



QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION SYSTEM

2025 Executive Brief

Prepared for Hillsborough College
for submission to

Children's Board Hillsborough County
1002 East Palm Avenue
Tampa, FL 33605



QEES is generously funded by The Children's Board of Hillsborough County



In partnership with Hillsborough College, Conscious Awareness Learning Model (CALM) and Early Literacy Matters (ELM)



QEES Vision Statement

All children arrive at school with the benefit of high-quality positive life experiences that matter for brain development in all the areas that play critical roles in school success.

What is QEES?

Hillsborough County's **Quality Early Education System (QEES)** began in 2018 as a bold idea for a coordinated hub that could lift early-learning quality across birth-to-five settings county-wide. QEES' north-star vision is clear: "All children arrive at school with the benefit of high-quality positive life experiences that matter for brain development in all the areas that play critical roles in school success."

Everything QEES does today flows toward that goal, strengthening the interlocking circles of support that school, home, and community can provide for every child, with these four program components:

- **HCC-Pathways — Teachers & Directors.** Bi-weekly, one-to-one coaching and monthly workshops help practitioners master foundations such as learning environment, daily routines and curriculum planning, while they earn stackable college credit toward certificates or degrees.
- **Early Literacy Matters (ELM) — Literacy Coaches, Classroom Teachers & Families.** ELM coaches use the Early Learning Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) tool to pinpoint instructional needs, then provide on-site modeling, small-group lesson demonstrations, and more than 20 workshops that build teachers' expertise in print awareness, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge and comprehension. Families receive books, tips and take-home activities that mirror classroom strategies, strengthening the home-school reading connection.
- **Business Operations & Management (BOSS) — Owners & Directors.** Through cohort-based training and follow-up mentoring, BOSS covers budgeting, staff management, record keeping and health-and-safety compliance, so programs are financially stable and regulation-ready.
- **CALM (Conscious Awareness Learning Model) — Educators & Parents.** Monthly training and embedded coaching rooted in Conscious Discipline® techniques cultivate self-regulation, empathy and trauma-informed classroom cultures; parents learn parallel strategies to reinforce skills at home.

Practical extras bolster the model: mini-grants for classroom materials, an on-demand YouTube library of nearly 900 short videos that educators and families can stream for quick tips,

and partnerships with state licensing agencies that reduce paperwork, so teachers stay focused on children.

In short, QEES is more than a program—it's a story of teachers, families, and community partners linking arms so every Hillsborough County child can step into kindergarten ready to thrive. As part of that story, QEES is charting a practical, scalable roadmap that communities across the country can adopt to raise early education quality nationwide.

Top Five Reasons to Care About Early Education Quality

1. High-quality early learning transforms life trajectories. In Boston, children who attended a high-quality universal pre-K program were more likely to graduate high school, take the SAT, attend college, and avoid juvenile incarceration (Gray-Lobe et al., 2021). The Boston model has been described as having unusually high instructional quality and has demonstrated positive impacts on children's math, language, literacy, executive function, and socio-emotional skills at kindergarten entry (Chaudry et al., 2021; Guerrero-Rosada, 2023; Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013).

2. Public investment in preschool pays off. A rigorous cost-benefit analysis of a well-implemented, evidence-based early childhood program found that for every \$1 spent, society gained \$7.30 in return through reduced public expenditures on education, health care, and criminal justice, along with increased earnings and tax revenue. The same study showed that the annual rate of return was 13.7%, indicating that the benefits of early education accumulate steadily over time—outpacing the typical returns of public infrastructure or workforce development programs (Garcia et al., 2016).

3. The early years are a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Rapid brain growth—nearly 90% of adult brain size—is already achieved by age five, making the earliest years the most critical for development (UNESCO, 2017). High-quality early education programs provide the nurturing, stimulating environments children need to build the foundational cognitive, social, and emotional skills essential for future success.

4. Preschool narrows opportunity gaps before they widen. Children from low-income families often lack access to formal preschool, and they are more likely to be cared for at home, in environments that are less educationally rich than homes of more advantaged children. Research on Head Start shows that these children benefit most with improved school readiness from the

program compared to their disadvantaged peers (Bauer, 2019; Kline & Walters, 2016).

5. Without quality support for educators, children's learning is at risk. Nearly 1 in 5 Pre-K teachers plan to leave their jobs within a year, citing challenges such as managing student behavior, low pay, supporting student mental health, and time spent on administrative work (Steiner et al., 2025). Without serious investment in the early childhood workforce to help them with these challenges, we risk undermining the quality and continuity children need.

Updated Evidence that QEES Delivers

Data from Year 6 show that QEES continued to deliver powerful results for early learning in Hillsborough County, demonstrating both breadth and depth in its outcomes.

- QEES not only met but exceeded the effectiveness targets for all but one program objective, a clear testament to the strength of its approach. More than 1,260 educators participated in high-quality training and technical assistance, and 222 centers and family child care homes received customized coaching and professional development.
- QEES renewed and reinforced its commitment to emotional well-being through CALM, reaching 190 educators and 398 children with strategies that promote classroom regulation and school readiness. The program also provided direct support to families, equipping 611 caregivers with CALM tools and training 707 others to strengthen home literacy habits.
- Across the board, QEES delivered measurable and meaningful impact: for example, 92% of trained educators improved their knowledge, 90% of children in the home reading program were read to four times a week or more, and 96% of educators enhanced their literacy practices through Nemours BrightStart! coaching.

Year-over-Year Impact

QEES maintained or exceeded its performance goals while refining its strategy for deeper, more sustainable outcomes. For example:

- While QEES trained fewer educators in Year 6 than in Year 5 (1,263 vs. 1,721), the percentage demonstrating

For more details on QEES' Year 6 data, see Appendix A.

Scan this QR code to watch 21-minute video report that brings the data to life with scenes from QEES classrooms and interviews with QEES' participants.



knowledge gains improved slightly, reflecting a shift toward more targeted and effective training.

- Site support requests rose sharply—from 59 to 91—as more providers actively sought QEES resources to enhance classroom and business quality.
- Although total literacy participation decreased slightly—from 941 to 864 children served—QEES still exceeded its target by 20%, and 90% of families in the home reading program met the goal of reading at least four times per week, up from 70% the year before.
- Technical assistance in literacy strategies (with Nemours BrightStart Curriculum) expanded both in reach and results, and CALM coaching saw higher engagement and stronger outcomes than the prior year.

As a result, QEES enters its next phase not only as a proven program but as a data-driven, scalable model for transforming early childhood education.

Recent Highlights from the QEES Story

Building on the momentum of previous years, QEES has introduced a range of new efforts that extend its reach and deepen its impact. Here are five notable examples that reflect QEES' continued innovation and responsiveness to community needs:

1. Preparing the Next Generation of Leaders

QEES launched BOSS Junior, a leadership development program for assistant directors and strong lead teachers who may be asked to step into director roles without formal training. Offered countywide, this initiative equips early educators with the confidence and skills to lead effectively before they are placed in a leadership role.

2. Bringing Early Learning to Life Through Art and Community

Through recurring Family Days at the Tampa Museum of Art, QEES weaves together literacy, art, and early learning using hands-on activities tied to museum exhibits. QEES staff host activity tables and offer guidance to families who have questions about their child's development or need help navigating early education, especially if they are new to the area. These events make QEES a visible and trusted resource throughout the broader community.

3. Providing Intergenerational Support in the Classroom

In partnership with Seniors in Service, QEES began training older adult volunteers who now assist in preschool classrooms. These volunteers, supported by the Children's Board, contribute a

nurturing presence and supportive assistance to classrooms. Their involvement also helps to further embed early learning into the broader fabric of the community.

4. Planting Seeds and Connections for Literacy, Science, and Life Skills

QEES now helps teachers use school gardens and other nature-based activities to strengthen the connection between literacy, vocabulary, science, and practical life skills. These experiences give children meaningful ways to learn where food comes from and how to care for the environment, all wrapped in literacy-rich conversations with teachers and caregivers.

5. Expanding ELM into Family Child Care Homes

QEES customized and expanded their Early Literacy Matters (ELM) program into family child care settings. This expansion allows QEES to support literacy in smaller, often Spanish-speaking providers who had previously been harder to reach. By bringing modeled literacy practices and coaching directly into these settings, this targeted initiative increases both the depth and breadth of QEES' impact on school readiness across the early learning landscape.

References

Bauer, L. (2019, June 14). Does Head Start work? The debate over the Head Start Impact Study, explained. Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/does-head-start-work-the-debate-over-the-head-start-impact-study-explained/>

Chaudry, A., Morrissey, T., Weiland, C., & Yoshikawa, H. (2021). Cradle to kindergarten: A new plan to combat inequality (2nd ed.). Russell Sage Foundation. <https://www.russellsage.org/publications/cradle-kindergarten-2ndEdition>

Garcia, J. L., Heckman, J. J., Leaf, D. E., & Prados, M. J. (2016). The life-cycle benefits of an influential early childhood program (NBER Working Paper No. 22993). National Bureau of Economic Research. <https://doi.org/10.3386/w22993>

Gray-Lobe, G., Pathak, P. A., & Walters, C. R. (2021). The long-term effects of universal preschool in Boston. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 138(1), 363-411. <https://academic.oup.com/qje/article-abstract/138/1/363/6701924>

Guerrero-Rosada, P. (2023). Identifying actionable classroom and program features for scaling. University of Michigan. <https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/177947>

Kline, P., & Walters, C. R. (2016). Evaluating public programs with close substitutes: The case of Head Start. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 131(4), 1795–1848.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjw027>

Steiner, E. D., Shapiro, A., & Levine, P. R. (2025). Pre-K teacher well-being, pay, and intentions to leave in 2024: Findings from the American Pre-K Teacher Survey. RAND Corporation.
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA3279-5.html

UNESCO. (2017). Bright and early: How financing pre-primary education gives every child a fair start in life. UNESCO IIEP Learning Portal.
<https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/library/bright-and-early-how-financing-pre-primary-education-gives-every-child-a-fair-start-in-life>

Weiland, C., & Yoshikawa, H. (2013). Impacts of a prekindergarten program on children's mathematics, language, literacy, executive function, and emotional skills. *Child Development*, 84(6), 2112–2130. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23534487/>

Appendix A

Data from Year 6

Objective 1

Provide access to countywide training and technical assistance to at least 80% of 1,100 early childhood education staff in college, community-based locations, or via live virtual platforms.



Teachers



Directors



Cognitive



Social



Emotional



Physical



Advancement

This objective refers to community wide training and technical assistance across Business Operations and Management, Conscious Awareness Learning Model (CALM), Early Literacy Matters (ELM), and HCC-Pathways. This objective does not include more intensive coaching, which is conducted with a subset of participants and is covered by other objectives.

Year 6 Findings



115% of target

1,263 teachers provided with training and technical assistance

Breadth

Year 6 target = 1,100 teachers



115% of target

92% 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

Effectiveness

Year 6 target = 80% of the teachers trained

Objective 2

Provide at least 70% of 267 non-system early childhood education centers and family child care homes with coaching, mentoring, and professional development.



Teachers



Directors



Cognitive



Physical

This objective refers to support provided by two distinct teams: Business Operations and Management and HCC-Pathways. The staff from the Business Operations and Management team visit centers and homes to provide coaching on setting up their business with specific and advanced organizational and operational supports. The Business Operations Support System (BOSS) course takes a deeper dive into the overarching business concepts that can help businesses succeed, using the Organizational Checkup as an assessment tool for providers. Also included, is support provided by the HCC- Pathways team, whose staff visit centers and homes to provide coaching on setting up basic structures for learning related to environments, daily routines, curriculum planning, approaches to learning, and assessments. This evaluation is necessary before a center can successfully implement additional, more specialized support elements provided by CALM and ELM.

Year 6 Findings



83% of target

222 centers and homes supported onsite

Breadth

Year 6 target = 267 centers and homes



139% of target

97% of the 210 centers and homes that submitted data completed the pre/post assessments, involved observations and interviews, and showed improvement over time

Effectiveness

Year 6 target = 70% of at least 267 centers and homes

Objective 3

Provide coaching to at least 75% of 170 countywide early childhood education practitioners (ages 1-5 classrooms) 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 tailored to specific needs and occurs weekly, biweekly, or monthly. 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 6 Findings



Breadth

112% of target

190 teachers and directors coached

Year 6 target = 170 teachers and directors



Effectiveness

125% of target

94% of the teachers and directors coached demonstrated developmentally appropriate practices on the Conscious Discipline® Progress Assessment

Year 6 target = 75% of at least 170 teachers and directors

Objective 4

Provide early childhood education coaching support services for social-emotional development of at least 75% of 250 children (ages 3-5) in classrooms countywide participating in CALM.



Families



Teachers



Social



Emotional

This objective refers to 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, events, materials, and take-home activities.

Year 6 Findings



159% of target

398 children provided with social-emotional support services

Breadth

Year 6 target = 250 children



125% of target

94% of the 360 children for whom data were submitted demonstrated increased social-emotional competence from pre- to posttest

Effectiveness

Year 6 target = 75% of at least 250 children

Objective 5

Provide at least 75% of 420 countywide parents/caregivers engaged in 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 preschools attended by participating children. Additional resources and materials are offered through outreach, parent events, forums, and website links to support services.

Year 6 Findings



145% of target

611 families provided with CALM strategies

Breadth

Year 6 target = 420 families



125% of target

94% of the 520 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

Effectiveness

Year 6 target = 75% of at least 420 families

Objective 6

Provide educational site supports to at least 52 eligible early childhood education programs serving children birth to age 5 participating in CALM or BOSS.



Teachers



Directors



Social



Emotional



Cognitive



Physical

This objective refers to a system for managing funding requests from early education providers for classroom materials needed to implement CALM techniques and Conscious Discipline® strategies or center materials needed to implement BOSS strategies for the business. Eligible providers must be in compliance with Child Care Licensing, and have attended at least 8 CALM trainings or a full BOSS cycle in the past 12 months. QEES staff review and fulfill requests from the CALM and BOSS Educational Support Catalogs and follow up to confirm the receipt and utilization of materials. QEES uses an internal system to track this program component.

Year 6 Findings



Breadth

175% of target

91 programs requested and implemented site supports for CALM and/or BOSS strategies

Year 6 target = 52 programs



N/A

Effectiveness

Objective 7

Provide at least 85% of 720 children (ages birth-5) in countywide early childhood education centers or family child care homes with emergent literacy skills/support year-round through the ELM model.



Families



Teachers



Cognitive

This objective refers to providing support/skills to children (ages birth-5) regarding emergent literacy. Children are assessed to identify levels of emergent literacy skills. Instruction on multisensory early literacy skills includes print awareness, oral language, letter knowledge, phonological awareness, syllable counting and segmentation, rhyming, blending, alliteration, onset-rime, comprehension, and emergent writing. This support is provided through weekly targeted coaching in small groups (12 sessions; 20–30-minute lessons) in classrooms.

Year 6 Findings



120% of target

864 children supported in emergent literacy skills

Breadth

Year 6 target = 720 children



99% of target

84% of the 665 children for whom data were submitted demonstrated increased literacy skills on the Early Literacy Skills Assessment or Get Ready to Read! from pretest to posttest

Effectiveness

Year 6 target = 85% of at least 720 children

Objective 8

Provide year-round support to at least 85% of 525 countywide parents/caregivers (of ELM children) engaged in early childhood education sites to develop strategies for emergent literacy and home-school engagement.



Families



Cognitive

This objective refers to parent/caregiver 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 6 Findings



Breadth

135% of target

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

Year 6 target = 525 parents/caregivers



Effectiveness

116% of target

99% of the eligible 608 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 6 target = 85% of at least 525 parents/caregivers

Objective 9

Provide ELM activities to 240 children (ages 3-5) and their families to carryover classroom literacy strategies into home environments.



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 at least four times a week.

Year 6 Findings



142% of target

341 children provided with literacy strategies for home

Year 6 target = 240 children



113% of target

90% of the 258 children for whom data were submitted had documentation of being read to at home at least 4 times per week

Effectiveness

Year 6 target = 80% of at least 240 children

Note: 4% of children served moved prior to completion of Outcome 9 measurement, 21% of children served did not submit a log from pre to post, and 6% of children served submitted reading logs with increased reading times from pre to post that did not meet the 4x a week qualifier

Objective 10

Provide technical assistance for literacy strategies to at least 85% of 60 early childhood education staff in 25 sites countywide using Nemours BrightStart! Literacy Curriculum.



Teachers



Cognitive

This objective refers to coaching on literacy in classrooms using Nemours BrightStart! Literacy Curriculum as a framework. The Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) 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 6 Findings



Breadth

138% of target

83 staff served at 33 sites

Year 6 target = 60 staff across 25 sites



Effectiveness

113% of target

96% of the 82 staff for whom data were submitted demonstrated increased literacy skills on the ELLCO from pre- to posttest

Year 6 target = 85% of at least 60 staff

Comparison of Outcomes

Year 5 to Year 6 | October–September

Objective 1— Provide access to countywide training and technical assistance to at least 80% of 1,100 early childhood education staff in college, community-based locations, or via live virtual platforms.



Breadth

Fewer teachers were provided with training and technical assistance in Year 6, but the number still exceeded the target.

Year 5 = 1,721 **Year 6 = 1,263 teachers**



Effectiveness

A **higher percentage** of teachers met the target in Year 6.

Year 5 = 91% **Year 6 = 92% of teachers**

Objective 2— Provide at least 70% of 267 non-system early childhood education centers and family child care homes with coaching, mentoring, and professional development.



Breadth

More centers and homes were supported on-site in Year 6.

Year 5 = 202 **Year 6 = 222 centers and homes**



Effectiveness

A **smaller percentage** of centers and homes met the target in Year 6, but the number still exceeded the target.

Year 5 = 99% of 198 centers completed posttests by September and demonstrated improvement

Year 6 = 97% of 210 centers completed posttests by September and demonstrated improvement

Objective 3— Provide coaching to at least 75% of 170 countywide early childhood education practitioners (ages 1–5 classrooms) participating in CALM.



Breadth

More teachers and directors were coached in Year 6.

Year 5 = 180 **Year 6 = 190 teachers and directors**



Effectiveness

A **higher percentage** of teachers and directors met the target in Year 6.

Year 5 = 87% **Year 6 = 94% of teachers and directors**

Objective 4— Provide early childhood education coaching support services for social-emotional development of at least 75% of 250 children (ages 3-5) in classrooms countywide participating in CALM.



Breadth

More children were provided with social-emotional support services in Year 6.

Year 5 = 356

Year 6 = 398 children



Effectiveness

A **lower percentage** of children met the target in Year 6, but the number still exceeded the target.

Year 5 = 96%

Year 6 = 94% of children

Objective 5— Provide at least 75% of 420 countywide parents/caregivers engaged in early childhood education sites with CALM strategies.



Breadth

More families were provided with CALM strategies in Year 6.

Year 5 = 591

Year 6 = 611 families



Effectiveness

A **higher percentage** of families who completed posttests met the target in Year 6.

Year 5 = 93%

Year 6 = 94% of families

Objective 6— Provide educational site supports to at least 52 eligible early childhood education programs serving children birth to age 5 participating in CALM or BOSS.



Breadth

More educational site support requests were processed in Year 6.

Year 5 = 59

Year 6 = 91 requests



Effectiveness

N/A

Objective 7— Provide at least 85% of 720 children (ages birth-5) in countywide early childhood education centers or family child care homes with emergent literacy skills/support year-round through the ELM model.



Breadth

Fewer children were supported in emergent literacy skills in Year 6, but the number still exceeded the target.

Year 5 = 941

Year 6 = 864 children



Effectiveness

A **smaller percentage** of children met the target in Year 6, but the number still exceeded the target.

Year 5 = 92%

Year 6 = 84% of children

Objective 8— Provide year-round support to at least 85% of 525 countywide parents/caregivers (of ELM children) engaged in early childhood education sites to develop strategies for emergent literacy and home-school engagement.



Breadth

Fewer parents were provided with support for developing literacy and engagement strategies in Year 6, but the number still exceeded the target.

Year 5 = 726

Year 6 = 707 parents



Effectiveness

A **lower percentage** of families who completed posttests met the target in Year 6, but the number still exceeded the target.

Year 5 = 100%

Year 6 = 99% of parents

Objective 9— Provide ELM activities to 240 children (ages 3-5) and their families to carryover classroom literacy strategies into home environments.



Breadth

Fewer children were provided literacy strategies for home in Year 6, but the number still exceeded the target.

Year 5 = 354

Year 6 = 341 children



Effectiveness

A **higher percentage** of children met the target in Year 6.

Year 5 = 70%

Year 6 = 90% of children

Objective 10— Provide technical assistance for literacy strategies to at least 85% of 60 early childhood education staff in 25 sites countywide using Nemours BrightStart! Literacy Curriculum.



Breadth

More staff were served in Year 6.

Year 5 = 79

Year 6 = 83 staff



Effectiveness

A **higher percentage** of staff met the target in Year 6.

Year 5 = 91%

Year 6 = 96% of staff

Appendix B

Program Description

The QEES initiative, through a comprehensive system of supports, addresses the complex needs of early childhood education. This system thoughtfully provides education and support for child care owners, directors, teachers, families, and children. The programming increases awareness of "why" early learning is so important while providing a holistic approach to teaching young children. The system is delivered through the following four primary program components.

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 amount to a college course credit after successful completion of the series. Other delivery formats 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 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, 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.

Early Literacy Matters (ELM). ELM is an early literacy intervention program that focuses on building emergent literacy skills: concepts of print knowledge, 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 (HCC). Delivery formats are available that offer in-service hours and CEUs.

HCC-Pathways. This program component is for teachers and directors of child care 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. Other delivery formats are available that offer in-service hours and CEUs. HCC-Pathways ensures that teachers and directors can more easily and successfully implement what they learn from the CALM and ELM components of QEES. HCC-Pathways staff work with teachers and directors of child care homes and centers to create Action Plans to maintain a quality early learning environment and ensure that the strategies provided are implemented successfully. 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.

QEES Business Operations and Management. 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, the Business Operations and Management team offers center directors and home child care owners additional, more specific, and advanced training on organizational and operational topics that include: staff management, communication skills, record keeping, and indoor/outdoor health and safety. CEUs are issued and tracked through HCC, as are CEUs from the other QEES program components (HCC-Pathways, CALM, and ELM).

These Business Operations and Management services are provided through coaching and training sessions on topics such as budget, finance, record keeping, management, communication, and indoor/outdoor health and safety. Support includes training (over 30 hours) and coaching (provided in 20- to 30-minute sessions) for all child care programs. These sessions are built on evidence-based practices and tailored to site needs. Using information from an initial assessment, the Business Operations and Management team 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 child care homes and centers, the Business Operations and Management team 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, HCC (Ybor Campus), 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.

The Business Operations and Management team 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 C

Objective Symbols and Assessment Instruments

Key to Objective Symbols

This report uses symbols to denote how each objective relates to the child's development and surrounding support system, strengthened by the QEES program.

The **purple** symbols reference **key people** who build skill for supporting the child.



Families



Teachers



Directors

The **blue** symbols reference **areas of the child's development** supported through targeted QEES program components.



Cognitive



Social



Emotional



Physical

The **green** symbol references **career advancement supports** for teachers and directors to promote retention and stability in the child's circle of care.



Advancement

Assessment Instruments

This section summarizes the assessment instruments used to gather data about the effectiveness of QEES activities and the overall impact of achieving the 10 QEES objectives listed in the following table. The assessment instruments used to measure the impact of the activities embedded in the 10 objectives are indicated along with the constituents impacted by the objectives. Descriptions of each assessment, organized alphabetically, follow the table.

QEES Objectives			
Objective	Objective text	Assessment(s)	Constituent(s) Impacted
1	Provide access to countywide <u>training and technical assistance</u> to 1,100 early childhood education staff in college, community-based locations or via live virtual platforms.	Knowledge Assessments (HCC-created)	Teachers, Directors
2	Provide 267 non-system early childhood education (ECE) centers and family child care homes (FCCH) with <u>coaching, mentoring and professional development</u> .	Business Administration Scale (BAS) for Family Child Care Program Administration Scale (PAS) for Early Childhood Programs Business Operations Support System (BOSS) EOS Organizational Checkup CIRCLE Classroom Environment Checklist (Preschool CEC) Infant-Toddler CIRCLE Classroom Environment Checklist (Infant-Toddler CEC)	Directors, Teachers
3	Provide <u>coaching</u> to 170 countywide early childhood education practitioners (ages 1-5 classrooms) participating in CALM.	Conscious Discipline® Progress Assessment	Teachers
4	Provide <u>early childhood education coaching support services for social-emotional development</u> of 250 children (ages 3-5) in classrooms countywide participating in CALM.	Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) Rating Scales: Prosocial Behavior Skills Scale	Children

5	Provide 420 countywide parents/caregivers of engaged early childhood education sites with <u>CALM strategies</u> .	Knowledge Assessments (HCC-created)	Families
6	Provide <u>educational site supports</u> to 52 eligible early childhood education programs serving children birth to age 5 and participating in CALM or BOSS.	Site support tracking system and Utilization report	Directors, Teachers
7	Provide 720 children (ages birth-5) in countywide centers or family child care homes with <u>emergent literacy skills/support</u> year-round through the ELM model.	Early Literacy Skills Assessment (ELSA) Get Ready to Read Screening Tool (GRTR)	Children
8	Provide year-round support to 525 countywide parents/caregivers (of ELM children) engaged in early childhood education sites to develop <u>strategies for emergent literacy and home-school engagement</u> .	Get Ready to Read (GRTR) Home Literacy Checklist	Families
9	Provide <u>ELM activities</u> to 240 children (ages 3-5) and their families <u>to carry over classroom literacy strategies into the home environments</u> .	Reading log (HCC-created)	Families
10	Provide <u>technical assistance</u> for literacy strategies to 60 early childhood education staff in 25 sites countywide using Nemours BrightStart! Literacy Curriculum.	Early Language and Literacy Observation (ELLCO)	Teachers

Business Operations Support System (BOSS) Organizational Checkup. This tool, created by the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS), serves as a reliable self-assessment for businesses participating in the BOSS program. The 20-question checkup tool aims to measure the strength (on a scale of 1-5) of several operating system components, including vision, data, process, traction, issues, and people. The strength ratings for all 20 questions are averaged to determine an overall strength percentage. The checkup is administered twice throughout the 12-week BOSS training, with a pretest at the initial session and a posttest after six sessions.

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 10 areas assessed on a 7-point scale by a trained early childhood coach. The ECE/FCCH score is the average across the 10 areas, with 7 being the highest possible score. The 10 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

Circle Classroom Environment Checklist (CEC) Infant-Toddler and Preschool. This tool assesses the presence and quality of important aspects of the infant-toddler (22 items) or preschool (21 items) classroom environment. This tool is designed to focus on the learning environment, not on the teacher's interactions with children. An observation can take place with or without children in the room and typically takes 15 to 30 minutes to complete. In addition, this checklist focuses on aspects of the environment that relate directly to children's opportunities for play and learning rather than basic health, safety, and sanitation (which are addressed in each state's minimum standards for child care centers). The observer needs to be able to view all parts of the classroom, as well as the environment that children use for outdoor playtime. The CEC uses a 3-point rating scale for each item: 1 - low, 2 - moderate, and 3 - high. Each item rating has a description, and most items include specific materials and examples. When toys and materials are mentioned, it is assumed that they are developmentally appropriate for the ages of children in the classroom. If materials are present that are not developmentally appropriate, they are not included when scoring the relevant checklist item.

Conscious Discipline® Progress Assessment. This tool assesses the implementation of Conscious Discipline® skills and structures through a self-assessment rubric created on a 4-point scale (1, lowest; 4, 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 Classroom Observation (ELLCO). The ELLCO Pre-K assessment toolkit covers five areas: classroom structure (scores range from 4 at lowest to 20); curriculum (score ranges from 3 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 3 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

knowledge (1, 21). Designed as an authentic assessment for children ages 3 to 6, 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 3- to 5-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 Literacy 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 10 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.

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 7-point scale (from 1 to 7), using 25 items clustered into 10 areas. The QEES coach scores the 10 domains and averages the score across the 10 domains. A score of 7 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 monthly reading log allows families to track books read over the course of each week in that month and provide feedback. The reading logs are used to track progress toward the overall quarterly reading targets.

Site Support Tracking System and Utilization Report. This internal QEES reporting system includes product details and expenditures by site for materials purchased to help programs implement CALM and/or BOSS strategies. The system tracks requests; fulfillment;

confirmation of materials received; and follow-up by phone, email, or in-person visit to confirm that the materials were utilized.

Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) Rating Scales: Prosocial Behavior Skills Scale. This tool measures social skills, including communication, cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, engagement, and self-control. It includes a class-wide screening guide that can be used to measure individual skills development. The early childhood coaches assess the students on the scale. Students can receive a high score of 4 and a low score of 1.

Appendix D

Qualitative, Formative Survey Responses

Throughout the 2023-2024 program year, QUES continued to gather open-ended feedback from trainings, coaching visits, and family events. The selected comments below—grouped by stakeholder type—illustrate how QUES supports spark professional growth, calmer classrooms, stronger business practices, and family engagement.

“ ”

Child Care Director/Owner

This course was the best experience/training I have had in many years. Over the summer I paid almost \$2,000 to attend a program for directors and this was many times more useful!!

They were the life jackets that I needed.

This class helped me better my business. The BOSS class helped me look at myself as an important person.

Very helpful and supportive for directors and child-care leaders.

Thank you so much for offering this course. It has helped me identify priorities and focus in on what is and isn't important.

Child Care Professionals/Teachers

I always feel so gung-ho after our CALM sessions. They're rejuvenating for me..

WOW, another excellent class. The composure element is so vital; I am still working on it and thank you for all the tools.

CALM truly helped in my classroom and calmed the environment. CALM has helped my class not feel overwhelmed.

This has not only helped me teach the students but has helped me as a teacher to calm myself down.

Every time I attend CALM, good ideas come up, and I feel more confident in my classroom.

Today's session gave me tools to be a traveling advocate and source of prevention by teaching the children these skills.

What I found most helpful is how to gain control of the class and myself when we're in a stressful environment.

These sessions are very important because they make me feel that my job is vital to the community and make me feel good about myself.

QEES supported me with much knowledge, but overall, the most helpful support I received was their help with my science center. Their support has helped the cognitive development of the children in my care.

Parents/Caregivers

My daughter has become much more emotionally aware since starting with the program.

Safe Place works at our house!

This program was wonderful at a great time. Dealing with a very energetic son can be stressful when I'm not sure how to calm him. There were some wonderful tools I'm excited to try. Thank you.

Thank you for the helpful tips. Will make a Safe Place at home (besides my hugs).

I love it, I practice with my children, and it works, and on myself. You rock!!

CALM helped our family every day!

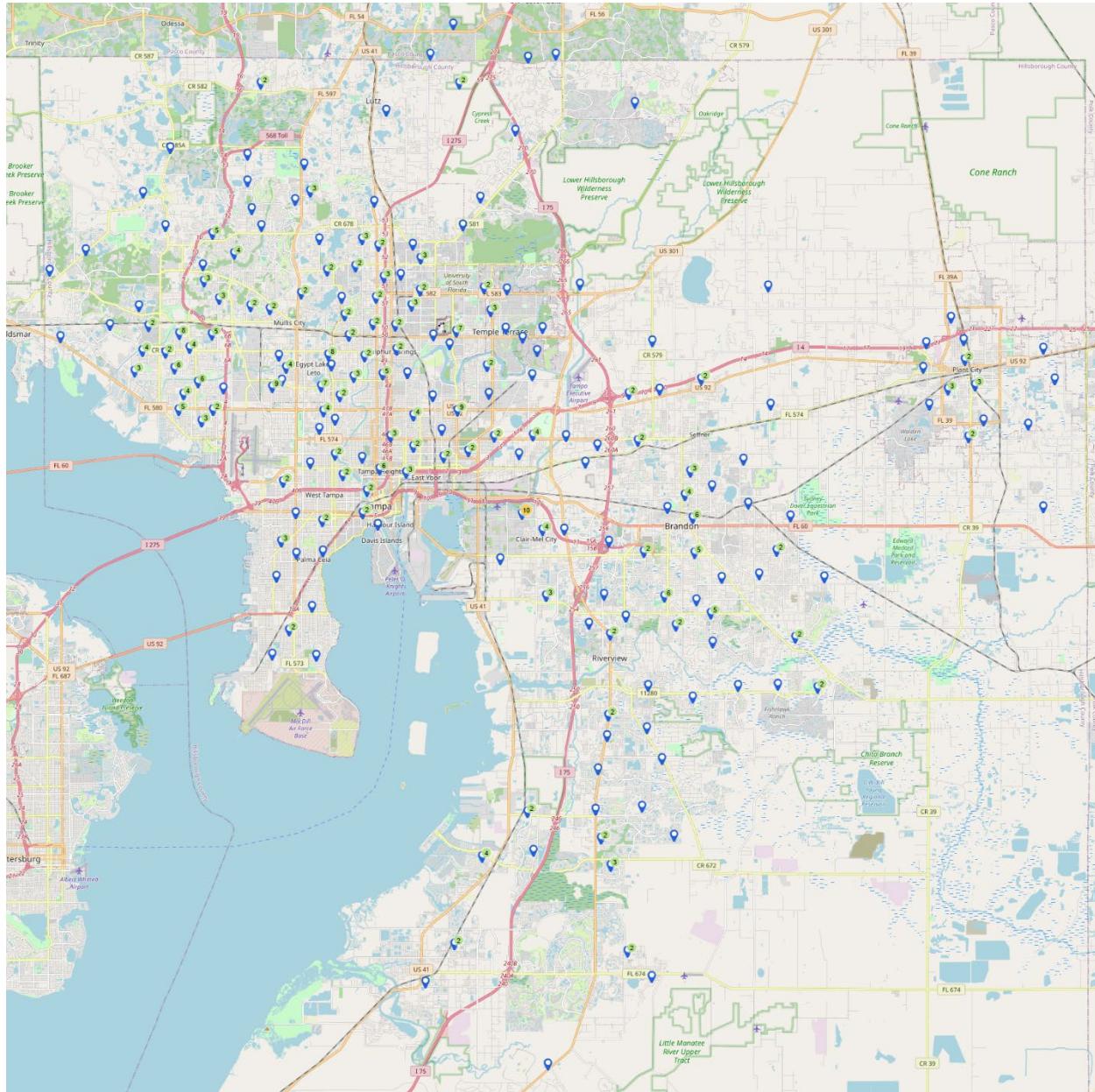
Great session, very informative. Thank you!

This training was very informative and made me excited to start implementing what I learned today.

Appendix E

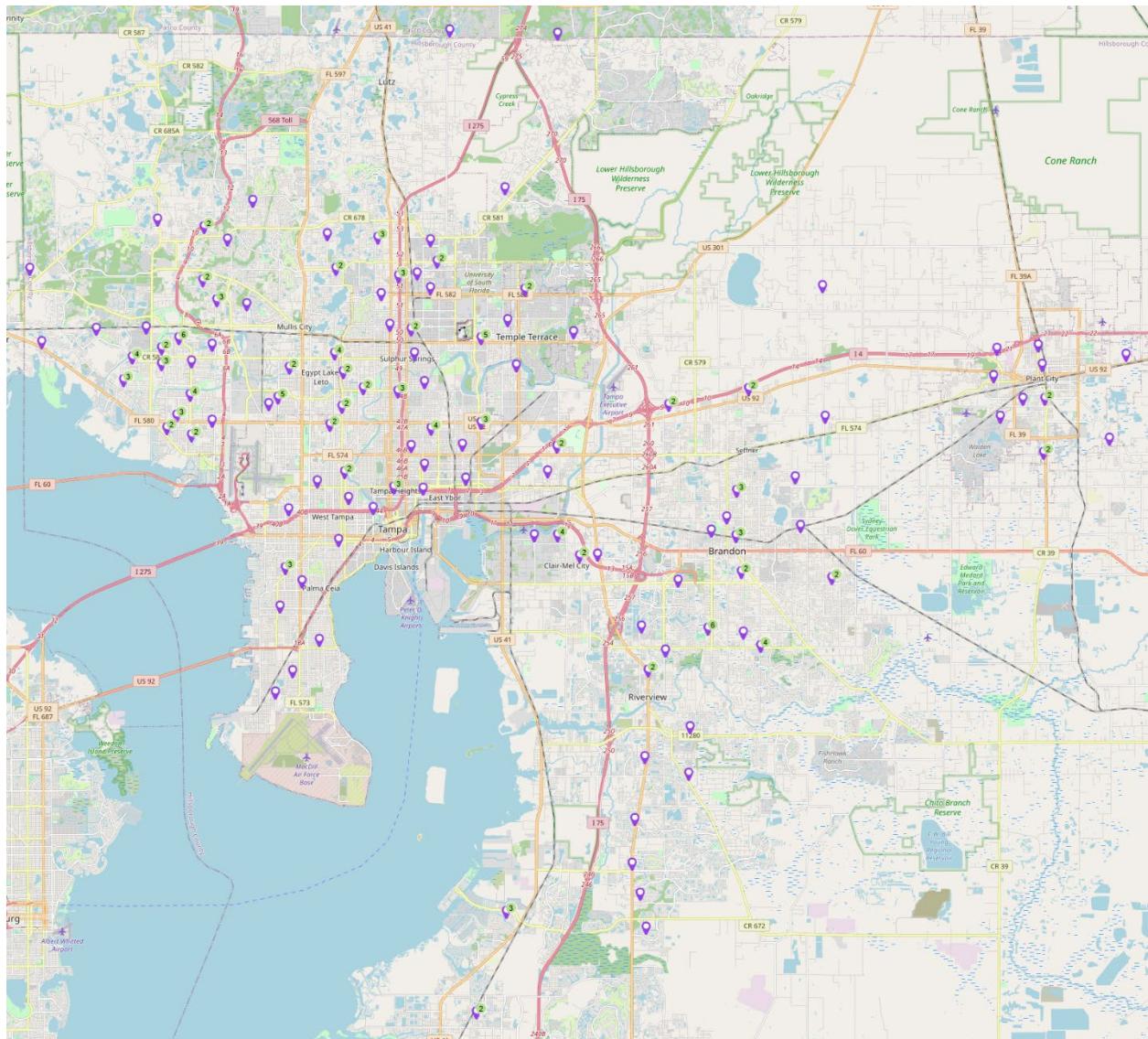
Mapline – Sites Served by QEES in Year 6

Map A illustrates 426 sites (both ECE Centers & FCCH) that received QEES services¹ from October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024.

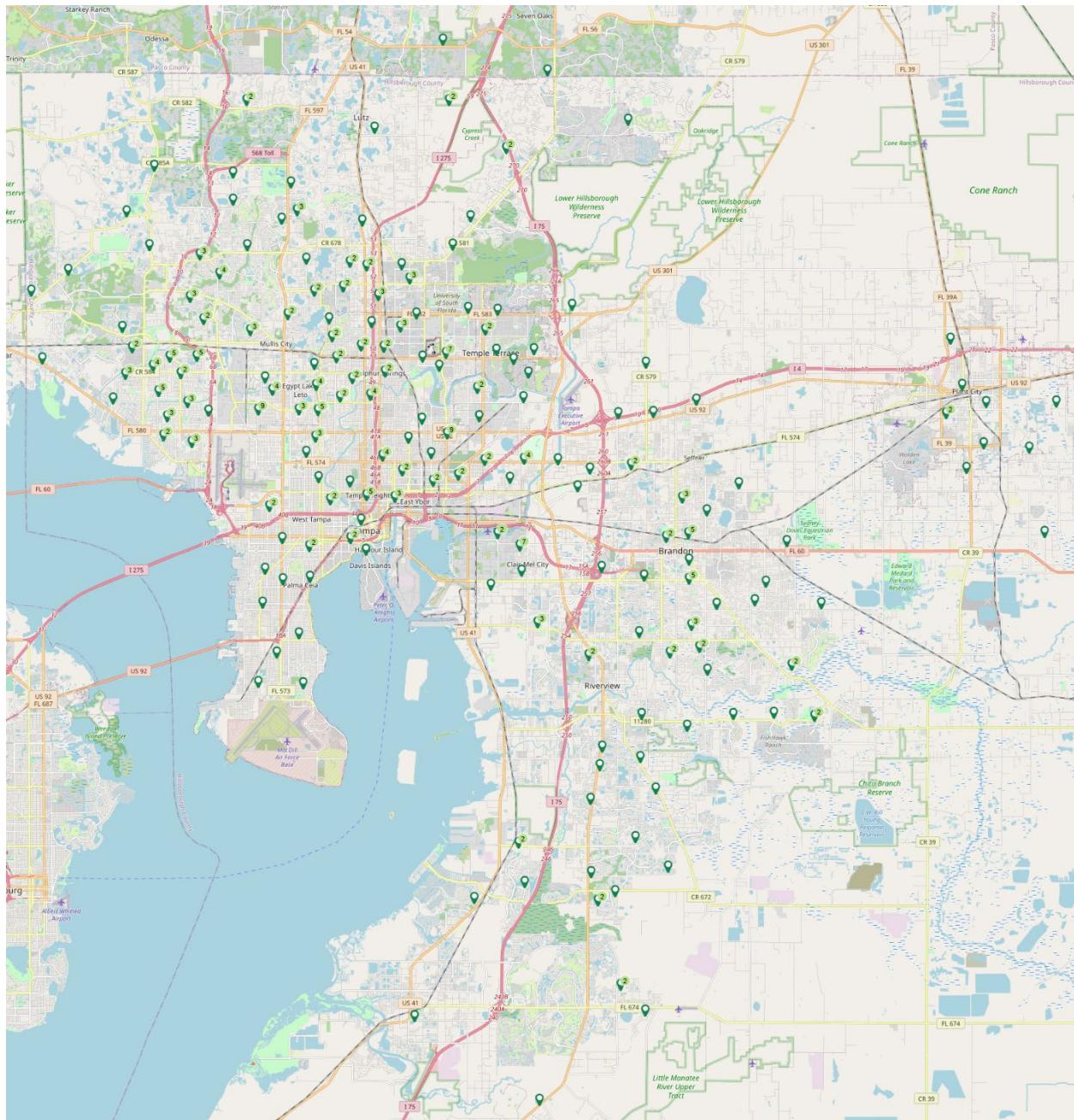


¹ As outlined in Appendix A: services from Conscious Awareness Learning Model (CALM), Early Literacy Matters (ELM), HCC-Pathways and/or QEES Business Operations and Management.

Map B illustrates 204 sites (both ECE Centers & FCCH) that received coaching from October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024.



Map C illustrates 334 sites (both ECE Centers & FCCH) that participated in QEEs training from October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024.



Appendix F

Note from the QEES Program Director

In Year 6, QEES continued delivering vital supports to early education providers, families, and children across Hillsborough County. The relationships we've built with the early childhood community have grown even deeper, strengthening our collective push for innovative, quality programming.

Each year, the providers and children impacted by QEES fuel my passion for our shared mission to improve early learning. The dedication, creativity, and care that educators and directors bring to their work is truly inspiring, especially as we continue to witness the positive impact that QEES is having in our community. The commitment that our providers show—including their determination and openness to trying new approaches—humbles me.

Together, we are laying the foundation for lifelong learning, resilience, and well-being. The impact we're seeing is real and growing. QEES is proud of all we've accomplished, and we look ahead with gratitude and excitement for another year of serving the community and children we cherish.

Marni Fuente,
QEES Program Director

