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Information Technology Career Academies to Expand to 10 More School Districts
Initiative connects teachers and students to industry-recognized certifications

TALLAHASSEE - Building on the success of information technology-focused Career and Professional Education (CAPE) Academies across the state, Workforce Florida Inc. and The Whetstone Group today announced the implementation of Phase II of the Middle School CAPE Information Technology (IT) Career Academy Technical Assistance Project. Phase I of the project resulted in middle school teachers and students from 15 Florida school districts earning more than 150 industry certifications in Microsoft® and Adobe® in the first semester of the 2012-2013 school year.

Phase II of the project will enable 10 more Florida middle school districts to participate in a competitive selection process to receive more than \$30,000 in technical assistance products and services to establish new CAPE IT academies. These academies are anticipated to generate Science Technology Engineering & Math (STEM) training and digital literacy opportunities for middle school students, preparing them for more advanced certifications in high school and college.

"Over the past five years we have watched CAPE Academies connect Florida students to market-relevant training and certifications that create career opportunities," said Workforce Florida President/CEO Chris Hart IV. "I am proud that Workforce Florida's support will enable this initiative to continue to open new doors for middle school students as they progress toward joining the IT workforce."

CAPE Academies were established by the 2007 CAPE Act sponsored by now Senate President Don Gaetz (R-Destin). They provide rigorous and relevant career-focused courses that articulate to postsecondary-level coursework and lead to industry certifications.

"The goal of growing and expanding our CAPE Academies is to give Florida students a career advantage in key industries through a collaboration of educators, business leaders and workforce development professionals," said President Gaetz. "Today, I applaud students enrolled in Florida's middle school IT CAPE Academies for seizing that opportunity to build their future careers. This initiative ties education to the realities of today's economy, exemplifying the drive of our students as well as the lengths our teachers are willing to go to help them succeed."

Under the 2007 CAPE Act, each school district must have at least one high school CAPE Academy, established in partnership with business and workforce development leaders in the community. In 2011, the CAPE Act was expanded to require plans for at least one CAPE Academy at the middle school level in each district.

Workforce Florida has funded both phases of the Middle School IT Career Academies Technical Assistance Project. The initiative is being implemented by The Whetstone Group, a youth-talent-development leader, using the LEAD Through Workforce Innovations Career Pathways/Academy model. Due in large part to the commitment and partnership of leaders from Florida's IT industry -- including CCI Learning® and Certiport® -- and education community as well as the Florida Chamber of Commerce and state agencies including the Department of Education and the Department of Economic Opportunity, the project focuses on providing valuable technical assistance rather than traditional grant funding. In addition to the technical assistance -- which supports compliance with CAPE Act standards and reinforces the connection between CAPE academies and career-themed education, and the regional economic drivers -- the project offers students certification in two of the world's leading digital literacy vendors' applications -- Microsoft® and Adobe®.

"We are honored to continue our efforts with Workforce Florida in providing Florida's youth with the opportunity to obtain marketable skill sets that will give them a competitive advantage in their pursuit of college and/or career goals," said Melissa Bumpers, President of The Whetstone Group."

For more information, please visit the project website designed by Web V students at Niceville High School in Niceville, Florida, at www.middleschoolcareeracademytap.com.

VIDEOS: Perspectives on the success of the Middle School IT CAPE Academy Technical Assistance Project, Phase I

- ***Workforce Florida President/CEO Chris Hart IV***
- ***Alan Raymond, Vice President, Global Channel Sales, Certiport Inc.***
- ***Frank Fuller, Senior Policy Advisor, K-20, Florida Senate President's Office***
- ***Georgia "Joy" Bowen, Leon County School Board Chair***
- ***Jeff Scroggins, Principal, The Whetstone Group***

VIDEO: Middle school students being recognized for earning industry-recognized IT certifications

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About Workforce Florida

Workforce Florida Inc. is the statewide workforce investment board of business and government leaders charged with overseeing Florida's workforce system, which includes the Department of Economic Opportunity, 24 Regional Workforce Boards and nearly 100 One-Stop Career Centers. Workforce Florida's mission is to develop strategies that help Floridians enter, remain and advance in the workforce to support economic development and strengthen the state's business climate. Learn more about Florida's workforce resources and solutions at www.EmployFlorida.com.

About The Whetstone Group

Founded in 2004, The Whetstone Group (TWG) has offices in Georgia and Florida and is a leader in Youth Workforce Talent Development through the establishment of career educational offerings linked to local, state and regional economic drivers. TWG is dedicated to providing students, businesses and communities with the competitive advantage needed to meet the workforce challenges of today and tomorrow. For more information, please call us at 770-458-9374 or visit our web site at www.experienceTWG.com. The voice telephone number in this document may be reached by persons using TTY/TDD equipment via the Florida Relay Service at 711.

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