

>> ASK THE EXPERT

Ready or Not?

Preparing the next generation for work.

Employers and educators must engage in a “more collaborative approach to the education and training of the next generation of workers,” according to a recent study by the Harvard Graduate School of Education. “This philosophy isn’t simply about learning; it’s also about how to enable young people to make a successful transition to working life.”

“It would surely produce important social as well as economic returns on investment,” the study concludes.

Florida is leading the way with innovative career and technical education programs such as career academies, apprenticeships and other business-driven solutions, like Florida Ready to Work.

Florida Ready to Work offers online training in nine foundational skill areas identified by employers as critical across industries and occupations. Proctored assessments validate mastery of skills. Those who complete the program earn the Florida Ready to Work Credential – proof that a jobseeker has the applied skills and initiative required for college and career success.

“Seminole County and Central Florida are positioned to become the hub of high tech medical, research and manufacturing, and as a producer of the talent needed, Seminole County Public Schools is an economic driver of this effort,” says Superintendent Bill Vogel.

Lake Brantley High School in Seminole County is a model with more than 600 students earning the Florida Ready to Work Credential this year and 2,100 total Credentials since the program was first introduced three years ago – more than any other high school in Florida.

“Employers recognize the value of the Florida Ready to Work Credential, and it gives our students a competitive advantage and confidence when pursuing



Roland Lopez and Megan Mairs are among the more than 2,100 Lake Brantley students who are “ready to work.”

employment now and in the future,” says Joe Oldakowski, district director of career and technical education for Seminole County Public Schools.

Florida Ready to Work is supported by business leaders including the Florida Chamber of Commerce, Associated Industries of Florida, Florida Retail Federation, Manufacturers Association of Florida, and the HR Florida State Council.

“Student achievement is our primary objective,” says Lake Brantley Principal Mary Williams. “We are using the program to prepare our students for both college and careers.”

More than 110,000 Florida high school students have participated in the program statewide. Other high school Credential leaders this year include New Smyrna Beach High School in Volusia County, Edgewater High School in Orange County, Melbourne High School in Brevard County, and Lake Howell High School, also in Seminole County.

Students, educators and employers say the program is user friendly, educationally sound and workforce focused.

“This program is helping prepare our students for the competitive workplace

and demonstrate that they are indeed ready for work. It allows employers to easily recognize the skills that our students possess,” says Darla Lanier, a Lake Brantley teacher and Florida Ready to Work champion.

The program is web-based, so students may participate inside or outside of school. It is convenient for teachers, too. Teachers can easily monitor student progress online and quickly intervene when needed.

Elizabeth Artis, a senior at Lake Brantley High School, took her Florida Ready to Work Credential to the interview where she now works. “It offers students a great opportunity to successfully enter the workplace with confidence,” Elizabeth says. “It helped me get the job.”



Darla Lanier's students are ready.