



Charlie Crist
Governor
Monesia T. Brown
Director

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Contact: Robby Cunningham
850/245-7130

Planning Underway for Landmark Education Reform

TALLAHASSEE, FL - Next fall, Florida's classrooms will undergo a major transition, giving students a new pathway into the state's workforce. Today, planning sessions for implementation of the Career and Professional Education Act were kicked off in Tallahassee.

The Career and Professional Education Act, brainchild of Florida Senator Don Gaetz, will infuse technical and vocational curricula into traditional high school learning, offering today's students training for tomorrow's most sought after careers.

"Florida's classrooms will lead the nation in this historic transformation," said Monesia T. Brown, Director of the Agency for Workforce Innovation. "Under guidance of Governor Crist and the Legislature, our state has become a national model in connecting public education with the needs of our future workforce."

Today's workshop in Tallahassee, the first of seven scheduled this year, brought the Act's stakeholders together to begin developing strategic and operational plans for Career Academies, the in-school component through which training will be delivered. Education and training programs will be customized to meet the needs of students, businesses and job seekers in your community and throughout the state.

Career Academies will transform high school career and technical education in Florida by ensuring graduates receive nationally recognized industry certifications, targeting high-skill, high-wage jobs in high-demand occupations.

"We have a significant challenge in Florida to deliver the best talent possible to keep our businesses competitive and our economy strong," said Chris Hart, President of Workforce Florida, Inc. "The Career and Professional Education Act ensures that education, industry, workforce and economic development partners, in every Florida school district, are working together to create new, meaningful opportunities to prepare students for in-demand jobs."

Education Commissioner Jeanine Blomberg added, "The Career and Professional Education Act will ensure workforce education programs meet the current and future needs of Florida's economy. Every student who completes a Career and Professional Academy program will graduate from high school with one or more industry-recognized certifications, and will be prepared to enter the workforce and/or proceed to higher education."

Seven Regional Workforce Boards have agreed to coordinate the workshops that will be conducted during November and December. Stakeholders include Regional Workforce Boards, school districts, postsecondary institutions (public and private), state universities and the business community.

"The transformation of our educational system to support the needs of business and industry as a result of the Act is monumental and offers great opportunities for success at all levels," said Kimberly A. Moore, Chief Executive Officer of WORKFORCE *plus*. "Aligning education with business affords not only immediate gains with regard to developing a skilled workforce but it also lends way to a pipeline of individuals that can meet the growing demands of existing business and any new businesses that may be interested in locating in Florida."
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Agency for Workforce Innovation

The Caldwell Building, Suite 100•107 East Madison Street•Tallahassee, Florida•32399-4120
Telephone (850) 245-7105•Fax (850) 921-3223•TTY/TDD 1-800-955-8771-Voice1-800-955-8770
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