Get Ready to Read Home Literacy Environment Checklist (GRTR Home Checklist).** This checklist consists of 37 items that the child's parent rates as true or false. A score of at least 20 indicates that the home environment has many supportive elements for early readers.

**HCC-Created Knowledge Assessments.** These assessments created by the QEES program staff are designed to validate that teachers, directors, or families who attend a QEES training gain new knowledge. Typical assessments consist of ten multiple-choice assessment items covering key concepts linked to the goals of each training session. These are "dipstick" measurements that enable a quick, broad check of training effectiveness and are not intended to assess the full depth of learning by program participants.

**Preschool (Preschool PQA), Infant-Toddler (Infant-Toddler PQA), and Family Child Care Home (FCCH PQA) Program Quality Assessments.** The Preschool, Infant-Toddler and FCCH PQAs are used to evaluate quality and identify needs in center-based preschool programs. Developed by the HighScope Educational Research Foundation, a HCC-Pathways coach rates the program on a scale of one (lowest) to five (highest). Each

classroom receives an average score from each graded domain. An ECE/FCCH earns the grand mean average rating of the scores across all classrooms. The Preschool, Infant-Toddler and FCCH PQA reflect research-based and field-tested best practices for early childhood programs in the following domains:

- Learning environment
- Daily routine
- Adult-child interaction
- Curriculum planning and assessment
- Parent involvement and family services
- Staff qualifications and development
- Program management

**Program Administration Scale (PAS).** The PAS measures leadership and management practices of early childhood programs not considered to be family child care settings. Program quality is assessed on a seven-point scale (from one to seven), using 25 items clustered into ten areas. The early literacy coach scores the 10 domains and averages the score across the 10 domains. A score of seven is the highest possible. The 10 domains are as follows:

- Human Resources Development
- Personnel Cost and Allocation
- Center Operations
- Child Assessment
- Fiscal Management
- Program Planning and Evaluation
- Family Partnerships
- Marketing and Public Relations
- Technology
- Staff Qualifications

**Reading Log.** The weekly reading log allows families to track books read over the course of a week and provide feedback. Children select a happy face for positive feedback, a neutral face for neutral feedback, and a sad face for negative feedback. The weekly reading logs are used to track progress towards the overall quarterly reading targets.

**Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) Rating Scales: Prosocial Behavior Skills Scale.**

This tool measures social skills including communication, cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, engagement, and self-control. It includes a classwide screening guide that can be used for ages three to eighteen. The early childhood coaches assess the students on the scale. Students can receive a high score of four and a low score of one.

# Appendix C

## Qualitative, Formative Survey Responses

This annual report focuses on the summative assessments used to determine whether QEES achieved the breadth and effectiveness targets for each of its nine objectives. As part of QEES implementation, the QEES project team also constantly engaged in formative assessment of its services by administering surveys to program participants following every project training session and reviewing the responses. Feedback from participants was considered by the team to be critically important for guiding subsequent work, with negative feedback addressed and positive feedback used to confirm that sessions are connecting with participants as designed.

Although these surveys are not defined as assessments of whether QEES achieved the targets for each of its nine objectives, the participants' responses can provide an additional qualitative window into the impact of QEES on teachers, center directors, and families. A qualitative analysis of all the QEES formative survey responses for every session conducted is beyond the scope of this report, but this appendix provides samples of the highly positive nature of participants' experiences, using the CALM sessions as an example.

CALM participant surveys consisted of 4 questions that participants rated on a 3-point scale:

1. Did you find the CALM session helpful? (*Not helpful, Unsure, Very Helpful*).
2. Did you feel the presenters were prepared for the workshop? (*Not Prepared, Unsure, Prepared*).
3. Do you feel that the CALM trainers provided sufficient support that benefitted the workshop? (*No, Unsure, Yes*).
4. How would you rate the workshop overall? (*Okay, Good, Great*).

The survey also offered participants the opportunity to write additional comments. Negative ratings or comments by the participants were extremely rare. To illustrate the overall highly positive reactions conveyed by the survey responses, the remainder of this appendix provides the following for each of the ten CALM sessions from October 2018 through September 2019:

- Number of total survey responses.
- Average ratings for the survey questions.
- Number of comments provided.
- A word cloud that provides a visual representation of the survey comments, with the most frequently-used words or phrases appearing in the graphic. The size of the words or phrases in the graphic corresponds to frequency: the larger the word or phrase appears in the word cloud, the more frequently the word or phrases appeared across the survey responses.
- Three sample comments selected for their specificity and descriptiveness.



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## CALM Session 1 (10/6/2018)

Responses: 135  
Average rating: 2.9 or above  
Comments: 55

class workshop training us enjoyed Thank much **Love** learning  
**Thank** CALM **Great** amazing good Spanish work

### SAMPLE COMMENTS:

"Thank you very much! This workshop was very productive; not only to help children with self-regulation but also to calm myself and consciously manage my stress."

"This is such a terrific opportunity for educators to have a positive ripple effect in the lives of children. Thank you."

"I loved the high energy and the constant physical examples done."

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## CALM Session 2 (11/2/2018)

Responses: 113  
Average rating: 3  
Comments: 51

new will session Every enjoyed job helpful information great everything good  
classroom **Thank** learn **love** CALM class us training  
experience coming made really Great job help excellent

### SAMPLE RESPONSES:

"Very instructive. You help us find the tools for development in our jobs as educators. Well structured. The supports provided for the people who don't speak English as their first language is admirable. Thanks again!"

"Thanks for opening our eyes and minds to new approaches that work wonderful, it makes my job more rewarding."

"I really love coming to these classes! It is helping me grow both at home and in my classroom and most importantly within myself. Thank you!"

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### CALM Session 3 (1/12/2019)

Responses: 129  
Average rating: 2.9 or above  
Comments: 47

Always great job enjoyed need help something CALM work class feel  
**Thank** talk Love Keep Great en much helpful

#### SAMPLE RESPONSES:

"CALM presenters are interactive with everyone, very clear and make it very personal. Thank you."

"Thank you all again. This has really helped me reevaluate the way I am as a person and help me deal with challenging behaviors in the classroom."

"This topic is absolutely life-changing. I'm grateful and thrilled to be a part of what I feel is a movement toward a huge, positive difference in the world."

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### CALM Session 4 (2/2/2019)

Responses: 124  
Average rating: 2.9 or above  
Comments: 34

classes much good love Great Awesome Thank helpful talk  
learned

#### SAMPLE RESPONSES:

"The information provided is extremely helpful and life changing in so many ways. Grateful for my experience with this!"

"Excellent, we always leave with new tools to use in the classroom and in life."

"I have a loud, strong voice and I liked hearing that having a loud, strong voice does not mean that I am being mean when I talk with my children and that they know that I love them and that they are not afraid of me or intimidated when I talk to them. Thank you!"

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## CALM Session 5 (3/2/2019)

Responses: 117  
Average rating: 2.9 or above  
Comments: 42

information Love class training education **Awesome** helpful **Great** always  
**Thank** First loved enjoyed children session learn

### SAMPLE RESPONSES:

“As always it was excellent. Even though I have attended sessions from previous cycles I always learn something new. Thank you.”

“Every day and every meeting I am thankful for this great collective that teaches us and offers us interesting tools rooted in love for helping children with their education. And also on top of everything for helping the people who do not have English as their first language.”

“Every meeting is excellent! We learn, we enjoy, and we are encouraged and hopeful for early education and humanity as a whole. Thank you for your dedication.”

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## CALM Session 6 (4/6/2019)

Responses: 116  
Average rating: 2.9 or above  
Comments: 41

training Class **Excellent** information Love time **Thank** good  
**Great** Always

### SAMPLE RESPONSES:

“Motivational—I wish my whole staff was here to hear this!”

“Excellent. Every training is more and more interesting. The trainers are excellent. Thank you for your help.”

“Excellent training with really great information! I love these because I always learn something new.”

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## CALM Session 7 (5/4/2019)

Responses: 130  
Average rating: 2.9 or above  
Comments: 49

share will class experiences love Awesome Thank good  
Great day always Great workshop learned lot

### SAMPLE RESPONSES:

"Very professional and educational to put into practice day after day."

"The reflection activity was a real eye-opener -- I always feel encouraged and supported when I attend the class."

"I love the real-life situations to relate to. It's always nice to hear someone else share those thoughts/experiences. Makes it real."

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## CALM Session 8 (6/1/2019)

Responses: 109  
Average rating: 2.9 or above  
Comments: 45

love session learning enjoyed Excellent implement Thank  
Great class come better informative always

### SAMPLE RESPONSES:

"Amazing! packed full of excellent information can't wait to come back."

"I enjoy the classes and always walk encouraged and with information to benefit every child I encounter."

"These classes that you offer are always so wonderful, for life, for work, and for society. Don't change. Excellent!"

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## CALM Session 9 (8/3/2019)

Responses: 136  
Average rating: 2.9 or above  
Comments: 61

always Keep helpful class training thank much love learning  
**Great** Excellent Thank information time wonderful new job

### SAMPLE RESPONSES:

"I found the workshop very refreshing and I gain lots of new knowledge that I can implement into the classroom."

"Enjoyed the presentation, handouts helpful. I like that CALM focuses on the teacher so the teacher can focus on the child."

"Thank you for make-and-take, water, coffee, lunch, and wonderful information! I cried several times it was so good!"

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## CALM Session 10 (9/7/2019)

Responses: 129  
Average rating: 2.9 or above  
Comments: 52

love job training learned lot **Great** workshop good class Thank  
much helpful enjoyed time excellent

### SAMPLE RESPONSES:

"Enjoy every time and new info and feeling great afterwards."

"Amazing! Just heard about you all. So good!"

"I will definitely be here for the next cycle starting in October."

# Appendix D

## Voices From Early Learning Leaders

The value of any professional support initiative is often best expressed by those who participate in its activities. To honor the voices of early learning leaders and provide additional qualitative support for the findings described in this report, this appendix provides a selection of participants' statements about the impact of the QEES program. These statements were provided voluntarily through letters or emails to HCCL staff.

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**I wanted to share how critical this project is to our providers! When we think about the role that they take on, teaching, nurturing and loving our youngest learners, we, as a community, need to provide them with all the supports we can!**

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**Sandy Show**  
**Supervisor of Family, Child, and Provider**  
**Services**  
**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

### **Carmen Echevarria, Owner** **BAYCREST ACADEMY 1 & 2**

In the 15 years I have been in business, this is the first time I have been given professional help at no cost that helps our daycares increase in quality. It had been a great blessing for our centers, Baycrest I and II. We are getting the direction and training we need to improve the quality of our program. Mrs. Amy has been a great support and guidance taking our program to another level. I would definitely recommend the QEES program to other childcare centers.

### **Wendy Thompson, School Director** **CHILDREN'S NEST**

I am thrilled to have the opportunity to participate in the QEES program. . . . I am able to ask questions and not worry that I am doing something wrong. While being able to network with other directors or administrators, I can see that others have the same struggles we do. It allows us to brainstorm together to help each other.

Participating with CALM has been fantastic!!! Not only are we getting help with our little ones who need the extra support, but the trainings are so refreshing to participate in. I leave these trainings so excited and hyped over what I have learned. The skills that I am learning not only apply for me at work, but for my personal life.

I can honestly say that since I have started participating with the QEES program it has made me a better director. The trainings, networking, and coaching have opened me up to so many things that I did not know, or what or how to change things to make our program run better.

**Brandi Hooper, BASE Program Director**  
**BSAC AFTER-SCHOOL EXPERIENCE**

The QEES Program is invaluable to the childcare community. The ability to meet with Licensing professionals to ask questions and have open conversations will only make for better childcare experiences for families and raise the standards for childcare throughout Hillsborough County.

**Ana Rados, Director**  
**SEABORN DAY SCHOOL**

QEES has provided invaluable guidance starting with a thorough examination of our program and our internal procedures. The program has introduced us to three outstanding coaches that have guided us through the implementation of our updated goals in order to improve our employee/center and parent/center connections.

**Ginnie Platt, Area Director**  
**LITTLE GIANTS LEARNING ACADEMY**

I have been in the QEES program from the start and it has been so much fun. The help that we have been given from the support teams, Amy, Kristina, has been great. They are always there to help with a question and support our teachers. Amy came in and sat in classrooms that we felt needed some guidance and gave great feedback for us to make some helpful changes to the environment. The meetings they have are helpful feedback to us as providers. It has been a pleasure working with the QEES team and we look forward to what's to come.

**Amber Dunne, Executive Director**  
**CHILDCARE OF BRANDON**

I'm writing today with my thoughts about the QEES program. The program has brought some great trainings to my centers. We have attended CALM and ELM trainings as well as trainings presented by Child Care Licensing. The variety of training topics have been perfect, hitting on topics that are a concern to all those in our field. The entire QEES team is so personable and professional. It's a pleasure to work with them. The hands-on coaching has been especially helpful for my newer Directors as they learn the ropes. I personally really enjoy the QEES association meetings. Collaborating with other center leaders doesn't happen often in this field, so this time to collaborate and problem-solve together leaves me feeling inspired and refreshed.

**Connie Garrett, Center Director**  
**CHILDREN'S KASTLE**

We have been fortunate to have the support from QEES and those who work in this program. Amy McLane with the QEES program has assisted us in evaluating and reviewing our curriculum, observing our classrooms and policies. Through the program, Ms. McLane has offered valuable insight to various aspects of our program allowing us to enhance and further engage children, parents, our community and staff. . . . As a provider, the value in sharing information with others in the QEES network and having a QEES representative there to support and guide us allows us to offer higher quality learning experiences to those we serve. A difference can be seen in the classroom, in communication between students, parents, teachers, and the community.

**Gabriela Cloud, Director**  
**CIRCLE C RANCH ACADEMY**

The QEES program has been nothing short of a blessing to our center. As a director, it is easy to miss something or make a mistake with all of the hats we wear on a daily basis. I have received so much love and support from the start of the program and I truly want to thank Amy for reaching out to me and helping in any way she can. I feel confident in asking questions and receiving guidance, knowing that it does not count against me. It truly is the perfect support group to our program and continues to teach us something new each day. The QEES program is like a second family and I am very grateful for the opportunities they continue to share with us.

**Shalynn S Smith, Director**  
**SEE SAW JUNCTION**

It is with great pleasure at this time to be writing about the Hillsborough County QEES Program. This program is phenomenal with so many roadmaps to running a quality childcare program. This program has not only guided us to putting quality back into both of my centers but throughout meetings with other QEES participants, it has allowed me to build partnerships and network. From forming managerial skills to organizational skills this program has been such great help.

The QEES on-site coaching is amazing, brilliant, smart, and well -needed. My on-site coach was Mrs. Amy McLane. Mrs. McLane is a true example of a caring person that loves what she does. She made it exciting to be a part of the QEES program. During her coaching visits, she inspired my staff to continue their education in the childcare industry and as a director encouraged me to set higher educational goals to my staff, such as everyone receiving their CDA Nationals. She has been there every step of the way ensuring that we are well-equipped and organized (children files, staff files) for our routine inspections. Piece by piece we revamped my staff and parent handbook and created program evaluations for my parents. The Hillsborough County QEES Program has created a loving, fun-filled educational environment for staff, children, and families here at See Saw Junction Learning Center I & II.



## **Tripp Crouch, Owner/Operator CHILDREN'S NEST DAY SCHOOLS**

Just a quick note to let you know what a terrific program QEES is and how helpful it has been to our schools. Children's Nest Day Schools operates seven childcare centers in the Tampa Bay area, and four of those schools participate in the QEES program. The experience has really been wonderful, and our school directors have really embraced and taken advantage of the support and training provided to them and their teachers.

We think that QEES has done a great job filling a void that exists in the early learning community. Specifically, the training and support of School Directors has been the most rewarding part of the program. Teacher training is obviously vitally important and much attention is rightfully given to that training. Directors, however, have their own unique challenges, and, after attaining their Director's Credential, there were very few resources for them to develop their professional skills. QEES monthly Director meetings and monthly trainings have stepped in to help fill this void. School Directors meet and discuss the challenges at their schools, and receive ideas and trainings for managing their schools, staff, students, and parents. Our Directors eagerly anticipate the monthly Director meetings, and it seems that a real sense of camaraderie and community has developed amongst the participating Directors. Our team really enjoys that camaraderie, and we've seen a real relief from our Directors knowing that many of their challenges are shared in the greater early learning community.

The CALM program has likewise been a terrific addition to our staff training. Helping teachers manage social/emotional issues and challenges in their classrooms and with their students is a great help. We've already seen an improvement in classroom management from the teachers that have actively engaged in the CALM program.

Finally, private childcare providers like Children's Nest are constantly striving to balance two competing agendas: the first is providing the very best care and developmental support we can for the children in our care, and the second is to provide that care affordably for our working parents. QEES (and CALM) have been a wonderful resource for support and training for both directors and staff, and the free support greatly helps us manage both of our competing agendas.