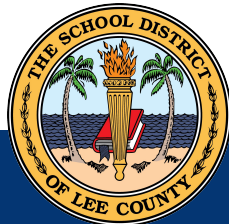


PROJECT *Believe!*



*Driving Recruitment Success
Through Strategic Focus*







Introductions



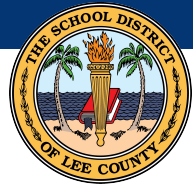
Dr. Denise Carlin,
Superintendent



Dr. Shanna Johnston,
Chief Human Resources Officer



Inez Mata,
Talent Acquisition Coordinator



What is Project BELIEVE?

A district-wide strategic initiative to strengthen instructional staffing through **focused recruitment** and **certification support**, ensuring every classroom starts the year with a certified teacher.

Every student deserves a certified teacher on day one because student achievement begins with strong, dedicated educators in every classroom. Project BELIEVE is transforming how we attract, prepare, and place instructional staff by rethinking our:

- Systems & Processes
- Tools & Expectations
- Mindsets & Roles

GOAL

By August 11, 2025
instructional
vacancies will
decrease from
575 to 0.





Stakeholders Involved

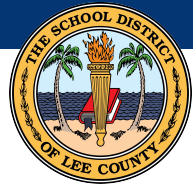
Who was involved?

- School Board
- Superintendent
- Deputy Superintendent
- Regional Associate Superintendents
- Chief Human Resource Officer
- HR Operations
- Talent Acquisition
- School Principals
- Administrative Assistants



GOAL

By August 11, 2025
instructional vacancies
will decrease from
575 to 0



PROJECT *Believe!*



SESSION GOALS

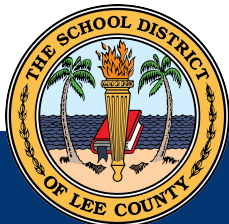
1

Share Scalable Strategies

2

Emphasize Urgency,
Innovation, & ***Belief***

PROJECT Believe!



PROJECT Believe!

Have Questions?



What is Project Believe?

A district-wide strategic initiative to strengthen instructional staffing through focused recruitment and certification support, ensuring every classroom starts the year with a certified teacher.

In one word, what comes to mind when you hear "strategic staffing"?



Vacancy Reality Audit

Reflect: What is your true vacancy story?

Current Vacancy Count: _____
Percentage Change from Last Year: _____
Top 3 Most Difficult Fills: _____
Highest-Need Schools/Programs Impacted? _____



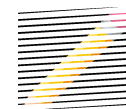
Discuss with your table: Where are your vacancies clustering? Is your problem volume, distribution, or process?

Reactive Vs. Proactive Mapping

Reflect: When does recruitment actually happen in your district/organization?

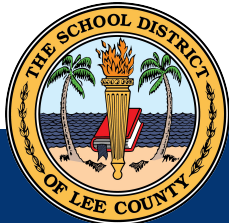


Discuss with your table: Where are your "dead" months? Where are you reacting instead of anticipating?

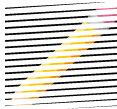


1:00

PROJECT
Believe!



What if every school started the year fully staffed?





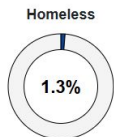
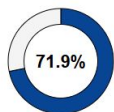
Welcome

to the School District of Lee County

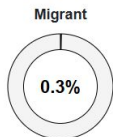
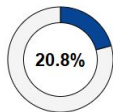
Superintendent Model	Elected
Size	27th Largest School District in the Nation 8th Largest in School District in Florida
Number of Schools	96 "Traditional" - 117 Total
Student Enrollment	102,506 & Counting

Student Demographics

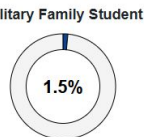
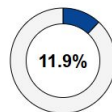
Economically Disadvantaged ⓘ



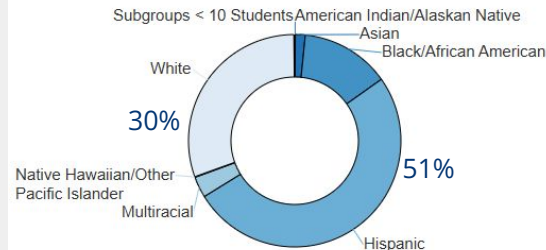
Current English Language Learners

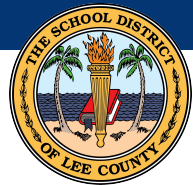


Students with Disabilities



Race/Ethnicity

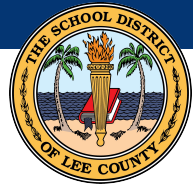




Welcome

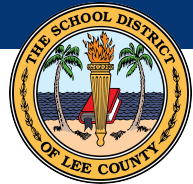
to the School District of Lee County

Number of Teachers	5,538								
Florida Certification	Traditional, Alternative Pathways, Reciprocity								
High-need Subject Areas	ESE, Math, Science, ESOL								
Teaching Vacancy Data	<p><i>First Day of School Trend</i></p> <table border="1"><caption>Instructional Vacancies</caption><thead><tr><th>Date</th><th>Instructional Vacancies</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>August 15, 2022</td><td>188</td></tr><tr><td>August 14, 2023</td><td>246</td></tr><tr><td>August 12, 2024</td><td>196</td></tr></tbody></table>	Date	Instructional Vacancies	August 15, 2022	188	August 14, 2023	246	August 12, 2024	196
Date	Instructional Vacancies								
August 15, 2022	188								
August 14, 2023	246								
August 12, 2024	196								



A Case for Change

- Exit Interview Trends & Retention Data
- Feedback from Principals: Barriers to Hiring
- Stakeholder Pressure: Students, Families, Community
- Broader National Trends: Teacher Pipeline Collapse



Activity: Vacancy Reality Audit

Reflect: What is your true vacancy story?

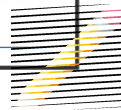
- Current [Instructional] Vacancy Count
 - *Higher Ed: Track vacancies for tenure-track faculty, critical research staff, or adjunct pools.*
- % Change from Last Year
- Top 3 Most Difficult Fills
- Highest - Need Schools Impacted



Discuss with your table:

- *Where are your vacancies clustering?*
- *Is your problem volume, distribution, or process?*
 - *Higher Ed: Process-based (e.g., higher ed search committees taking 6–9 months) or volume-based (e.g., lack of doctoral candidates in specific STEM fields).*

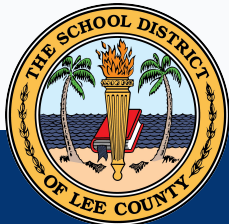
VACANCY REALITY AUDIT	
<p>What is your true vacancy story?</p> <p>Current Vacancy Count: _____</p> <p>Percentage Change from Last Year: _____</p> <p>Top 3 Most Difficult Fills: _____</p> <p>Highest-Need Schools Impacted? _____</p>	

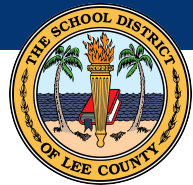


Where are your vacancies clustering? Is your problem volume, distribution, or process?

Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.





Necessary Shifts in Recruitment

Proactive Recruitment



Visibility:
Weekly
Progress
Monitoring &
Communication

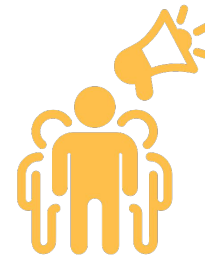
Rhythm:
Year-round
Recruiting &
Retention
Calendar



Precision:
Targeted
Outreach

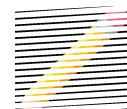


Clarify:
Alt-cert
Pipelines
with Boot
Camps &
Support



Distribution:
Ambassadors

Narrative:
Strategic
Branding &
Storytelling

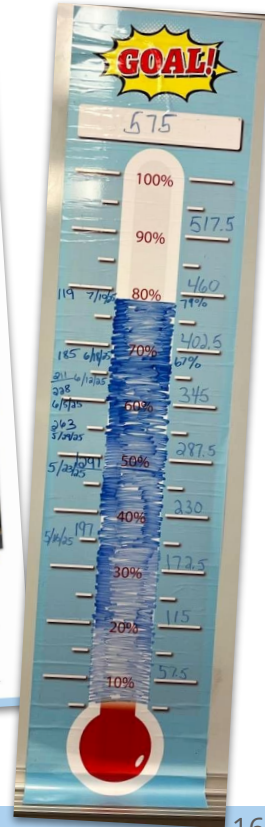




Key Strategies for Action Internal Communication

- ✓ **Weekly Updates**
 - HR Division Emails/ Newsletters
 - School-based Administrators & Assistants Emails
 - Weekly Board Updates
 - Weekly Thermometer Update in Superintendent’s Cabinet

✓ Recruitment Toolkits



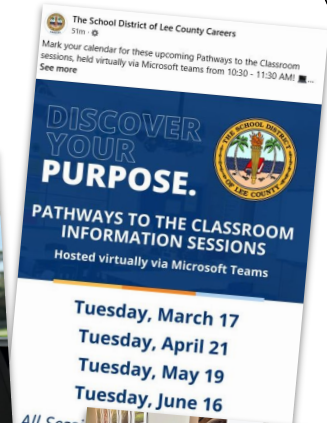


Key Strategies for Action

External Communication



- ✓ Talent Acquisition Open Office Hours
- ✓ Social Media Campaigns
- ✓ School-based Open House Recruiting Events
- ✓ Executive Leadership Support

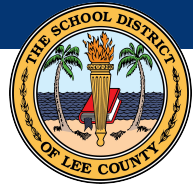


*Kudos to Clinton Garlick and his team at **Amanecer Elementary** for hosting their own recruitment event.*



Key Strategies for Action

One Team One Vision



Scheduling & Staffing Solutions

- Regional Associate Superintendents
- ESE Leadership
- Principals

Differentiated Support

- Human Resource Support

Full Alignment

- School Locations
- HR Operations Team
- Talent Acquisition Team





PROJECT BELIEVE



Big cheers for **Project Believe** — Every time we hire someone, the HR team rings a bell to celebrate. 🔔



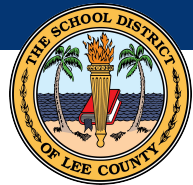
The School District of Lee County Careers is in Lee County, Florida.

August 4 at 3:48 PM · 🌐

🎉 Big Cheers for Project Believe!

Each time we make a hire, our HR team rings a bell to mark the moment! Every ring represents another amazing team member joining The School District of Lee County! 🔔

#LoveLeeSchools #nowhiring #careers



Key Strategies for Action

One Team One Vision

Dr. Jason Kurtz, Principal Hector A. Cafferata K-8

Anticipating Needs

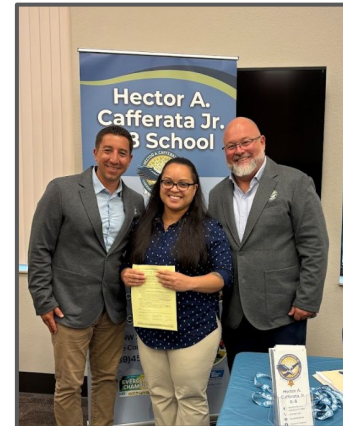
- Para to Teacher Pathways
- Intern Host Site

Building Relationships Early

- FGCU FLIER Host School
- Community Recruitment Event
- Mock Interviews

Chief Talent Officer

- Hosted Community Recruitment
- College/University Recruitment Events





Key Strategies for Action

One Team One Vision

Mr. Ed Carter, Principal Green Meadow Elementary
(former principal Veterans Park Academy for the Arts)

Fostering Innovative Partnerships

- FGCU EDG3323 Pilot Host

Building Relationships Early

- FGCU FLIER Host School
- Intern Host Site
- Mock Interviews

Strategic Partner in Recruitment

- Final Intern Observations





Activity: Reactive Vs. Proactive Mapping




Reflect: When does recruitment actually happen in your district/organization?

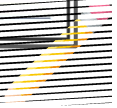
- When recruitment events happen
- When university outreach occurs
- When alternative certification onboarding begins
- When principal hiring meetings occur



Discuss with your table:

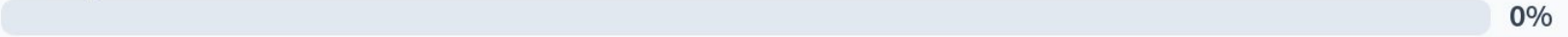
- *Where are the dead months?*
- *Where are you reacting instead of anticipating?*

REACTIVE VS. PROACTIVE MAPPING	
Reflect on when recruitment actually happens.	
Where are the dead months?	
Where are you reacting instead of anticipating?	

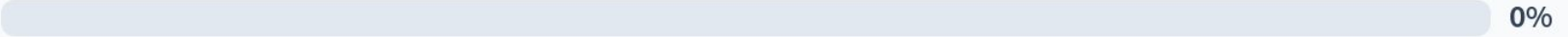


What are your dead months?

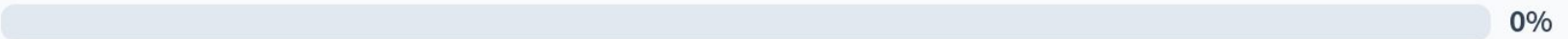
January



February



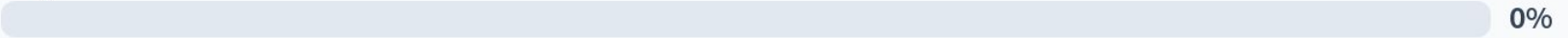
March



April



May



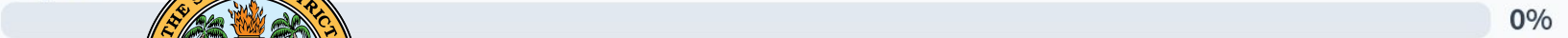
June



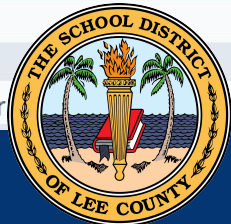
July



August



September





Key Strategies for Action

Internal Talent Pipeline Development

"Grow Your Own" Programs

Para-to-Teacher Initiative with Tuition Support

Student Teacher Partnerships

Guest Teacher Pipeline



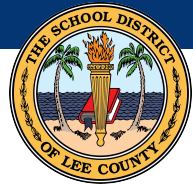
Internal Recruitment Campaigns

Recognize

Elevate

Retain





Key Strategies for Action

Internal Talent Pipeline Development

Leveraging Current Staff

Current Support Staff

- Instructional Support, Clerk Typists, Substitutes
- Many already have rapport with students and families and understand the culture and school systems.
- Some may already be working towards teacher certification or higher degrees.

Strategies to Cultivate Aspiring Educators

- Mentorship and Exposure
- Professional Development





Key Strategies for Action

Internal Talent Pipeline Development

Guest Teacher Pipeline

- “Discover your Purpose” Information Sessions
 - Navigating Certification Pathways
 - Transcripts Evaluations
 - In-Person and Virtual Opportunities





Key Strategies for Action

Internal Talent Pipeline Development



FLORIDA
SOUTHWESTERN
STATE COLLEGE



Florida Gulf Coast
University





Key Strategies for Action

Internal Talent Pipeline Development

Florida Gulf Coast University EDG3323 Courses

- San Carlos Park Elementary
- Veterans Park Academy for the Arts





Key Strategies for Action

Internal Talent Pipeline Development



Inaugural FGCU College of Education Collaboration Partnership Award Presented to the Principal of The Bayshore School



The Bayshore School Principal Ben Ausman is the inaugural Collaboration Partnership Award winner from the Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) College of Education. Ausman was recognized for his outstanding commitment to preparing and supporting future teachers.

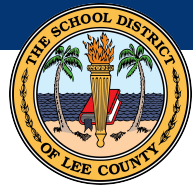
"Thank you to FGCU's College of Education for this honor," Ben Ausman said. "Welcoming interns to Bayshore has been a positive experience for students and staff. The investment made in our interns will provide high quality teachers to the School District of Lee County for years to come."

This newly established award honors an educational leader who exemplifies excellence in fostering meaningful field experiences for teacher candidates through deep collaboration with FGCU's College of Education. As the first-ever recipient, Principal Ausman sets a high bar for this prestigious distinction.

At The Bayshore School, Principal Ausman provides a model environment for teacher candidates to grow. Each year, the school hosts over 200 students on Introduction to the Teaching Profession, where they learn about the teaching profession and determine if it is the right path for them. Teaching at Bayshore is a consistently among the most highly selected placements in the district.

Principal Ausman is an early champion of FGCU's innovative FLIER Program, which provides an internship and a paid teaching experience — an approach that affirms the value of our valued employees. He fosters a supportive professional culture and provides professional development, facilitates open dialogue, and provides personal support to build the confidence and competence of future teachers, while strengthening the





Key Strategies for Action

Internal Talent Pipeline Development



The District Hosts Educator Signing Day to Celebrate Future Teachers

The District Hosts Educator Signing Day to Celebrate Future Teachers



The School District of Lee County proudly hosted its first ever Educator Signing Day, a high-energy celebration honoring education graduates who have committed to begin their teaching careers in Lee County schools. The event, themed "eLEEVate: Where Futures Rise," recognized the next generation of educators and highlighted the School District's commitment to strengthening the teacher pipeline through powerful community partnerships.

The ceremony brought together families, principals, cooperating teachers, university partners, district leaders, and community supporters to witness the symbolic "signing" of new teachers.

"Our future educators are rising, just like our hot air balloon theme suggests," said Inez Mata, Talent Acquisition Coordinator. "Signing Day is about celebrating the heart, passion, and commitment these graduates are bringing into our schools. They are the reason our classrooms and our community continue to grow stronger."

The School District of Lee County hosts Educator Signing Day

Writer: Deb Albertson Nov 25, 2025 | Updated Nov 25, 2025





Activity: Hidden Talent Inventory

Reflect: Who are potential candidates already in your system?

- Any candidates that are currently in your system
 - Paraprofessionals
 - Long-term Subs
 - Uncertified Bachelor Degree Holders
 - Student Teachers
 - Retirees Eligible to Return
 - *Higher Ed: Graduate Assistants (GAs)*
 - *Higher Ed: Long Term Adjuncts*
 - *Higher Ed: Alumni*

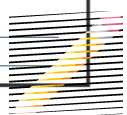


Discuss with your table:

- *Do you have a formal pathway for each group?*
- *If not, what is missing? Funding? Structure? Ownership?*

HIDDEN TALENT INVENTORY
Who is already inside your system? <i>Paraprofessionals, Long-term Subs, Uncertified Bachelor Degree Holders, Student Teachers, Retirees.</i>

<i>Do you have a formal pathway for each group?</i> <i>If not, what is missing? Funding? Structure? Ownership?</i>





Activity: Hidden Talent Inventory Give One - Get One

Prompt: What is a current strategy that you are implementing to recruit potential candidates already in your system?

Directions:

1. Brainstorm current strategies implemented within your district or institution to recruit potential candidates already in your system. Record strategies in the "Give One" Column.
2. When prompted, stand up and pair up with peers around the room to share. Record peer responses in the "Get One" column.

Be Ready to Share!



Give One - Get One	
<p>Prompt: What is a current strategy that you are implementing to recruit potential candidates already in your system?</p>	
Give One - Your Responses	Get One - Peer Responses
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>



Compensation & Incentive Initiative Statute & Resolution



School Level Incentives will be provided to school-based instructional and special instructional non-itinerant staff and prorated as such.

Risk Level	School Level	Critical Subject/Course	Complementary Subject/Course	Total Incentive Range
4	\$2,500	\$6,500	\$2,500	\$2,500 - \$9,000
3	\$2,000	\$4,500	\$1,500	\$2,000 - \$6,500
2	\$1,000	\$2,500	\$500	\$1,000 - \$3,500
1	N/A	\$1,000	N/A	\$0 - \$1,000



Compensation & Incentive Initiative

Critical & Complementary Subject Areas



Critical Subject Areas

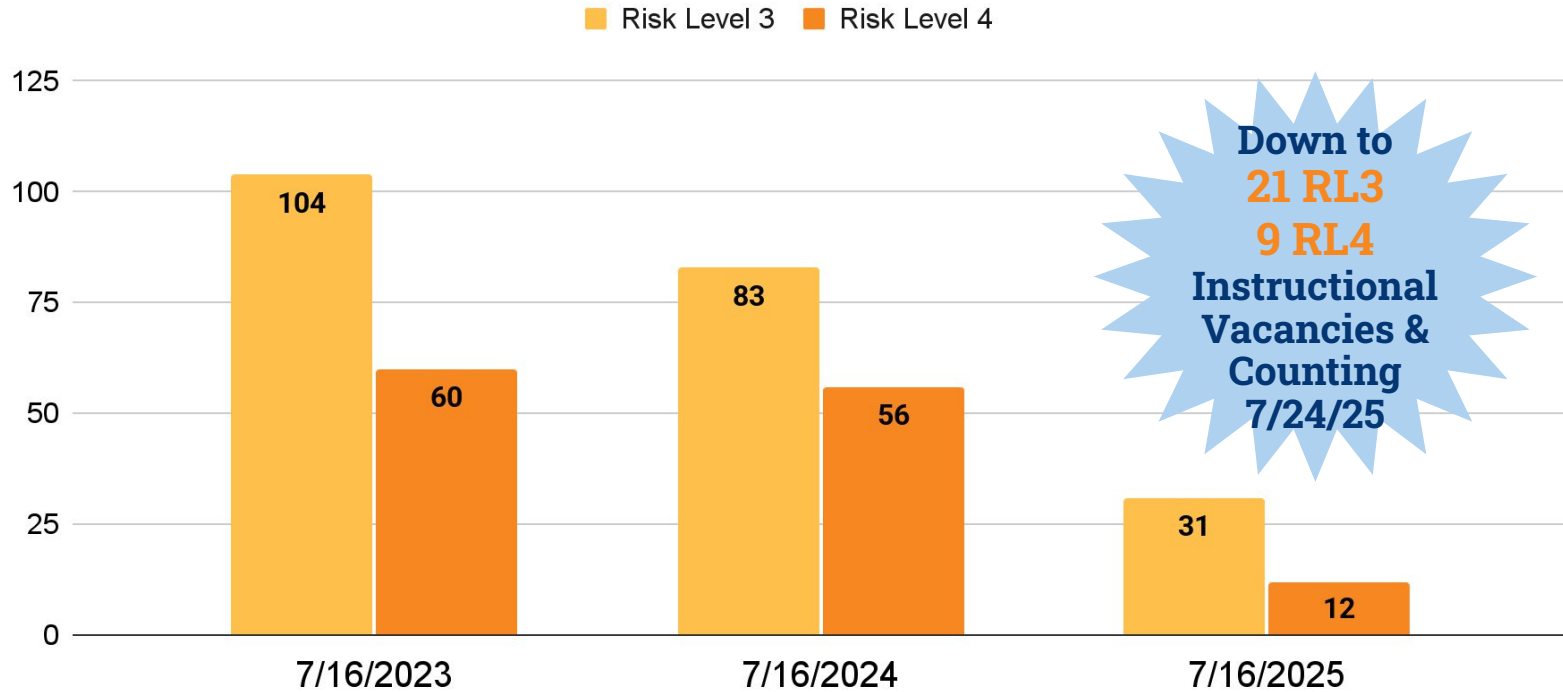
- Grades 3–10 ELA/Reading Courses
- Grades 3–8 Mathematics Courses
- Algebra 1 Courses
- Geometry Courses
- Grade 5 Science
- Grade 8 Science
- Biology 1 Courses
- Civics Courses
- High School U.S. History Courses
- ESE In-Person, Self-Contained Courses

Complementary Subject Areas

- Grades K-2 ELA, Mathematics, and Science Courses
- Grades 3-4 Science Courses
- Grades 6-12 Science Courses *not listed*
- Grades 6-12 Social Studies Courses *not listed*
- Grades 11-12 ELA/Reading Courses
- Grades 9-12 Mathematics Courses *not listed*
- ESE Courses *not listed*



Risk Level Comparison FY23 - FY25





Activity: Equity Lens

Reflect: If you could only fund 3 areas, what would they be?

- State-identified critical shortage areas
- Local data-driven shortage areas
- Risk-level schools
- Early Literacy
- Alternative Certification Candidates

Discuss with your table:

- *Are your current incentives aligned with your highest student need?*
- *Is your compensation strategy flat or targeted?*





EQUITY LENSE DECISION MATRIX

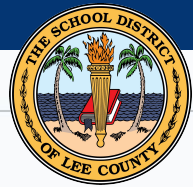
If you could only fund three areas, what would they be?

- State-identified critical shortage areas.
- Local data-driven shortage areas.
- Risk-level schools.
- Early Literacy
- Alternative Certification Candidates.

Are your current incentives aligned with your highest student need?
Is your compensation strategy flat or targeted?



If you could only fund three areas, what would they be?



State-Identified Critical Shortage Areas

Local Data-Driven Shortage Areas

Risk-Level Schools

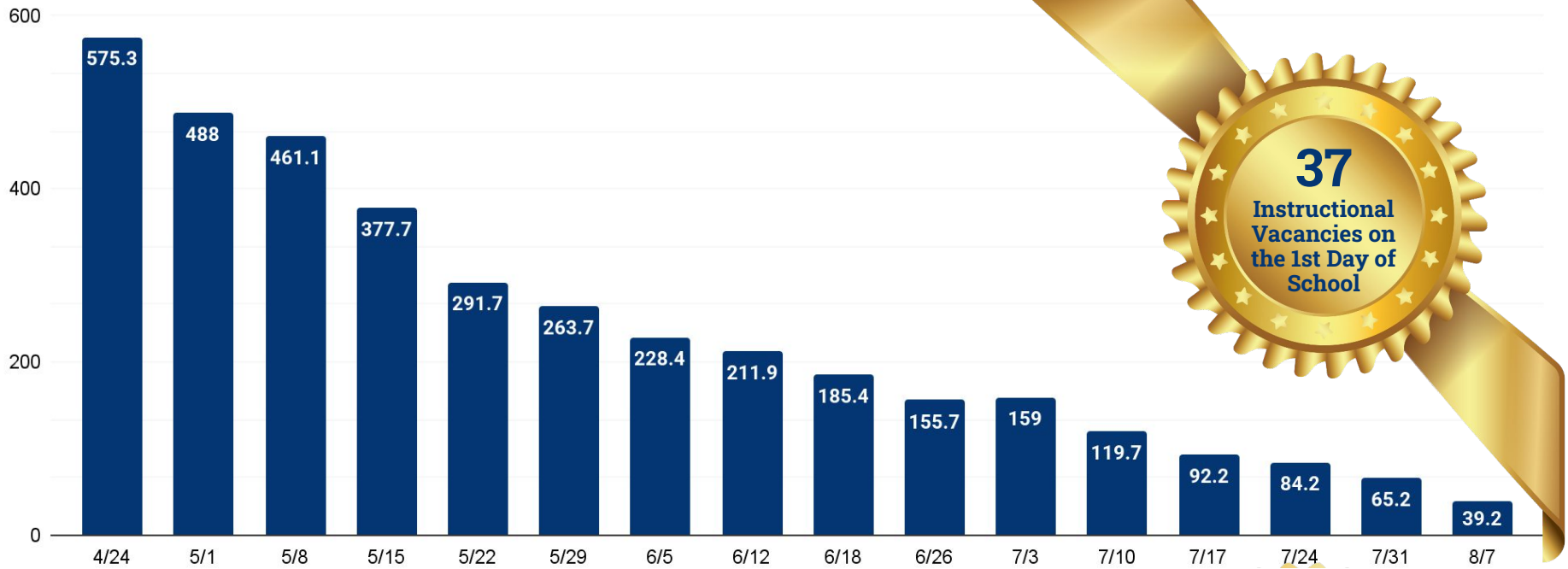
Early Literacy

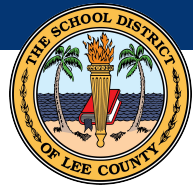
Alternative Certification Candidates





Instructional Vacancies Summer 2025





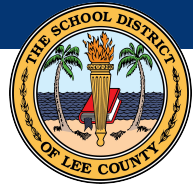
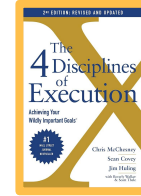
69 Total Schools Beginning on Day One with ZERO Vacancies

Governor DeSantis recently noted, Florida is seeing an 18% drop statewide, but Lee County is leading the way. Teacher vacancies have dropped from 200 last year to just 37 (August 11, 2025) - an **81% decrease**.





The 4 Disciplines of Execution (4DX) Franklin Covey



Discipline 1:
Focus on the Wildly Important Goal (WIG)

Zero teacher vacancies by day one of school on August 11, 2025.

0%

Discipline 2:
Act on the Lead Measures

LAG Measure
Vacancies

LEAD Measures
Weekly tracking system

Prioritization for high needs schools

Discipline 3:
Keep a Compelling Scoreboard

Weekly
District
Region
School
Position

Risk Level Schools
Zero Vacancy Schools

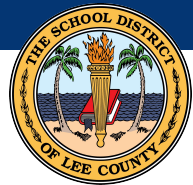
Discipline 4:
Create a Cadence of Accountability

Weekly Updates
School Board
Cabinet
School Leadership
Community

All In
Identified Barriers
Shared Strategies
Partnered Leaders

Individualized Approach





Discipline 1

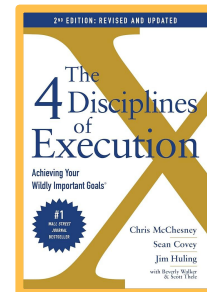
Focus on the **Wildly Important Goal**



0%

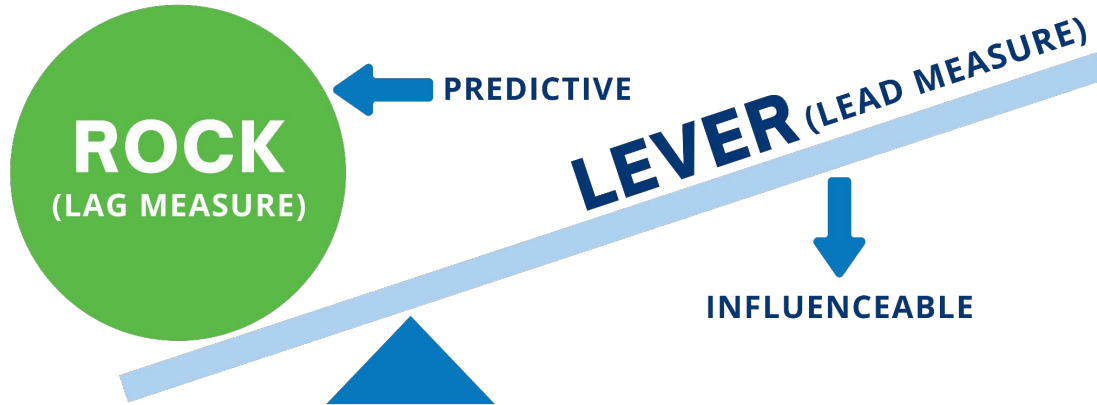
From 575
to 0

Zero Teacher Vacancies by day one of school on August 11, 2025.



Discipline 2

Act on Lead Measures



LAG Measures

- Historical
- Final Outcomes

LEAD Measures

- Predictive
- Actionable
- Influence Future Success



Discipline 3

Keep a Compelling Scoreboard

TALENT ACQUISITION

Project Believe Updates

Week Ending	Total Instructional Vacancies	North Region	East Region	South Region	West Region	Special Centers
4/24/2025	575.3	123.2	243.5	116	83.6	9
5/1/2025	488	78.2	220.5	107	72.3	10
5/8/2025	461.1	60.2	200.5	98	85.4	17
5/15/2025	377.7	58.2	162.5	82	60	15
5/22/2025	291.7	47	117.5	69	44.2	14
5/29/25	263.7	49	111.5	40	46.2	17
6/5/25	228.4	46	93.2	45	35.2	9
6/12/25	211.9	62	75.7	36	30.2	8
6/18/25	185.4	47	73.5	27.7	27.2	10
6/26/25	155.7	31	69	23.5	21.2	11
7/3/25	159.2	29	70.2	28	21	11
7/10/25	119.7	27	56.2	15	19	2.5
7/17/25	92.2	19	40.2	15.5	12	5.5
7/24/25	84.2	18	33.2	14	12	7
7/31/25	65.2	16	34.2	7	6	2
8/7/25	39.2	7	23.2	4	4	1

Watch the **WINK News** coverage of Project Believe from 7/8/25 (start video at 0:26).
Go Dr. Johnston!

SCHOOL DISTRICT CUTS DOWN ON TEACHER SHORTAGE

Wow!

Project BELIEVE Update

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Hiring Guidelines and Budget Checks to Advertise in Place
Centralized Matches and Placements Begin

Mitigation Strategy Calls

School Plans Due for Every Vacancy Being Covered by a Certified Teacher

Every Classroom has a Certified Teacher

People play differently when they are keeping score.



Discipline 4

Create a Cadence of Accountability



Weekly Updates

School Board Briefings

Cabinet "Hiring Thermometer"

**School Leadership Strategy
Sessions**

All in Philosophy

Identify Barriers

Share Strategies

Partnered Leaders



A Reflection Ongoing Strategies



1. Communication is Key
2. Collaboration was vital
3. Data is Fluid
4. Healthy competition goes a long way





A Reflection Ongoing Strategies

Virtual & In-Person Recruitment Events



- FGCU / FSW Teacher Recruitment and All Majors
- GoodWill Industries recruitment (all positions)
- Career Source recruitment (all positions)
- SDLC hosted events (ex. Spring Teacher Recruitment Fair and Transportation/Maintenance Fairs)
- Radancy (Virtual) Platform (all positions)

Community Connections



- *Social Lee: Careers and Conversations*
- STEMtastic
- Local Community Events
- Certification Information Sessions



Marketing Engagement

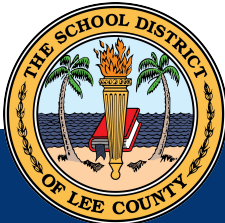
- *Google Ads*
- *Facebook*
- *LinkedIn*

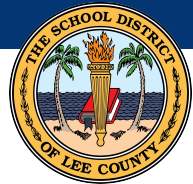
Execution Commitment

What is one bold step your district/ organization will take in the next 90 days?

Execution improves when commitment becomes public.

PROJECT
Believe!





Recruitment to Retention

PROJECT
Believe!



PROJECT
THRIVE



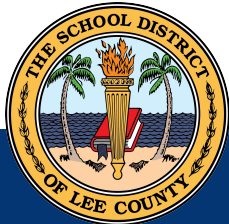
*Inspiring Belonging,
Empowering Growth, and
Supporting Every Step to Success*





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PROJECT *Believe!*



2026 Leadership Learning Annual
Convening Breakout Session
Round 1 Exit Survey



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PROJECT Believe!

