Our Vision:

Our vision is that every Palm Beach County high school graduate completes a post-secondary credential within six years of high school graduation that prepares them for a meaningful career with a sustainable wage.
The Challenge

Of all new jobs created in Florida by 2020, 68 percent will require an education beyond high school. In Palm Beach County, however, only 44 percent of all high school graduates are predicted to receive a post-secondary credential within 6 years of high school graduation.

Our Goal

Achieve Palm Beach County is an initiative of an array of community partners from the government, education, corporate, nonprofit, philanthropic, faith-based, and other sectors of our community. Achieve Palm Beach County facilitates the strategic collaboration of community partners in creating a comprehensive system of supports for students. It is focused on ensuring that every student in Palm Beach County has the support they need to earn a post-secondary credential and be career-ready. Our goal is to increase the percentage of Palm Beach County high school graduates who earn a post-secondary credential within 6 years of graduating to 60 percent by 2025.

Our Mission

Achieve Palm Beach County’s mission is to collectively ensure an integrated and effective system of supports from middle school through post-secondary that empowers students for career success.

Guiding Principles

In designing and implementing this work, Achieve Palm Beach County is committed to the following principles:

- The terms “post-secondary credential” and “college completion” include any form of post-secondary education. This encompasses professional certificates, Associate’s degrees, and Bachelor’s degrees.
- The voices of students and parents are essential in designing approaches to increase post-secondary education access and completion.
- The initiative must intentionally consider all types of students and be inclusive of the many diverse communities within Palm Beach County.
- The route to and through post-secondary education may be different for each student, requiring individualized options and supports that meet students’ unique needs and interests.
- Collective impact provides a framework for collaboration, alignment and synergy that will most efficiently maximize community efforts to improve post-secondary education readiness, access and completion outcomes.
Overview

In 2016, Achieve Palm Beach County engaged in a comprehensive strategic planning process. The process involved the participation of all our community partners, including students and parents, as well as the exploration of key data and effective practices. As a result of this process and with an emphasis on accomplishing our targeted goals, the Achieve Palm Beach County partners identified four initial areas of focus for our collaborative efforts.

In its first two years, Achieve Palm Beach County has been successful in utilizing a collective impact approach to ensure college access and preparation for many underserved Palm Beach County high school students. With more than 100 community partners involved, tremendous strides have been taken to overcome gaps in information sharing, demonstrate the value and accessibility of obtaining a post-secondary credential, and streamline access to community resources and supports.

While the work of Achieve PBC happens within the strategy and support teams, the alignment of this work to Achieve PBC’s strategic plan and the monitoring of its outcomes is managed by the Operations Team, and endorsed and supported by key executive leaders or Executive Champions.

The success of Achieve Palm Beach County is attributed to the collaboration and hard work of four strategy teams: Parent Engagement and Support, Post-secondary Advising for High School Students, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Completion, and Scholarships and Support Services for College Students. Our two support teams, Communications and Data, provide additional support and resources for the special projects and objectives of the strategy teams.

Achieve Palm Beach County’s Collective Impact Goals

Achieve Palm Beach County is focused on achieving the following collective impact goals by 2025:

**GOAL 1**
Increase the percentage of graduating seniors from Palm Beach County School District high schools with seamless college enrollment (fall after high school graduation) from 65% to 75%.

**GOAL 2**
Increase the percentage of Palm Beach County School District students that seamlessly enroll in college and return to college for a second year from 85% to 95%.

**GOAL 3**
Increase the percentage of seamless college enrollees that receive a post-secondary credential within six years of high school graduation from 60% to 70%.

**GOAL 4**
Increase the percentage of graduating seniors from Palm Beach County School District high schools with seamless enrollment into a state-approved professional certificate or licensure program to 20%.

**GOAL 5**
Increase the percentage of seamless state-approved professional certificate or licensure program enrollees that receive a post-secondary credential within two years of high school graduation to 70%.

**GOAL 6**
Increase the percentage of all Palm Beach County School District high school graduates that receive a post-secondary credential within six years of high school graduation from 38% to 60%.
Areas of Collaborative Focus and Accomplishments

**Parent Engagement and Support Team:** Parent and family support can propel students to a post-secondary education or derail them. Many parents do not understand the long-term financial advantages of completing a post-secondary education. *Parents need financial literacy regarding funding for a post-secondary education and an understanding of the various post-secondary options available.* This information, as well as strategies to help their children research, select, and complete a post-secondary education, is crucial to their children's success.

**Accomplishments:** Designed to help parents support their students with exploring careers and the types of post-secondary education needed for their careers of interest, *this team created one-page checklists to address the general steps needed to navigate their students’ paths beginning as early as middle school, through high school and into the college years.* These checklists were made available in four languages. This team also hosted five family gatherings across the county. These meetings served 50 families and covered information such as FAFSA completion, community resources available for post-secondary and career exploration, and information on trade schools.

**Post-secondary Advising for High School Students Team:** High school counselors have numerous duties and responsibilities. While they should be supported to provide additional and more in-depth assistance with post-secondary education access, *counselors must also continue to address numerous student needs, such as social and emotional support, course and program selection, and academic support toward graduation.* Successful efforts to increase post-secondary access in other communities have added support from external partners to provide students with individualized post-secondary and career exploration, advising, and preparation, including support from volunteers, professional staff, teachers, mentors, peers, and online resources.

**Accomplishments:** This team is focused on providing awareness and education to high school students about the available resources for post-secondary and career preparation. As a result, *this team partnered with the FAFSA team to support 19 Kahn Academy, MyCareerShines, and FAFSA completion train-the-trainer events.* Nearly 400 local nonprofit staff and administrators, as well as students and parents, were trained, with an estimated reach of approximately 6,000 students and parents. The goal of this effort was to assist students and parents with exploring free resources available to study for the SAT and any other subject, to explore various careers and career paths, and to complete the FAFSA form.

**Summer Collegiate Institute:** This team also supported a week-long intensive and intentional learning experience devoted to empowering rising leaders by connecting them with the critical resources needed to help them reach their full potential in higher learning, covering topics such as leadership, college preparation, and post-secondary education success. A total of 30 students attended the Summer Collegiate Institute during the summer of 2018. As a result of the Institute, participating students were significantly more likely to have a plan after high school graduation, take the SAT/ACT, and apply for a scholarship or financial aid. An additional 39 students participated in the Summer Collegiate Institute in the summer of 2019.
Areas of Collaborative Focus and Accomplishments

**FAFSA Team:** For many students, the cost of college is a significant barrier to completing a post-secondary education. Completing the FAFSA is generally required for consideration of all needs-based aid, not just federal aid. As a result, completion of the FAFSA is a significant predictor of post-secondary education access. FAFSA completion rates at Palm Beach County high schools vary from 39 percent to 86 percent of 12th graders. Florida offers a state-funded scholarship called Bright Futures, which rewards Florida high school graduates for high academic achievement. However, in Palm Beach County, only 30 percent of high school graduates receive this scholarship. Therefore, **FAFSA completion is essential to making post-secondary education affordable for low- and moderate-income students.**

**Accomplishments:** The FAFSA team’s work is focused on increasing the number of students who complete the FAFSA. With the goal of helping students and families to understand, dispel myths and apprehensions, and complete the form, the team created a FAFSA Toolkit. The Toolkit serves as a guide for community organizations to use when holding FAFSA information awareness and completion events. The team supported FAFSA completion events at community venues, such as The School District of Palm Beach County’s College and Career fair in October 2018, and conducted four information sessions with valuable insights into navigating the completion of the FAFSA, reaching more than 200 individuals. The team also partnered with the Post-secondary Advising for High School Students team to support train-the-trainer events for local nonprofit staff with the potential to reach thousands of parents and students.

**Scholarships and Support Services for College Students Team:** Results in Palm Beach County and across the nation demonstrate that beginning a post-secondary education is much easier than completing it. Our research revealed a number of barriers along the route to post-secondary completion that students must overcome in order to succeed. These barriers include sustained funding for not only tuition but fees, books, and unexpected emergencies; academic advising support to select the best programs of study and necessary courses; navigation of rules and processes required for timely registration, withdrawal and payments; and social and emotional support to adjust to a post-secondary environment.

**Accomplishments:** To identify opportunities to enhance student support and post-secondary persistence, the team conducted focus groups of students at Palm Beach State College. Based on the focus group results, the team identified two areas where increased and intentional support was needed: more in-depth student support and support for unexpected, acute financial emergencies.

**All Male Panthers Coaching Program:** To address the need for more support, this team is in the process of launching the All Male Panthers Coaching pilot program at Palm Beach State College. Based on successful student support models, the program will provide men, particularly men of color, on campus with a multi-faceted coaching support system focused on helping them to obtain the skills necessary to be successful in their academic and work life, and to become productive citizens by capitalizing on campus-based and community-based supports. This program will launch in the fall of 2019, with a goal of supporting 250 students each year.

**Student Urgent Relief Fund (SURF):** This fund was developed to support low-income, post-secondary students with mini-grants of up to $500 to assist with unanticipated financial issues, such as emergency dental work, auto repairs, utility bills, etc. that have the potential to derail their ability to continue in their post-secondary education. Through various community partners and funders, $40,000 was secured to officially launch SURF at Palm Beach State College in the spring of 2019, with a goal of serving 80 students this year.

Achieve Palm Beach County will continue to facilitate community-wide collaboration, for the purpose of aligning existing knowledge, resources and programs to support and empower students for post-secondary and career success. Growing our current work as well as engaging in new highly-impactful opportunities to collaborate will remain an important focus for Achieve Palm Beach County moving forward. Of course, the achievements of Achieve Palm Beach County’s first two years would not have been possible without strong partnerships. **Thank you to all of our partners!**
THANK YOU!

Operations, strategy and support team members who have shown up faithfully to organizational meetings to create solutions, collaborate, and work on ensuring college access and success in Palm Beach County.

A Special Thank You to Our Executive Champions!

Maria Antuna | Hispanic Chamber of Commerce  
Steve Craig | CareerSource Palm Beach County  
Dr. Donald E. Fennoy | The School District of Palm Beach County  
Dr. Dennis Gallon | Community Leader  
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Alex Price | Office Depot  
Steve Prielozny | Bank of Belle Glade  
David Williams | Wells Fargo  
Dr. Lisa Williams-Taylor | Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County

Do you want to get involved?

Please contact us at 561-375-6600 to get involved in a strategy or support team, or to support our work through a charitable contribution.

AchievePBC.org

Through the collective impact framework, we have been able to establish strong partnerships, leverage and align our local resources, and create a more effective support system, resulting in greater success for our students.

Thank you to the generous funders who support Achieve Palm Beach County.

Funding Partners