



# 2022 Annual Report

**UF** | Lastinger Center for Learning  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

# Our Mission

The University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning improves the quality of teaching, learning, and childcare. We research, develop, and scale equitable educational innovations for adults and children that put all learners on trajectories for lifelong success.

# Core Values

The Lastinger Center is guided by the following core values:

- 1 /// EQUITABLE** We seek to identify and mitigate factors that limit access to high-quality educational opportunities for all learners.
- 2 /// RESPONSIVE** We listen and respond to interests, challenges, and goals of the individuals and communities we serve to design learning experiences that meet their needs.
- 3 /// RESEARCH-BASED** We use research and best practices to design engaging, high-quality learning experiences.
- 4 /// COLLABORATIVE** We develop partnerships and incorporate stakeholder feedback to create the best possible outcomes for the communities we serve.
- 5 /// TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED** We leverage technology to create scalable, innovative learning experiences.
- 6 /// SUSTAINABLE** We design learning experiences whose impact can be sustained and scaled by working at system levels.

# 2022 Annual Report



## What's Inside

Letter from the Director . . . . .	3
By the Numbers . . . . .	4
Product Portfolio . . . . .	5
Early Learning . . . . .	7
Literacy . . . . .	9
New Worlds Reading Initiative . . . . .	11
Mathematics . . . . .	13
Leadership & Coaching . . . . .	14
Technology & Data Science . . . . .	15
News, Awards & Legends . . . . .	16





Since 2002



Helping teachers teach and  
students learn.

—ALLEN & DELORES LASTINGER

# Letter from the Director

**Phil Poekert, Ph.D.**



We approached 2022 with much anticipation. It was a year to be filled with great celebration and, as hoped and planned, commemorations of our 20th anniversary of operations – a gala, Lastinger Legends awards, a documentary, and a podcast series to elevate the pioneers that inspired the original spirit of the Center. For the past 20 years, the Lastinger Center has worked to transform teaching and learning through creative, innovative approaches to education. Inspired by the vision and leadership of our founders, faculty, funders and friends, we've had the opportunity to support millions of people in their learning journeys. The look back at our past resulted in the first submission to the UF Archives from the Lastinger Center.

In addition to our celebrations, much was accomplished this past year. We launched our strategic plan for 2022-2025, rebooted our advisory board, and expanded our team. We connected with educators and hosted professional learning activities, delivered hundreds of thousands of books to children's homes, developed and launched Florida's first legislatively recognized literacy micro-credential, tested programming for mathematics professional learning, and shared interactive reading guides with educators and families. We improved our technology for course delivery to enhance others' learning, built infrastructure to manage and analyze data to optimize learning, and shared our learning through published reports and scholarly papers.

The good work of the Lastinger Center team has resulted in a number of accolades, including members of our team taking on leadership roles in various associations, the Center itself taking on the role of a Goal Leader for the Florida Chamber of Commerce's 2030 goal for literacy and mathematics, and me being recognized as the #1 Principal Investigator at the University of Florida.

We have achieved much this year, and there is still much to do to launch us into the next 20 years. In Allen and Delores Lastinger's words, the Lastinger Center is for "helping teachers teach and students learn." We plan to sustain that charge for generations to come.

Cheers,  
Phil

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Poekert', written over a light blue circular background.

# By the Numbers

Since its founding in 2002, the University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning has focused on bringing the aspirations of founders Allen and Delores Lastinger to life. As we reflect on 2022, highlights show that we have stayed true to "helping teachers teach and students learn." We continue to expand our impact, and the future only promises more opportunities for the Center to do more excellent work.

**83%**

of early childhood educators would recommend our courses

**41**

early learning courses offered

**39,732**

children were served by educators taking our early learning courses

**57%**

average increase in educator knowledge gain

**2,387**

schools served by the New Worlds Reading Initiative

**~2M**

books shipped in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, and English Braille

**6K+**

families participated in research study investigating book distribution impact

**165,672**

students served by the New Worlds Reading Initiative

**67**

counties served by the New Worlds Reading Initiative

**76%**

of Florida school districts served by our literacy programs

**45K+**

students impacted by educators enrolled in our literacy programs

**210K**

hours of literacy professional learning completed

**77%**

gain in teacher knowledge of the Science of Reading

**500K+**

students used Math Nation, our online math learning platform

**20M+**

practice questions answered on Math Nation

**12**

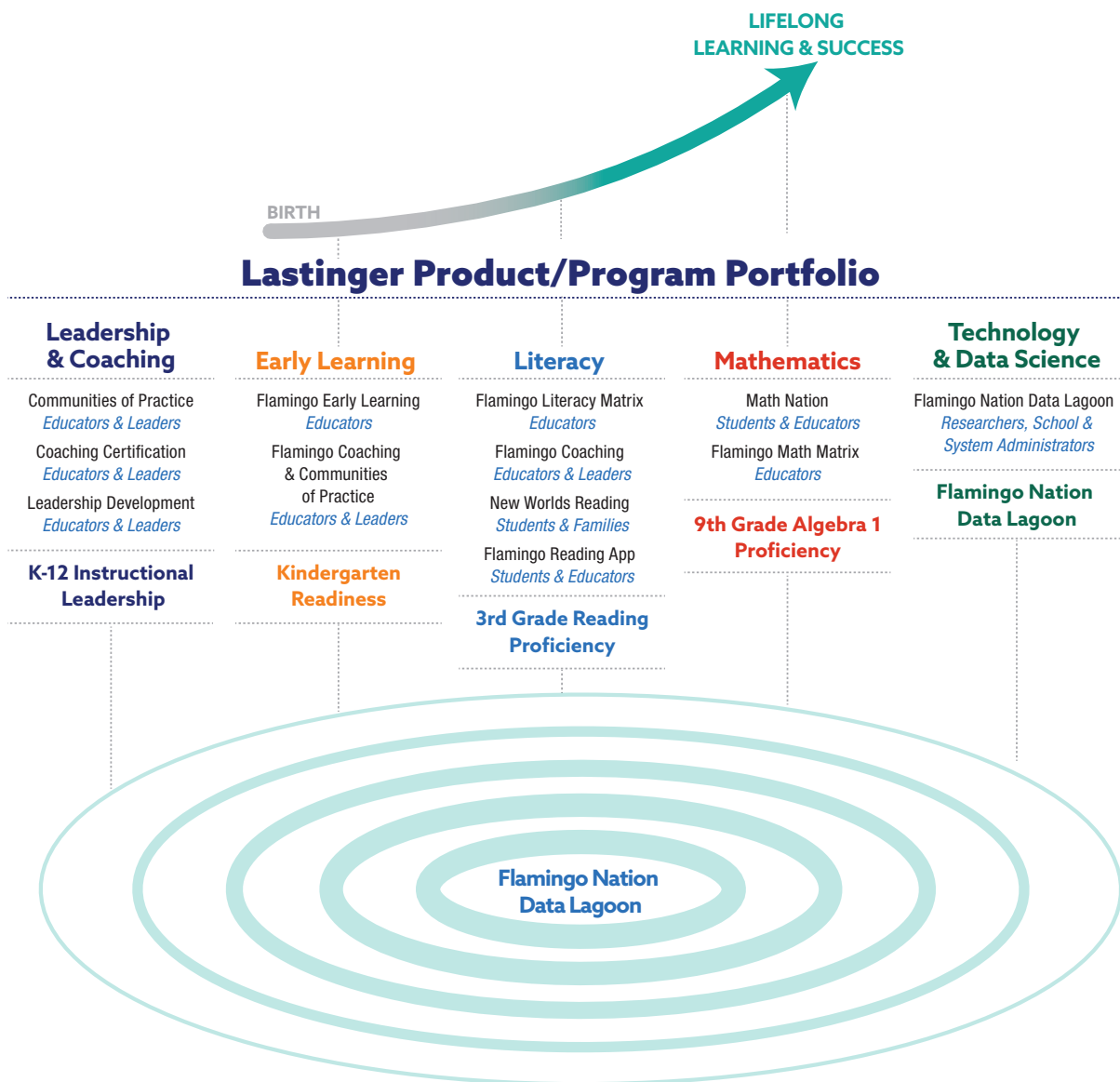
online modules created for the Math Matrix professional development system

**21%**

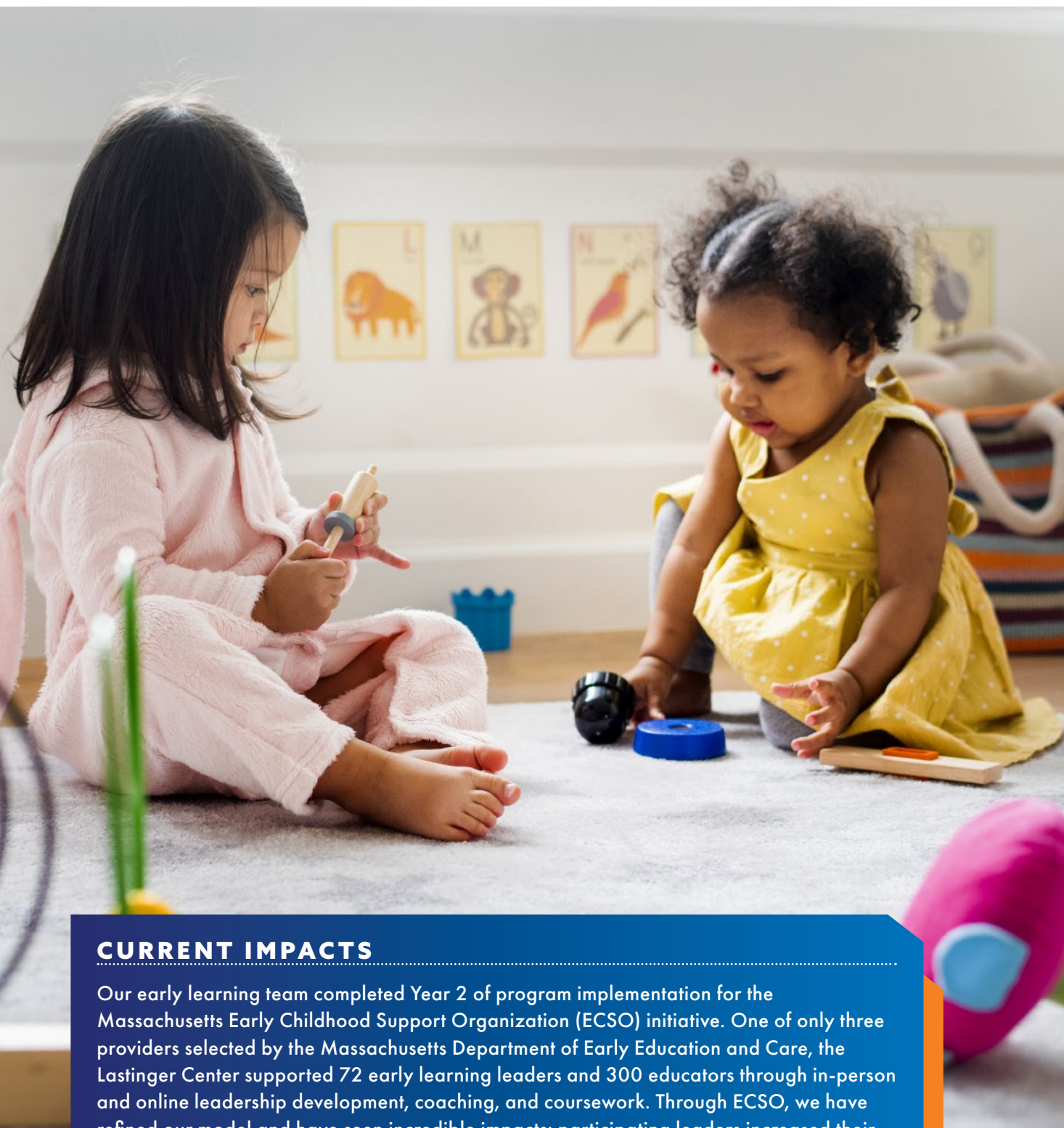
improvement in teacher knowledge on Algebraic Reasoning after completing the Math Matrix

# Product Portfolio

The Lastinger Center product portfolio focuses on three predictors of future success: kindergarten readiness, reading proficiency by third grade, and Algebra 1 proficiency by ninth grade. K-12 instructional leadership and coaching programs shore up efforts to achieve these milestones, and technology and data science initiatives make critical information available to diagnose learning challenges and expedite the implementation of effective solutions.







## CURRENT IMPACTS

Our early learning team completed Year 2 of program implementation for the Massachusetts Early Childhood Support Organization (ECSO) initiative. One of only three providers selected by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, the Lastinger Center supported 72 early learning leaders and 300 educators through in-person and online leadership development, coaching, and coursework. Through ECSO, we have refined our model and have seen incredible impacts: participating leaders increased their leadership scores by nearly 20%. Program implementation continues in Year 3, along with a quasi-experimental design study to examine program impacts on teacher and child outcomes.



# Early Learning

Our early learning professional development programming maintains its focus on meeting educator and child needs, with the ultimate goal of setting our youngest learners on paths to being fully prepared for kindergarten. In 2022, we assisted early childhood educators in achieving their professional goals and meeting requirements by developing certification pathways, including the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, and offering online literacy professional development to help Florida preschool teachers meet new emergent literacy requirements. Beyond Florida, we implemented Communities of Practice and Coaching programs with early childhood leaders in Massachusetts to develop their facilitation, coaching, and instructional leadership skills, streamlining pathways to integrate best practices in early childhood education into communities throughout the state. In Louisiana, we supported educators through coaching certifications and CDA pathways.

**83%**

of early  
childhood  
educators would  
recommend our  
courses

**41**

early learning  
courses offered

**39,732**

children were  
served by educators  
taking our early  
learning courses

**57%**

average increase  
in educator  
knowledge gain

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As we strive to support early childhood educators and the systems in which they work, we are developing a network of strategic partnerships that strengthen the early childcare provider ecosystem. Coupled with creating more credentialing pathways in English and Spanish for early childhood educators to further professional and educational goals, we are able to support advancements in educators' knowledge, skills, and careers while ultimately preparing children for success in kindergarten and beyond.



*The CDA program has helped  
me better my knowledge and  
made me feel more at ease about  
being a new teacher.*

—Briyana Headley



## CURRENT IMPACTS

We partnered with the Pinellas School District in St. Petersburg, Florida, to implement the Pinellas Early Literacy Initiative (PELI). This multi-pronged literacy professional development experience supported early elementary teachers, coaches, and administrators across eight schools in the “Transformation Zone,” previously dubbed “Failure Factories” due to drastically low literacy rates.

In just one year, the percent of kindergarten through second grade students reading at or above grade level increased from **13% to 61%** – higher than the state average.

# Literacy

2022 has been the year of connection for our literacy work in Florida. Thousands of teachers were connected to Science of Reading professional development through our Literacy Matrix program. Coaches were connected to a new Literacy Coach Endorsement to improve their literacy knowledge and coaching skills. Leaders were connected to professional learning to help them cultivate a culture of literacy excellence in schools and districts. Policymakers were connected to data and research to inform and influence literacy policy. In our New Worlds Reading Initiative, 160,000+ families were connected to books and resources to foster a love of reading.

At the macro level, these connections have resulted in a comprehensive literacy system providing critical support to children, families, teachers, schools, and districts across the entire state of Florida. Florida is now seen as the archetype for innovative and coordinated policy and programming across all levels of education, with a growing number of states taking notice and replicating legislation and bringing programs such as the Literacy Matrix to their educators.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

We continue to work closely with the Florida Legislature and Department of Education to further build out the literacy system with a new 60-hour literacy micro-credential. This online program builds foundational knowledge and skills for an estimated 17,000 PreK through 12th grade teachers and counts toward Florida's Reading Endorsement. We also aim to partner with other states and organizations to further scale this successful system to other states.

**76%**  
of Florida school  
districts served

**45K+**  
students  
impacted

**210K**  
hours of  
professional  
learning  
completed

**77%**  
gain in teacher  
knowledge of  
the Science of  
Reading



*Our students started to build their foundational skills and their confidence, and then their love of reading began.*

—LaKisha Lawson





## CURRENT IMPACTS

Our greatest joy in 2022 was hearing feedback from families and children who participate in the New Worlds Reading Initiative. Families shared incredible stories of how their children excitedly run to the mailbox to retrieve their book package each month, read signs while in the car, and have a greater interest in reading other books in addition to monthly New Worlds Reading deliveries.



# New Worlds Reading Initiative

2022 was the first full calendar year for the New Worlds Reading Initiative, Florida's free statewide book delivery program for students not yet reading on grade level. Through strong relationships with state legislators, our partners at Scholastic, and the Florida Department of Education, we were able to ship close to two million free books directly to children, create and share print and video literacy resources for families and educators, and prepare to launch a professional learning program for teachers.

We kicked off the second year of the New Worlds Reading Initiative with a launch event hosted at the UF Champions Club in November. Our team connected with families, program partners, and sponsors, and generated excitement about reading. Testimonies of the positive impacts of the program on children, families, and reading skills were shared throughout the event. In 2022, the New Worlds Reading Initiative also launched its corporate tax credit donation program, allowing us to partner with 15 tax-credited donors and securing \$7.6M in tax credit donations for the 2021-22 financial year.

**~2M**

books shipped in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, and English Braille

**6K+**

families participated in research study investigating book distribution impact

**165,672**

students served

**2,387**

schools served

**67**

counties served

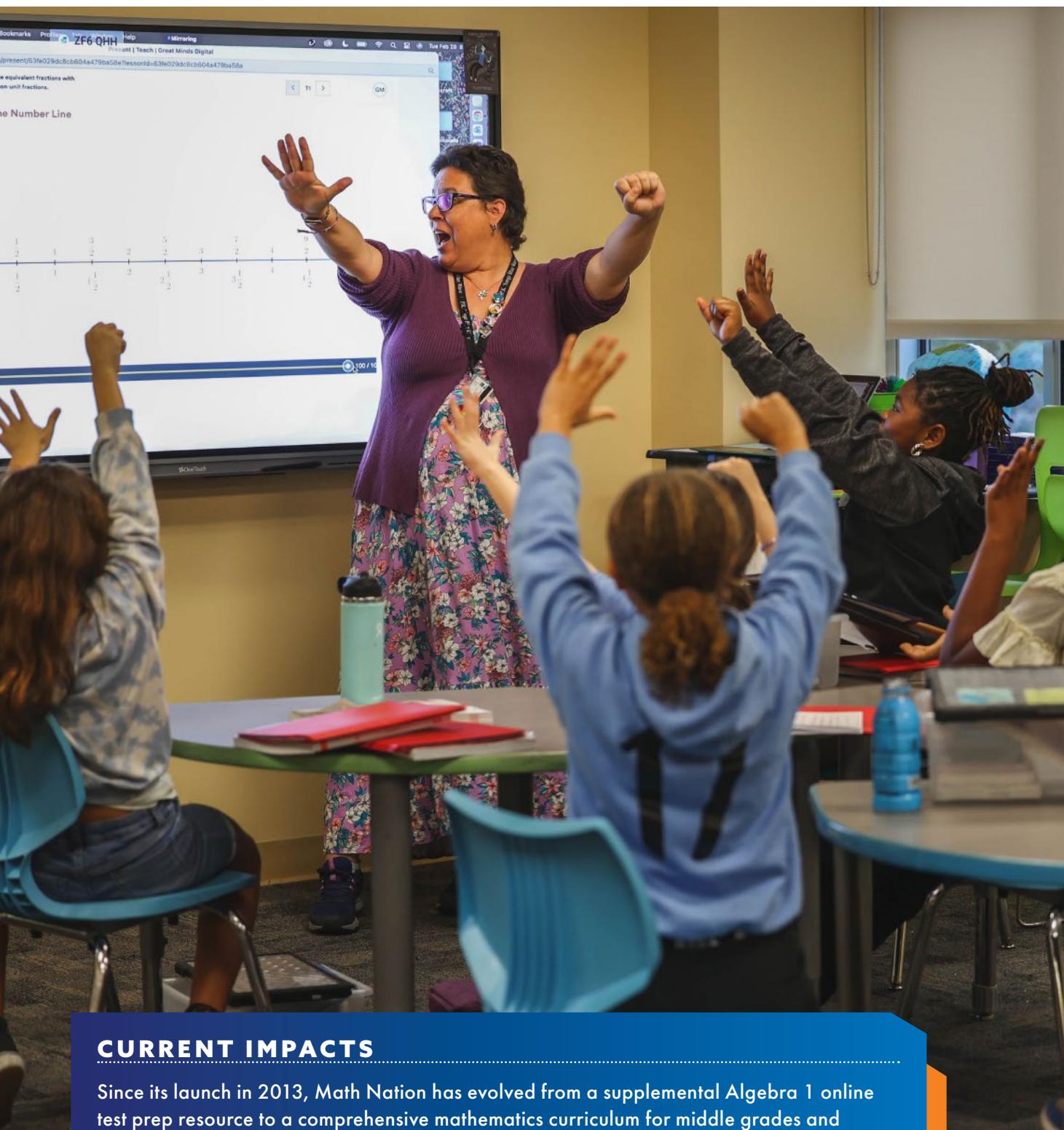
## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

We continue to develop our capacity to enroll eligible students through targeted marketing and regional partnerships with community-based organizations. The New Worlds Reading Teacher Professional Development pilot, designed to raise standards in literacy instruction and connect school-based reading activity with growing home libraries, will launch in summer 2023. We plan to grow our tax credit contributions for long-term sustainability and exploration is also underway to extend the program to include more children and expand from reading and literacy to math and numeracy.



*As soon as they get the books, they read them. They put it down; they pick it back up and read it over and over and over.*

—New Worlds Reading Parent



## CURRENT IMPACTS

Since its launch in 2013, Math Nation has evolved from a supplemental Algebra 1 online test prep resource to a comprehensive mathematics curriculum for middle grades and Algebra 1, Geometry, and Algebra 2 courses. In 2022, [29](#) Florida districts and schools adopted at least one Math Nation subject as a primary curriculum. Six additional states – Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, and South Carolina – provided statewide access to at least one Math Nation subject through multi-year contracts.

# Mathematics

In 2022, building upon our nationally utilized secondary math curriculum – Math Nation – the Lastinger Center enhanced Algebra 1 content to further increase student engagement and achievement by incorporating more relevant examples in math problems. We contributed to the field of mathematics research by co-authoring a RAND Corporation report which examined Florida teachers' credentials and preparation for math teaching and continued work on two National Science Foundation grants related to algebra instruction. Work has also continued on the development of our newest professional development system for math teachers, the Math Matrix. Using data collected during the preliminary pilot of the Math Matrix, we are refining our content to shorter, more digestible modules to further increase access and learning flexibility.

**500K+**

students used Math Nation, our online math learning platform

**20M+**

practice questions answered on Math Nation

**12**

online modules created for the Math Matrix professional development system

**21%**

improvement in teacher knowledge on Algebraic Reasoning after completing the Math Matrix

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Algebra 1 curricular enhancements are being finalized and will be made available through the Math Nation platform in 2023. A second pilot of the Math Matrix's first eight modules is being conducted in Florida during Spring 2023 to inform future product and content development. In addition, we are beginning to work with key stakeholders to consider what programs, policies, and conditions are needed to build out a comprehensive mathematics system, similar to Florida's literacy system.



*The most useful thing was learning new ways for presenting algebra to my students. This module was full of new ideas to incorporate into my lessons.*

–Math Matrix Pilot Participant





# Leadership & Coaching

The UF Lastinger Center's leadership and coaching work experienced significant expansion in both scope and geography during 2022. We partnered with the Florida Department of Education to create and launch a new online K-12 Literacy Coach Endorsement program this past year, intended to strengthen coaches' literacy instruction knowledge and coaching skills. In addition, our in-person K-12 instructional coaching certification program and complementary leadership training were relaunched in Florida to build a strong and cohesive foundation of coaching and leadership within and across school districts. Finally, our early learning coaching and leadership model is now available online and in-person and has expanded beyond Florida to Louisiana and Massachusetts. Together, these programs offer a birth through 12th grade educational leadership professional development pipeline to further support teachers through effective coaching and leadership.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Interest in leadership and coaching continues to grow, with possibilities for discipline-specific opportunities emerging in conversations with organizations like the Florida Council for Teachers of Mathematics about exploring development of a Mathematics Coach Endorsement. The release of the Florida Educational Leadership Standards for effective school administrators in November 2022 and conversations with leaders in the field inform the development and integration of competencies and future iterations of leadership programming.







# Technology & Data Science

An upgrade to our Flamingo Learning platform in 2022 sets the stage for an exciting new era of online course delivery and data analytics. The updated platform will host more than 200 courses, support a wide variety of learner demographics, and provide a standardized set of data sources that open the door to new insights into user experience and learning design. The Flamingo Nation Data Lagoon draws data from Flamingo Learning, Math Nation, and the New Worlds Reading Initiative, and is a perfect example of far reaching collaboration focused on finding solutions for educational issues of today and tomorrow. The Data Lagoon currently streamlines access to data from millions of learners for research and development and shortens the timeframe for analysis and understanding implications by weeks. As active members of a global community engaged in building data systems, the Lastinger Center team benefits from and contributes to collective wisdom gained from hundreds of data systems being constructed on the open education analytics infrastructure.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Given its technology-enhanced programming, the establishment of the Data Lagoon and the promotion of artificial intelligence at the University of Florida, the Center is poised to engage in thought leadership around maximizing data sharing to optimize student outcomes while maintaining privacy and security for student information.



*We can now perform simple queries, create visualizations and have concrete opportunities to engage in advanced analytics, machine learning, and AI. We can't wait to see what we can do.*

—Cathy Cavanaugh, Ph.D.

# News, Awards & Legends

2022 was a year of significant growth in the Lastinger Center, with 62 new associates joining our highly committed and highly skilled team. Even prior to the expansion of remote work, the Lastinger Center employed staff across Florida and throughout the nation to ensure top talent, diverse perspectives, and successful scaling of our work. In 2022, associates were located in Connecticut, Louisiana, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia, and growth in our Gainesville-based team led us to secure an off-campus facility in Gainesville's Innovation District.

## 2022 END OF AN ERA

Laverne Daniels, the Lastinger Center's much loved executive administrative assistant since 2002, retired. Deemed by former director, Don Pemberton, as the Center's spiritual leader, Laverne was recognized as the College of Education's Staff Member of the Year in 2022.

*What she became to all of the associates was the spiritual center of our work.*

”

Laverne, day in and day out, exemplified the values that we sought to live by. The days when you come in tired, and you're not quite wanting to be as warm and kind to the world, there's Laverne reminding you, on a daily basis, that we can get through this together. We're united in this. I truly believe it's the Lavernes of the world that propel us forward. Everyone at the Center is just nuts about Laverne because she helps us to be our best every day.

—Don Pemberton



Phil Poekert, Don Pemberton, Laverne Daniels, Delores & Allen Lastinger

## 2022 AWARDS

### GREAT GATOR

Lori Gully – Spring  
Robin Gregory – Fall

### DIRECTOR'S ACHIEVEMENT

Fernando Franco Crespo	Bryan Lutz
Luiz Franco Giovannini	Tim Mosunich
Brittany Gonzalez	Karen Osarenkhoe
Gabe Lipartito	Amanda Pate
Theresa Loch	Stephanie Snidarich
Erica Lopez	Ron Viafore

### LASTINGER LEGENDS

In our 20th year of operations and as we take this work into the future, we honor our Lastinger Legends, the people who were there at the beginning, sharing their expertise, hearts, and souls to launch the UF Lastinger Center for Learning. They conceptualized and built this ambitious initiative to improve the lives of children and educators. It has, and we can't wait to impact more. We are grateful to our Legends named here and to all who have shared their efforts on behalf of the UF Lastinger Center for Learning.

Alyson Adams  
Thomasesia Lott Adams  
Pedro "Pete" Bermudez  
Elizabeth "Buffy" Bondy  
Nancy Dana  
Laverne Daniels

Jeffrey Dow  
David Lawrence Jr.  
Roderick McDavis  
Leannetta McNealy  
Gloria Merriex  
Dorene Ross



**The University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning**

improves the quality of teaching, learning, and childcare.

We research, develop, and scale equitable educational innovations for adults and children that put all learners on trajectories for lifelong success. Serving more than one million students and 50,000 educators annually, the Lastinger Center has made significant strides for real, scalable solutions in collaboration with educators in Florida, around the nation, and around the world.

To learn more please visit [lastinger.center.ufl.edu](https://lastinger.center.ufl.edu).

**UF** | Lastinger Center for Learning  
UNIVERSITY *of* FLORIDA

618 SW 12th Street  
0711 Norman Hall  
PO Box 117052  
Gainesville, FL 32611

(352) 273-4103    [lastinger.center.ufl.edu](https://lastinger.center.ufl.edu)       @LastingerCenter