



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**DATE:** November 9, 2011

**CONTACT:** Tamra Eitel, director, marketing  
Pinellas Education Foundation  
[Tamra.Eitel@pinellaseducation.org](mailto:Tamra.Eitel@pinellaseducation.org)  
727-588-4816 ext. 2114

Andrea Zahn, director, communications  
Pinellas County Schools  
[Zahna@pcsb.org](mailto:Zahna@pcsb.org)  
727-588-6122, cell 727-638-2903

## Academies of Pinellas Given the Green Light

Largo, Fla. – The Pinellas County School Board yesterday in a unanimous vote approved the five-year planning grant aimed at advancing career academy learning throughout the county's public schools.

Called the Academies of Pinellas, the plan was made possible through a partnership with the Ford Motor Company Fund, Workforce Florida, Pinellas County Schools, the Pinellas County Parent Teacher Association, Pinellas Education Foundation and FACTE (Florida Association for Career and Technical Education).

The goals of the Academies of Pinellas are to:

- Consolidate the different academies (Centers of Excellence, career academies, themed academies, Career and Professional Education 'CAPE' academies) under the Academies of Pinellas.
- Make learning relevant – more learning through application.
- Promote academies and certifications that address community and workforce needs.
- Increase the number of academies in all high schools.
- Make schools smaller as a result of creating multiple academies in each high school.
- Integrate core subjects into themed programs.
- Operate most academies with an open enrollment process.
- Respect the dignity of all work and educational pursuits.
- Have involved community and business advisory boards supporting academies.

Statistics show that students not only succeed when they are enrolled in coursework that's relevant, but they are better prepared for life after high school whether their choice is to attend college, enter the workforce or obtain further technical training.

"I applaud our School Board members for understanding the urgency of challenging our students, which the Academies of Pinellas certainly will do," said Pinellas Schools interim superintendent John Stewart. "I further applaud everyone, school district personnel and community partners alike, who worked hard to bring this opportunity to fruition."

Academies of Pinellas will incorporate much of what has already proven successful with the Centers of Excellence and expand on that formula to broaden opportunities for high school students. The plan will ensure that every region of the county offers the most successful programs to give students a greater variety of choices based on their interests and aptitudes in addition to improving the graduation rate.

"We know that students in Career Academies academically out-perform students in the general school population across the state of Florida," stated Gerry Hogan, co-chair of the Career Education Board. "With funding from Ford and under the leadership of administrators from Pinellas County Schools and school board members, Pinellas County business and civic leaders, our goal is for 50% of students to be enrolled in Career Academies by 2017. This experience will translate to higher graduation rates, fewer absences, and higher FCAT scores."

The support of various community and civic groups like the numerous chambers, rotary clubs, the Urban League, the St. Petersburg NAACP among others have not only been crucial to the success of the plan's adoption but will continue to be vital in its implementation.

**For more information including a short video, please visit [www.pinellaseducation.org/careers](http://www.pinellaseducation.org/careers).**

**About The Pinellas Education Foundation**

The Pinellas Education Foundation is an independent, non-governmental not-for-profit established in 1986. The Foundation's mission is to enhance and improve educational opportunities in Pinellas County Schools. Well known Pinellas Education Foundation programs include: Enterprise Village, Finance Park, Doorways Scholarships and Teacher Classroom Grants.

**About Pinellas County Schools**

Pinellas County Schools is the seventh largest school district in Florida and 24th largest in the nation, serving more than 101,000 K-12 students at 137 schools. With almost 17,000 employees, the school district is the largest employer in the county. The vision of Pinellas County Schools is 100% Student Success. We encourage parents, business leaders and community members to partner with us in our mission to educate and prepare each student for college, career and life.

###