

PJI SUMMER ACADEMY REPORT 2025



ALL PEOPLE. ALL VOICES. ALL MATTER.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2025 PJI Summer Academy, hosted by the Peace and Justice Institute in June of 2025 at the Orlando Garden Club brought together a dynamic and diverse group of educators, professionals, and community leaders for a week-long immersive program. Designed to strengthen inclusive learning environments and build community resilience, the Academy serves professionals from all walks of life and across community organizations.

This two week cohort-based experience invited participants to reflect deeply on their personal and professional practices while exploring new approaches to equity, belonging, and connection. Grounded in neuroscience and evidence-based practices, the curriculum wove together themes of resilience, reflective practice, trauma-responsive care, empathy, bias, mindfulness, restorative practices, and uncovering missing histories while also fostering authentic relationships and collaborative learning. Participants left not only with new tools but with a renewed sense of purpose, moving beyond compliance toward genuine connection with themselves, others, and their communities.

The 2025 Academy welcomed various community members representing a range of professional sectors including education, non-profit, public safety, government, health, and criminal justice, across differing career stages. This diverse mix enriched dialogue and created opportunities for cross-generational and cross-sectoral learning. Together, the cohort shared a vision for a more compassionate community, an impact that will carry forward well beyond the two-week experience.

The Peace and Justice Institute extends heartfelt gratitude to everyone who made the 2025 Summer Academy possible.



RACHEL C. ALLEN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PEACE AND JUSTICE INSTITUTE



LIANNA MCGOWAN
ACADEMY DIRECTOR
PEACE AND JUSTICE INSTITUTE

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS

The Peace and Justice Institute remains committed to accessibility. The transformative work of the PJI Summer Academy would not have been possible without the generosity of our donors and funders.

THANK YOU to all who made these sessions possible.

This year, PJI's Summer Academy brought together 43 participants representing 28 unique organizations across three counties. Sponsorships made it possible for 40 participants to attend on full scholarships and for 3 participants to attend on partial scholarships, ensuring that financial barriers did not prevent committed individuals from taking part in this learning experience.

The impact of this investment will be felt far beyond the Academy itself. Through the work of those who attended, the connections made and the knowledge shared throughout the Academy will ripple into everyday lives, nurturing compassion, sparking courage, and inspiring lasting change in communities.

The Peace and Justice Institute is deeply grateful for the role this support played in making such an outcome possible.

40

SCHOLARSHIP
ATTENDEES

28

UNIQUE
ORGANIZATIONS
REPRESENTED

3

COUNTIES
IMPACTED

“

Thank you for [your] generosity and for making the Summer Academy an unforgettable and life-changing experience for me.

-Seminole County Educator

“

The academy provided a truly enriching and positive environment, fostering not just learning but also growth in areas of peace, justice, and community engagement. Programs like this are essential for educators and community members alike, and your commitment ensures that these vital opportunities for professional and personal development remain accessible.

-Orange County Educator

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I wanted to express my sincere appreciation for your generous support of PJI's Summer Academy. I am so thankful to have been able to experience such a well planned and impactful program. The facilitators, information, and connections made were all unforgettable. Please know that I will bring the lessons learned into my community and spaces where I serve people.

-Seminole County Educator

**CENTRAL FLORIDA
FOUNDATION**



**NEMOURS
CHILDREN'S HEALTH.**

*Florida
Blue*

**MASSEY
SERVICES INC.**



"Thank you again for investing in the future of our community and in those of us dedicated to building it. Your support is deeply appreciated."

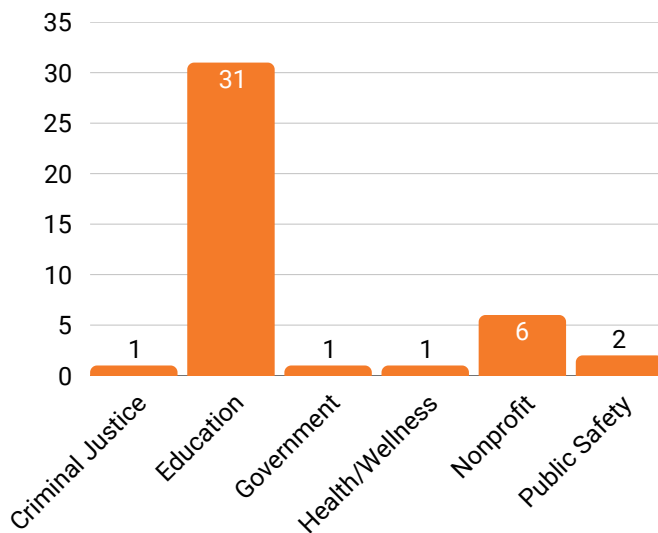
-Orange County Educator



GENERAL EVENT DETAILS

DATES

Session I: Monday, June 9 - Friday, June 13
Session II: Monday, June 23 - Friday, June 27



LOCATION

Orlando Garden Club
710 E Rollins St, Orlando, FL 32803

PARTICIPANT INFO

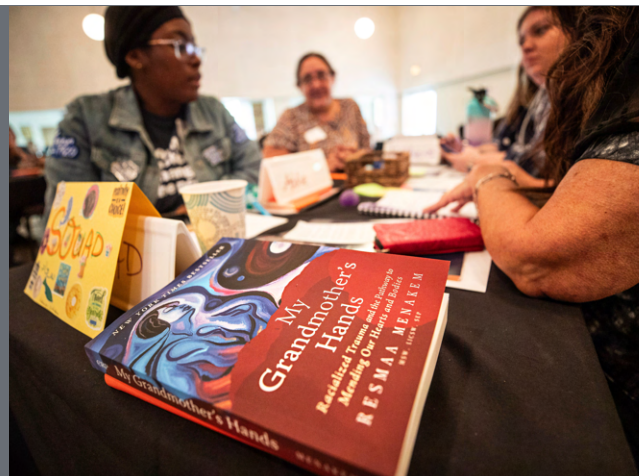
Total Attendees: 43
Title 1 Schools Represented: 10
Total Organizations Represented: 28
Total Full Scholarship Recipients: 40
Total Partial Scholarship Recipients: 3
Total Sectors Represented: 6
Total Hours of Learning Delivered: 1,720

REGISTRATION

\$1500 for a full 40 hour week of professional development.

“As an attendee of the summer 2025 cohort, I am truly impressed by the impactful work PJI is doing within the community. As the saying goes, systems don’t change, people change them. PJI’s efforts not only empower individuals but also inspire them to implement meaningful changes within their communities. I wish even more people had the opportunity to participate in this transformative experience.”

– Summer Academy Scholarship Participant



KEY THEMES AND CONCEPTS

The 2025 Summer Academy explores key themes that blend personal reflection, skill development, and systemic awareness. Participants explored practices and frameworks designed to strengthen resilience and foster belonging in their classrooms, organizations, and communities. These themes provided an interconnected foundation for creating environments where all people can thrive.



Practice daily mindfulness to promote focus, emotional regulation, and well-being.



Apply restorative practices to build, maintain, and repair relationships, fostering belonging, resilience, and a healthier community culture.



Explore and apply PJI's Principles for How We Treat Each Other.



Create hospitable and accountable communities through open, honest dialogue and restorative practices.



Examine the impact of Positive and Adverse Childhood Experiences (PACES), trauma, and toxic stress on health, behavior, learning, the economy, and community well-being.



Build trust through authentic storytelling and exploration of personhood.



Analyze systems and identify ways to challenge assumptions.



Develop strategies to heal trauma and strengthen community resilience.



Examine gender's role in the classroom and workplace, applying bias-neutral practices.



Explore missing histories to address gaps in curriculum and representation.

100% of participants found
the Academy to be
valuable and relevant.

*"All topics contributed towards a holistic approach to healthy and safe classrooms for both students and educators. They all contribute towards creating a more just environment for all."
- 2025 Academy Participant*



ACTION

To capture the depth and breadth of the Summer Academy's impact, PJI collected both **quantitative** and **qualitative** data (**see page 7**) through pre- and post-program assessments, ensuring a clear picture of participant growth and the program's effectiveness.

Participants completed both a pre-test and a post-test consisting of 23 demographic and likert-scale questions as well as 9 open-ended questions.

These items measured their perceived understanding of core PJI goals and concepts, as well as their ability to apply that knowledge in practice. To ensure that self-reported gains were supported by demonstrated understanding, alongside the likert-scale questions, several questions required participants to provide concrete examples. For instance, the assessment asked participants to rate their agreement with the statement, "*I know what ACEs are and the impact they have on my work, culture, community, and personal life,*" and then were asked to list two specific examples. Participants were also asked to provide examples of Privilege and Hidden Histories (**see page 7**). This approach allowed for a more accurate assessment of both perceived growth and knowledge retention.

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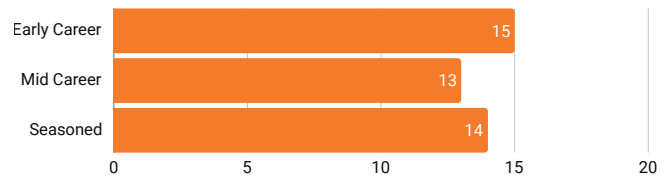
After the Academy, I feel like my purpose is to help people feel seen and supported. I want to bring more kindness, understanding, and inclusion into the work I do every day.

- 2025 Summer Academy Participant

DEMOGRAPHICS

Along with spanning across several sectors, the participants of the 2025 Peace and Justice Institute's Summer Academy demonstrated notable diversity in career trajectory, with representation from:

- Professionals new to their field, seeking foundational skills to launch their careers.
- Mid-career professionals, looking to strengthen leadership capacity and navigate complex workplace dynamics.
- Veteran professionals with 10+ years of experience, who sought to refine and update their approaches to educating and leading.



A majority of participants came from the education sector i.e. classroom teachers, school counselors, principals, instructional coaches, and district-level administrators, bringing the Academy's trauma-informed and equity-focused tools directly into K-12 schools. Others represented non-profit directors, youth program coordinators, social workers, public health educators, librarians, and community outreach specialists, as well as public safety officers and government program managers.



A GREATER SENSE OF COMPETENCY

In total, **42** participants finished the pre-survey and **33** completed the post. Of those responses, when asked to provide two examples of ACEs, privilege, and hidden histories, the following data was presented:

When asked to provide two examples of **ACEs**, we yielded:

- **50** responses in **9** categories in the pre-test
- **73** responses in **16** categories in the post-test

What does this mean?

Responses went from 1.2 per participant to 2.2 per participant as some chose to provide more than the two examples in the post assessment. The jump in number of responses and the near doubling of categories on the post-test indicates that participants became more familiar with ACEs throughout their sessions. While the pre-test and post test both had the highest counts for Abuse and Neglect as ACEs, the third highest count of Divorce was mentioned in the post-test responses. Not only were participants becoming more aware of ACEs, the recognition of Divorce as an ACE was significant enough to be mentioned by nearly a fourth of post-test responses.

"All the topics were on point. The one that really got to me is ACEs. When I realized that I too have ACEs. My eyes welled up."

When asked to provide two examples of **privilege**, we yielded:

- **33** responses in **19** categories in the pre-test
- **67** responses in **28** categories in the post-test

What does this mean?

Examples of privilege more than **doubled** between the pre-test and post test. Some categories, like Gender, grew from 3 responses to 13 in the post test, and 9 new categories, including Religion and Nationality, were added suggesting an emphasis on these topics in the curriculum and the impact of discussions of privilege on participants.

When asked to provide two examples of **hidden histories**, we yielded:

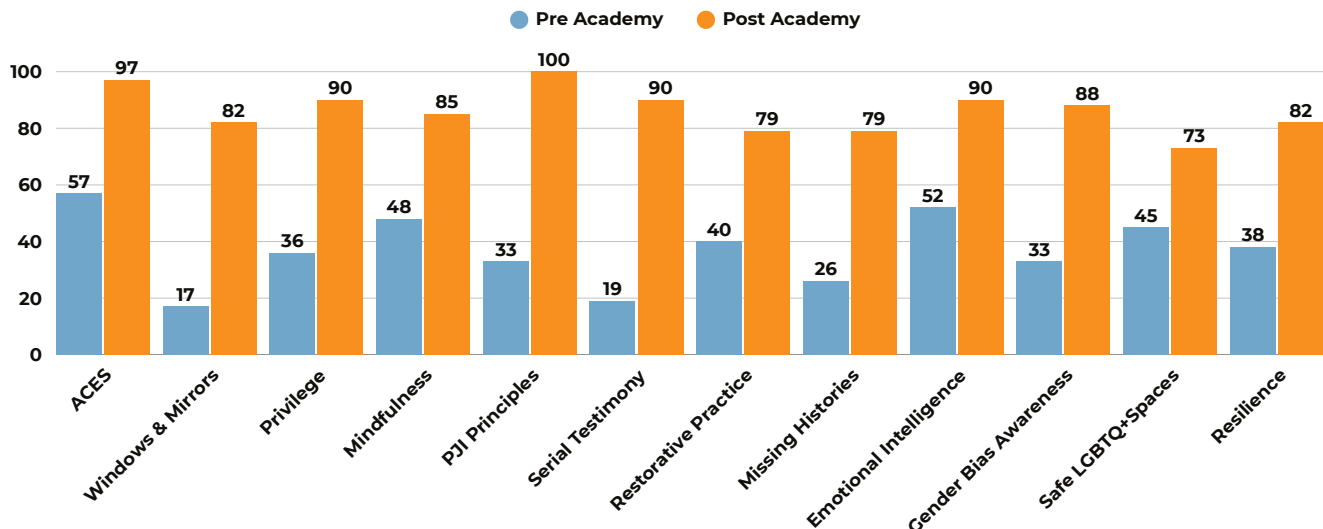
- **36** responses in **16** categories in the pre-test
- **64** responses in **24** categories in the post-test

What does this mean?

With Hidden Histories, the curriculum that is often not taught in history class, is important to understand the current context of the United States. Not only were participants able to name more Hidden Histories, their responses were more detailed. In the pretest, only three responses included specific events (i.e. Stonewall 5, Ocoee), while the post-test yielded twelve. Reference to Indigenous populations jumped from four responses in the pretest to 11 in the post-test. Japanese Internment was mentioned only in the post-test with five responses, showing new learning and knowledge retention.

Overall, responses recorded in the post-test demonstrated a greater sense of competency in all fields. This data is a reflection of the importance, impact, and relevancy of the curriculum at the PJI Summer Academy.

Knowledge Gain: 2025 PJI Summer Academy



SNAPSHOT FINDINGS

KNOWLEDGE OF ACES: +40 POINTS

Knowledge of ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) increased dramatically from **57% to 97%** of participants reporting a strong or expert-level understanding.

PRINCIPLES: +62 POINTS

Understanding of PJI's Principles for How We Treat Each Other rose from **33% to 95%**, equipping participants with practical tools for respectful dialogue and inclusive spaces.

SERIAL TESTIMONY: +66 POINTS

Familiarity with serial testimony—a core PJI dialogue method—jumped from **19% to 85%**, showing the program's effectiveness in teaching unique equity strategies.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE: +33%

Understanding of restorative practices, essential for safe and just classrooms and communities, rose from **40% to 73%**.

WINDOWS AND MIRRORS: +65%

Understanding of the "Windows and Mirrors" concept increased from **17% to 82%**, enabling participants to intentionally create environments where individuals feel seen, valued, and represented.

FEEDBACK

"I learned how stress lives in the body and how to use mindfulness, emotional awareness, and connection as pathways to healing. The Academy gave me tools to create spaces where people feel affirmed and respected."

"I feel more empowered and passionate about my students and committed to creating spaces where they feel they belong."

"Discipline is a major part of my role. The principles and restorative practices from the Academy will impact public safety. We are used to violence, and I learned there is another way."

"This is a game changer. I can utilize tools like the Principles and Serial Testimony in my classroom to build a safe and connected learning space."

"Mindfulness was really valuable. I learned how to slow down, breathe, and take care of myself during stressful moments. I'll definitely use that in my daily life."

"These topics are valuable to me because they made me more authentically myself and conscious of the way I approach others."

IMPACT, INSIGHTS, AND SUGGESTIONS

IMPACT

Based on the pre- and post-Academy survey responses, as a result of the Summer Academy, participants showed an increase in:

- Their ability to use mindfulness and emotional intelligence strategies to self-regulate and manage stress.
- Their knowledge of restorative practices and tools for building safe, connected classroom and workplace communities.
- Their understanding of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and their impact on learning, behavior, and wellbeing.
- Their knowledge of different frameworks to foster belonging and representation.
- Their knowledge of social and historical factors shaping equity, including privilege and the missing histories of marginalized communities.

INSIGHTS

In the post-Academy survey, participants shared the following as positive aspects of their experience:

- Opportunities for cross-sector collaboration with educators and community leaders.
- Rich table/group dialogue, including serial testimony and other structured discussion strategies.
- Concept application and practical insights they could immediately use in classrooms, and community spaces.
- Opportunities to apply learning at the personal, professional, and communal levels.
- Exposure to differing perspectives across career stages (early-career, mid-career, seasoned).
- Interactive, reflective, and engaging sessions.
- Networking opportunities with peers and mentors across sectors.
- Lived experiences and real-life stories that grounded the concepts in practice.
- Mindfulness practices and resources they could carry forward.

SUGGESTIONS

In the post-Academy survey, participants shared suggestions including:

- Opportunities to engage more sector leaders to support systemic change.
- More structured follow-ups or communities of practice to continue the learning and reflection.
- Additional resources for mindfulness and restorative practice implementation.
- Support from leadership to make space for this work.

FINANCIAL REPORT

TOTAL EXPENSES - BOTH SESSIONS

FACILITATORS	\$16,887.00
PROGRAM PRINTING	\$400.00
FOOD	\$7,000.00
VENUE	\$4,000.00
BOOKS	\$4,978.00
T-SHIRTS AND MATERIALS	\$1,152.00
PJI DIRECTOR	\$6,000.00
PJI OVERHEAD	\$7,980.00
TOTAL	\$48,397.00

REVENUE

REGISTRATION	\$5440.00
SPONSORSHIPS:	
FLORIDA BLUE	\$10,000.00
AGGARWAL AND GUPTA FAMILY FUND AT CENTRAL FLORIDA FOUNDATION	\$10,000.00
GINSBURG INSTITUTE AT NEMOURS CHILDREN'S HEALTH	\$10,000.00
BO CHIPMAN AND ELIZABETH EGGLESTON	\$4,000.00
MASSEY SERVICES, INC	\$10,000.00
TOTAL	\$49,440.00

Net income from the 2025 PJI Summer Academy will support the ongoing mission of the Peace and Justice Institute by funding free community programming throughout 2026.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Key Organizers:

- Lianna McGowan
- Rachel C. Allen
- Silin Li
- Ann Hoff-Fanaian

Facilitators:

- Lianna McGowan
- Aida Diaz
- Hank Van Putten
- Dr. Shari Koopmann
- Jania Fuller
- Dr. Jen Danilowski
- LaVonda Walker
- Shannan Outler
- DeAndrea Kelley
- Dr. DeShawn Chapman
- Jeremy Hugley
- Dr. Candice Jones

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- Bo Chipman and Elizabeth Eggleston
- Massey Services, Inc



We thank you for your steady commitment and contributions in making this event a collaborative success!

"Attending the summer academy has been an awarding experience not only professionally but also intentionally deepening my passion for education and my community."

-Seminole County Educator



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



THANK YOU

TO ALL WHO MADE THE 2025 SUMMER ACADEMY POSSIBLE

