

Building Capacity, Strengthening Talent for Florida's Global Trade & Logistics Industry

By Andra Cornelius, CECD; Debbie McMullian; and Alyssa Brown

COLLABORATION AMONG BUSINESS, WORKFORCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND EDUCATION PARTNERS BOLSTERS OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDUSTRY, COMPANIES, AND WORKERS TO ADVANCE

Florida has long been a significant trade gateway between the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean. In support of state efforts among economic development, transportation, land use, education and related stakeholders to make Florida a global trade hub, Workforce Florida – the state's business-led workforce strategy and policy board – launched a major Global Trade Initiative to strengthen the state's global trade and logistics workforce. With \$2 million in funding via the Quick Response Training program – which provides matching funds for customized training to eligible companies – the initiative helped to train over 1,800 new and existing employees at more than 100 companies and provided industry-relevant training to students at 13 trade and logistics-focused high school academies.

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STRENGTHENING TALENT FOR FLORIDA'S GLOBAL TRADE & LOGISTICS INDUSTRY

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Florida global trade and logistics companies face a multitude of current opportunities and challenges.

The industry as a whole is cited by experts as trending toward several new “norms” – the emergence of dynamic routes as opposed to the mostly static ones used today, a networked economy that will require companies to integrate their processes and systems with both vertical and horizontal supply chain partners, and the beginning of company preferences for accessing talent in global locations in lieu of sending home talent into the field. Florida companies face these industry trends as well as others unique to the state, including unprecedented state support for increasing capacity, improving infrastructure, and growing exports.

In and of itself a dynamic industry, global trade and logistics – which encompasses all industries with a role in managing the flow of goods or products from a point of origin to a point of consumption – requires employers to place constant emphasis on training. Its evolution will require increased updating and customization of training curricula offered to Florida companies just to meet the industry's need to capitalize on Latin American and Caribbean trade and establish Florida as a stronger, more agile and efficient global trade hub. Florida's greatest trade-based opportunities to achieve this vision, identified by the business community as well as government leaders, lie in continuing to in-

FIGURE 1. FLORIDA'S IMPORT AND EXPORT PERCENTAGES (BY VALUE) 2003-2012

Year	Imports	Exports
2003	55.7%	44.3%
2004	53.8%	46.2%
2005	53.1%	46.9%
2006	51.8%	48.2%
2007	47.9%	52.1%
2008	43.2%	56.8%
2009	41.0%	59.0%
2010	41.4%	58.6%
2011	41.8%	58.2%
2012	44.0%	56.0%

Data Source: Florida Ports Council, based on U.S. Census Bureau – total 2012 international trade value basis is \$161.5 billion

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crease state exports (See Fig. 1) and discretionary cargo handling by boosting capacity within its port, freight and air cargo sectors.

“State leaders, collaborating with partners in economic development, education, and workforce training, took the recession as a sort of ‘teaching moment,’ said Workforce Florida Senior Vice President of Global Talent Innovation Andra Cornelius, CEcD. “Global trade and logistics plays a prominent role in the resulting strategy for a new, more diverse Florida economy.” Workforce Florida is the state's strategy and policy board of business, economic development, education, government, and workforce leaders.

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Students and teachers at Columbia High School's Global Logistics Academy Warehouse.

THE NEED FOR A QUALIFIED, SPECIALIZED WORKFORCE

With greater global trade and logistics capacity comes the need for a qualified, specialized workforce; in Florida that means a strong focus on training for airborne and waterborne trade operations (See Fig. 2). Developing this workforce to meet current and future industry needs was at the crux of the Global Trade Initiative launched in 2011 by Workforce Florida Inc. and a host of economic development, business, and education partners. A \$2-million move to strengthen and advance Florida's international trade and exports, the initiative got underway at an opportune time, just as a wide-ranging state response to the global trade and logistics industry's call for a comprehensive trade initiative was mounting.

Workforce Florida's three-pronged initiative included funding through its Quick Response Training (QRT) program – which provides matching grant funds for customized training for Florida companies seeking to increase or maintain competitiveness – for approximately 1,000 new and existing port workers, up to 600 air cargo workers, and 15 academies in Florida high schools to train future global trade and logistics workers.

"No other state in the country has focused on the talent needs of the trade and logistics sector in as comprehensive and strategic manner," said Workforce Florida President/CEO Chris Hart IV. "Workforce Florida has been an ongoing partner in this collaborative effort and continues to make global trade and logistics a linchpin of the state's overarching talent strategy."

Workforce Florida's employer-driven grant provided a means for global trade and logistics companies to train new and existing talent and also provided educational inroads for the industry. Before training could begin, a critical question needed to be answered: What did this special-

ized industry consider to be the most pressing training needs? The wide scope of the question created a challenge in engaging employers. Industry leader Reynolds, Smith and Hill (RS&H), a leading global facilities, infrastructure, and aviation consulting firm, had helped to launch the initiative and stepped in to facilitate an answer. RS&H Executive Vice President Ronald Ratliff narrowed the scope of the query to speak to each company's specific needs, much like training would be delivered. It worked.

"We literally got companies to tell us, 'we need training in perishable goods' or, 'we need you to teach our staff about batteries,'" said Ratliff.

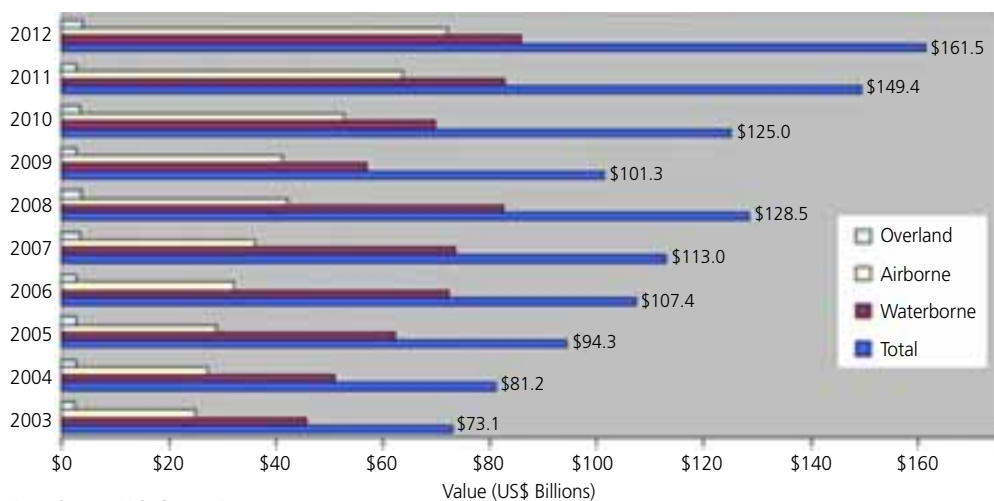
RS&H used the intelligence to provide insight on customizing trade and logistics courses developed by the University of North Florida (UNF). Courses were wide enough in scope to speak to the entire industry, but needed to be flexible enough to address training needs dictated by individual companies' products and processes as well as the constant technological advances that affected them.

"The common denominator was that employees needed to understand constantly changing products to safely and efficiently transport them," said UNF Dean of Continuing Education Robert Wood, Ph.D. Light bulbs, according to Wood, are a good example because they have evolved more in recent years than in all the years since their invention. Wood explained that one participating company needed to be able to provide constant training about shipping and storing light bulbs because of changes prompted by technological advances.

DEVELOPING COMPANY-SPECIFIC TRAINING

Seaconus, an international logistics company, has a Jacksonville stevedoring and warehousing operation that depends on Port Qualified Crane Operators, Certified Forklift Operators as well as managers, supervisors, and others. A subsidiary of Diversified Port Holdings (DPH) – also the parent corporation for shipping company Portus with operations in several southeast U.S. locations – Seaconus had begun working with UNF in 2009 to develop company-specific training.

FIGURE 2. FLORIDA'S INTERNATIONAL TRADE (BY VALUE) 2003 TO 2012



A BRIEF HISTORY OF GLOBAL TRADE IN FLORIDA

As the nation's only peninsular state, Florida enjoys a rich trade history that dates back to the 19th century, when its waterways, railways, and roads began moving goods throughout the state and beyond. Agriculture and mining products dominated Florida's early trade industry, with exports going to markets in Latin America and across the globe. Between 1960 and 2010, the value of global trade to and from Florida ballooned from less than \$5 billion to \$126 billion.

The complex trade and logistics industry in Florida today has grown from simple roots. As far back as 6,000 years ago, the native people of Florida traveled waterways and coasts by canoe, facilitating trade among the tribes – as evidenced by some 300 prehistoric canoes found across Florida, according to the National Park Service.

Later, Spain and Britain battled for control of Florida. Under British control, colonial plantations and other industries sprouted and flourished in Florida, exporting their products to other British colonies and trading with Spanish Louisiana and Mexico. This economic boom and maritime trade continued when Britain ceded Florida to Spain, with exports going to neighboring Gulf Coast and Eastern seaboard areas, the Northeast, and even Europe. After Spain ceded Florida to the United States and Florida became a U.S. territory in 1821, coastal trade expanded and ports in Jacksonville, Pensacola, and Tampa became more important to the economy.

After the Civil War, as agriculture, cattle ranching, lumber, manufacturing and industries like phosphate mining expanded, the state saw a number of trade-related transportation improvements. Railroads expanded across Florida, connecting the ports and the interior. Late 19th century federal and local improvements to channels and harbors, coupled with technological advances in navigation and shipbuilding during the 20th century, helped elevate Florida's ports to global prominence in trade and commerce and the cruise industry and marine recreation. But Florida's economy through the early 2000s remained largely dependent on tourism, agriculture, and industries fueled by population growth – construction, real estate, retail trade, and services in particular.

Florida's Strategic Plan – driven by its economic strategy – recognizes the unique natural infrastructure assets and is continuing to promote global trade and logistics in combination with advanced manufacturing. (See more at www.freight-movesflorida.com.)

Receiving matching QRT grant funds helped the company diversify training offerings and provide custom solutions to needs for management and other high-level instruction. The company's training strategy also included accessing critical courses in stevedoring and rigging – both key for docking, lifting, and transporting freight – for hourly employees through WorkSource, the local workforce board providing employment and training services in Jacksonville and surrounding areas.

"Quick Response Training helped us train 60-70, mostly higher-level employees at an average wage of \$60,000," said Seaonus' Human Resources Director Kathleen Wentworth. "Our need for constant training preceded receiving the grant, but the funds helped us provide greater and more substantial training."

Mike O'Leary, CEO of The Grimes Companies – a supply chain management firm providing logistics, trucking, warehousing, and packaging services – credits QRT with empowering the company to differentiate its processes and services from other companies.

"QRT funds allowed us to establish specifications and structured training programs, giving us the opportunity to train our staff on what we do and understand it from an industry perspective," said O'Leary. "Without company-specific training, we would be just like other companies."

O'Leary also credits QRT training with boosting morale and loyalty among employees while also giving them transferable skills, piquing their interest in continuing and/or higher education, and helping some redefine their job as a career. "Employees recognize we are committed to investing in them," O'Leary said. "That was valuable during the recession when people were losing jobs; many employees expressed their appreciation for that."

Seaonus' Wentworth and O'Leary of The Grimes Companies expect their industry's need for continuous training to increase. Many factors indicate it will. The multibillion-dollar expansion of the Panama Canal, slated for 2015 completion, is a major impetus among several, including dredging projects at ports Canaveral, Everglades, and Miami, for new training and skills needs today and on the horizon.

The plan is in its beginning stages for steps post-Panama Canal; the Florida Ports Council soon will commission a study to analyze current and future ports policy and investments as well as next steps after the widening of the Panama Canal is completed. The Council, along with leaders from the Florida Departments of Transportation and Economic Opportunity, also have showed unified support for federal legislation which would authorize continued investment in Florida's freight infrastructure and seaports.



Through Workforce Florida's Global Trade Initiative, employees at the Grimes Companies in Jacksonville received training to gain skills such as forklift operation.

AIR CARGO TRAINING

In South Florida, funding provided via Workforce Florida's Global Trade Initiative focused on training for workers in air cargo, the most regulated trade and logistics modality. Special safety and security considerations added nuances to creating and delivering effective training in the sector.

"Air cargo requires very specific training," said Mary Tearle, then the executive director for the Center for Business & Industry at Broward College. Broward College partnered with the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the 240-member trade association for the world's airlines, to facilitate the training. "The skills needed to safely and securely transport air cargo and comply with regulations are tied and critical to economic development and jobs in Florida."

Air cargo training is a high-stakes sector for the state and the South Florida region. This training also requires significant management of risk by individual air cargo companies, of which Tearle estimates 80 percent are small businesses. In addition, the South Florida region is where more than 90 percent of the state's air cargo trade in value is accounted for. Rocio Vegas, who coordinates training for Cargo Network Services, which serves air cargo providers, knows from experience how the sector's employees learn to do their jobs.

"Many people in air cargo learn day-to-day," said Vegas. "But understanding process improves performance; training helps them understand the basics of why they are doing what they are doing."

BY THE NUMBERS: GLOBAL TRADE AND LOGISTICS IN FLORIDA

According to *Made for Trade*, the Florida Chamber Foundation's 2013 Trade and Logistics Study:

- Florida is home to **one in five** of the nation's exporters.
- More than **95 percent** of exporters are small to medium sized businesses that together produce **two thirds** of Florida's total export value.
- Export-oriented companies typically grow **15 percent faster**, **pay 15 percent higher wages**, and are **12 percent more profitable** than firms operating solely in the U.S. market.
- Florida companies now export more than **\$66 billion to more than 500 trading partners** around the world.
- Florida's seaports and airports move nearly **\$162 billion** of merchandise trade to and from global markets.
- Florida's 512,000 jobs in transportation, trade and logistics pay workers **30 percent higher wages** than the state average.
- Florida's trade, transportation and logistics industry **added more than 23,000 global trade and logistics jobs** and **more than 9,000 new jobs in advanced manufacturing**. The value of goods exported by Florida companies **grew by \$11 billion to a record \$66 billion**.
- Florida has about **60,000 exporting businesses**, about one in five nationally.
- Florida is the **leading U.S. state** for trade with Latin America and the Caribbean.



New Super Post-Panamax Gantry Cranes will enable PortMiami to service larger ships with increased speed and efficiency.

According to Terry Light, manager of IATA's Miami Regional Training Center, this understanding by individual employees is critical to companies' avoidance of risk. Currently, all staff handling air cargo are required to have Transportation Security Administration (TSA) certification for security reasons. But the certification does not cover risk avoidance, a critical weakness.

"We focus a lot on helping stakeholders avoid fines and mitigate risk through training that is not a part of the TSA certification," said Light. "This is important because it can help businesses avoid fines that can be very damaging, especially to a small business."

QRT resources were used to support training to supplement TSA training as well as courses offering higher-level training for managers and leaders. Each of the more than 300 training courses IATA offers is customizable by company. "Leadership and management training is important because in air cargo, people are often promoted without the skills to lead and motivate other people," Light said. "Cargo companies often don't have the resources for this."

The state's efforts to bolster trade and logistics will have far-reaching effects on training needs in air cargo resulting from new jobs and responsibilities requiring greater and more comprehensive training. "The Panama Canal expansion is going to mean more regulations and rules because the volume and diversity of air cargo coming through Miami will increase," said Vegas.

That increase in volume equals more perishable goods, live animals, and pharmaceuticals – all of which require specialized care and training – flowing in and out of Miami. This increase will spur economic activity and give the region and the state more and greater negotiating opportunities. But with this privilege comes responsibility. "People have to be trained for all of these changes," said Vegas. "We are proactively preparing our training to meet these needs."

The 2011 Global Trade Initiative provided more than 1,800 industry workers at more than 100 seaport and air cargo companies with training using QRT resources.

ACRONYMS

Career and Professional Education Academies (CAPE)
Global Logistics Associate (GLA)
Incumbent Worker Training Grants (IWT)
International Air Transport Association (IATA)
North East Florida Education Consortium (NEFEC)
Quick Response Training Grants (QRT)
Reynolds, Smith and Hill (RS&H)
Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern (RACEC)
Transportation Security Administration (TSA)
University of North Florida (UNF)

UNF's Wood reported that every company in the seaport component was able to tailor the program to its individual needs and showed a significant increase in exports after the training. More than 1,240 trainees at 50 companies received training via UNF for seaport-related occupations, while more than 600 employees at 57 air cargo companies were trained in South Florida. Another 700 applications for air cargo-related training were received after funds were exhausted.

"The demand for more training is there," said IATA's Light. "The aviation community wants it."

In May 2013, Workforce Florida announced the QRT Challenge Grant, another \$2 million trade and logistics-focused initiative available to industry employers to support job creation and growth. A key goal of the grant is to help global trade and logistics companies enhance competitiveness by improving the skills of existing and new employees hired over the next year. QRT received doubled annual funding this year (\$12 million, up from \$6 million) as part of the state's commitment to talent development in key sectors such as trade and logistics.

Tearle has concerns about small air cargo companies not being able to meet the hiring requirements for the new grant. But she points to another Workforce Florida grant program – Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) – as a powerful training tool for small air cargo businesses. IWT, like QRT, provides matching funds to companies to help provide training to existing employees. But IWT requires only one full-time employee for a business to qualify. IWT was funded at \$3 million this year.

"I have seen IWT help small businesses become bigger business," said Tearle. "And then QRT helped those bigger businesses further expand. More IWT money would help small air cargo companies grow along with the entire industry."

EDUCATION INITIATIVES ESTABLISHING A PIPELINE OF FUTURE WORKERS

Florida is building on its reputation for workforce, education and talent pipeline innovation by increasing the knowledge and skills of future international trade and logistics workers. The pipeline development aspect of the

Global Trade Initiative – which capitalizes on the success of Career and Professional Education (CAPE) Academies, a separate statewide program designed to promote early career engagement – underscores the Florida workforce system's long-term, statewide economic and workforce development strategy of building talent and training to meet current and future industry needs.

As part of an overall state focus on early career exploration and engagement, global trade and logistics-focused training in Florida middle and high schools is reaping results – and establishing the strong pipeline of future talent necessary to further cement the state's position as a global trade hub.

The job opportunities for trade and logistics are stronger than ever. When the Florida Chamber of Commerce unveiled its first *Florida Trade and Logistics Study* in 2010, the industry employed about 466,000 workers. By 2018, that figure is expected to grow by 18 percent, or approximately 84,000 workers. Credit port expansions, airport modernizations, and transportation infrastructure advances, along with projected domestic and international trade growth through the year 2060, for this lush global trade and logistics career landscape.

Career and Professional Education Academies

Critical to filling those jobs is building the talent and skills today within the workers of tomorrow. CAPE Academies are fitting the bill. These small career-focused learning communities were first established in 2007 in Florida high schools to offer college prep or career themes.

The Academies are unique in the strong partnerships they encourage among employers, school districts, and other community stakeholders. CAPE Academies also have demonstrated a capacity for volume, with steadily and significantly increasing enrollment year after year. When Workforce Florida launched a three-pronged initiative in 2011 to support the state's ports and international trade sectors, it included \$600,000 to create up to 15 CAPE Academies in high schools throughout the state focused on international trade and logistics and advanced manufacturing for international trade opportunities.

"My hope for the program was that it would empower school districts to put kids into the workforce, and that has happened," said Anna Rossano-Arnold, executive director of the North East Florida Education Consortium (NEFEC), a regional organization that provides cooperative services to member school districts, most of them rural. NEFEC served as a point of contact and resource

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development for participating CAPE schools and had the unique vantage point of being able to know which schools' performance was outstanding.

"The value in a comprehensive initiative like this is in the partnership," said Rossano-Arnold. "From academy to academy, partnerships are the reason it works where it works."

Global Logistics Academy

The success of Columbia High School's Global Logistics Academy illustrates the importance of partnerships. With the leadership and support of local industry employers, economic developers, and the school district, career opportunities are strong for Academy students in Columbia County, FL, who through the program gain access to the nationally recognized Global Logistics Associate (GLA) credential. The credential acknowledges the completion of rigorous coursework in logistics and supply chain for entry-level positions.

"This Academy was formed in response to global logistics companies in our area getting together with economic development and telling our principal, Terry Huddleston, 'We need you to help us develop the talent for our industry,'" said Rebecca Golden, lead teacher for the Columbia High School Global Logistics Academy. Huddleston – now superintendent of Columbia County Schools – responded by establishing the Global Logistics Academy and tasking Golden with running it. The stage was set for opportunity for employers and students.

In addition to seed funding, the Global Trade Initiative helped the program subsidize the course curricula as well as the cost of the industry-recognized GLA certification. Entry-level workers with this certification can earn up to \$14 per hour.

Significant industry developments in the region – and associated jobs – have raised the stakes for Columbia

Columbia High School and local industry leaders are successfully taking a multi-faceted approach to garnering student interest in global logistics careers. Over four years, enrollment has more than doubled, from 56 students in year one to 130 in year four – a significant number in contrast to the school's total student body, which averages more than 1,750 per year. Global logistics employers are regularly invited to the Academy to talk to students and help them identify niche careers within the industry.

High to grow and sustain its Global Logistics Academy. Earlier this year, with an eye toward job creation, the state designated 500 acres of land owned by Plum Creek – the largest and most geographically diverse private landowner in the nation – as a Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern (RACEC) Catalyst Site. The Catalyst Site anchors the North Florida INTERMODAL PARK, an encompassing, 2,622-acre tract envisioned to be an inland port for train and truck freight coming from the Port of Jacksonville. Plum Creek is in the second phase of a two-phase process to have the North Florida INTERMODAL PARK certified as a Mega-Industrial Park.

"Mega-Industrial Park certification significantly shortens the amount of time for a prospect to make a location decision because it verifies all of the due diligence for the site," said Plum Creek Real Estate Manager Allison Megrath, AICP. "Certification will provide us with a proactive marketing tool to entice prospects to choose the North Florida INTERMODAL PARK over other potential locations."

Designated by Columbia County commissioners as a Mixed-Use District – a first in Columbia County – the tract is approved for up to 8 million square feet of commercial land use, 100,000 square feet of commercial land use, and 300 dwelling units. This major project provides unprecedented opportunities in Columbia County and 13 surrounding rural communities for high-paying jobs, strategic partnerships, and workforce education. Columbia High already has forged inroads with Plum Creek, which has contributed \$10,000 per year for the next three years to sustain the Academy. Through another program, every Columbia High student earning the GLA certification will generate a \$1 contribution to the school's program.

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Left to right: Plum Creek Land Asset Manager Greg Galpin; North Central Florida Regional Planning Council Executive Director Scott Koons, AICP; Columbia County Economic Development Association Manager Debbie Motes; Columbia High School Global Trade Academy Lead Teacher Rebecca Golden; Workforce Florida VP of Global Talent Innovation Andra Cornelius, CEcD; and Workforce Florida QRT Director Debbie McMullian during a visit to the Columbia High School Global Trade and Logistics Academy.

School leaders work to ensure potential Academy students understand, as early as middle school, that today's global trade and logistics industry is clean, fully automated, and has many upwardly mobile career paths for students who ultimately wish to excel in management and executive leadership. Middle school students have responded with interest when they learn about the industry's salary potential, which averages nearly \$55,000 annually.

Golden also works to steer students toward the Supply Chain Technology program at Florida Gateway College in nearby Lake City; program courses are offered to high school students at no cost. After completing this program, students can opt to continue education through technical center, community college or university programs to train for careers ranging from machine operator to logistician to air traffic controller.



Containers for transport at the Jacksonville Port Authority.

workforce boards, economic development agencies, and state-approved post-secondary institutions – to include plans for at least one middle school CAPE Academy in their three-year strategic plans.



Workforce Florida responded with funding to support the initiative, which, in lieu of traditional grant funding, provides participating schools with technical assistance to guide them in quickly establishing programs and engaging local employers. During its inaugural year – 2012-2013 – students and teachers earned more than 1,400 Microsoft® and Adobe® certifications. Golden thinks the idea of a middle school Global Logistics CAPE Academy has merit. “It would be great,” Golden said, “if we had more substantive middle school exposure to help get them thinking seriously before they begin high school.”

Involving Middle Schools

Recent successes in Information Technology career engagement at the middle school level offer possible solutions for helping school districts expand global logistics career opportunities to younger students through middle school feeder programs. Building on the success of the original 2007 Act that established CAPE academies, the 2011 Florida Legislature passed a new law requiring all district school boards – in collaboration with regional

CONCLUSION

As Gov. Scott and economic development leaders continue to bring new trade business to Florida, those jobs are expected to grow. Filling them is the next challenge, and one that Workforce Florida Inc. – the state's workforce strategy and policy board of leaders in business, economic development, education, and government – is tackling head-on with training and education initiatives that build a strong and steady pipeline of talent for generations to come. 🌐

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