

## Florida Charter School Conference & School Choice Summit

### Presentation by Mr. Chris Pello, CEO, Florida Trade Academy

**Topic:** Classrooms to Careers: FTA's Customized Pre-Apprenticeships and Certified Training for Student Success

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## Slide 2: Introduction to Florida Trade Academy and CEO

### Introduction to CEO:

Mr. Chris Pello, CEO and Founder of Florida Trade Academy, has over 30 years of experience in education, leadership, and community service. As an education specialist and community leader, Mr. Pello has dedicated his career to creating impactful opportunities for students. In addition to founding FTA, he established Livingstone Academy, the largest private school in Hillsborough County for students with special needs. His work has consistently focused on developing innovative solutions that address diverse learning needs and open up meaningful career pathways.

### Why We Started FTA:

Florida Trade Academy was founded with a vision to provide high school students with an alternative pathway to traditional college. Recognizing that only a small percentage of students pursue, and complete college degrees, Mr. Pello and FTA aim to bridge the gap between classroom learning and careers. FTA was designed to help students transition directly into rewarding careers, minimizing debt and maximizing their potential in high-demand industries. This approach aligns with FTA's mission to equip students with practical, attainable career paths that meet the needs of today's workforce.

### Our Mission Statement:

"To provide students with career pathways that lead to sustainable careers with minimal to no debt."

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## Slide 3: Who Are We?

### About Florida Trade Academy (FTA):

Florida Trade Academy (FTA) is a trusted leader in workforce development, offering a comprehensive suite of programs that help students seamlessly transition from classroom learning to skilled careers. Our offerings include certified training programs, registered pre-apprenticeships, and registered apprenticeships, all designed to address the diverse needs of students and the demands of high-growth industries. By partnering with schools and businesses, we create pathways that empower students to gain industry-recognized credentials, hands-on experience, and job readiness skills that position them for success in today's workforce.

## Mission & Vision:

- **Vision:** To lead the nation in creating, providing, and driving innovative workforce solutions.
- **Mission:** FTA facilitates opportunities for career seekers by offering customizable educational and career pathways that empower students to enter skilled trades with confidence and competence.

## Core Values:

Florida Trade Academy's work is guided by six core values:

- **Excellence:** We are committed to delivering the highest standards in education and training.
  - **Integrity:** We build trust through transparency and accountability.
  - **Diversity:** We welcome all backgrounds, perspectives, and skill levels, providing equitable access to career training.
  - **Adaptability:** We respond to changing industry demands and adapt our programs to meet the evolving needs of the workforce.
  - **Compliance:** We maintain strict adherence to industry standards and regulatory requirements.
  - **Teamwork:** We foster collaboration with our partners, instructors, and students to create supportive learning environments.
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## Slide 4: Proud Partners

Morgan Auto Group, NCCER, CareerSource Florida, Department of Labor, FL Department of Education, The Lowes Foundation, DeWalt, FL Department of Juvenile Justice, Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, Associated Builders and Contractors FL Gulf Coast

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## Slide 5: Products & Services Overview

### What We Offer:

Florida Trade Academy offers a diverse range of programs designed to prepare students for career success. Our offerings include:

- **Certified Training Programs:** Our certified training programs vary in length and are designed to equip students with the skills and knowledge required for industry-relevant certifications. These certifications are highly valued by employers and serve as a

testament to the student's job readiness. By focusing on transferrable skills, these programs not only enhance students' credentials but also prepare them for long-term career opportunities in fields like construction trades, manufacturing, and full-stack development, positioning them as competitive candidates in the job market.

- **Registered Apprenticeships:** Our registered apprenticeship programs are employer-facilitated, meaning that trainees are first hired by an employer before being enrolled in the program. This approach combines paid, on-the-job training with academic instruction, offering an earn-while-you-learn experience. Through the apprenticeship, trainees work toward industry-recognized credentials while gaining skills that directly align with employer needs. This structure provides a clear, sustainable pathway to long-term employment, as apprentices gain valuable work experience alongside their technical training.
  - **Registered Pre-Apprenticeships:** Our registered pre-apprenticeship programs are six-month introductory courses designed to equip students with foundational skills and certifications necessary for specific trades. These certifications serve as building blocks that seamlessly transition into the credentials required for registered apprenticeships. Through structured, hands-on experience and exposure to industry standards, these programs provide students with a head start, preparing them for the demands of full apprenticeships and enhancing their readiness for entry-level careers.
  - **Staff Training and Program Management Support:** At Florida Trade Academy, we don't just provide training for students—we also equip school staff with the skills and knowledge they need to successfully implement and manage these programs. Our comprehensive support includes training school personnel on program delivery, compliance requirements, and reporting standards, ensuring that each program runs smoothly and meets all regulatory guidelines. Additionally, we provide ongoing management support to assist with troubleshooting, adjustments, and continuous improvement, allowing schools to focus on student success while FTA handles the operational aspects.
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## Slide 6: What Works in Your Sector?

### **Certified Training Program Overview:**

Florida Trade Academy's Certified Training Programs are designed to prepare students with the skills and credentials they need to enter high-demand fields right after high school. These programs offer specialized training in areas such as construction trades, manufacturing, and full-stack development, leading to industry-recognized certifications that enhance a student's employability and earning potential.

### **Industry-Relevant Certifications:**

Our certified training programs provide students with certifications that are directly aligned with what employers seek. These credentials are transferrable and allow students to step into the

workforce as skilled, job-ready candidates, bypassing the typical college route while still achieving career success.

### **Customizable Pathways:**

Each certified training program can be tailored to align with specific industry needs, regional job markets, and individual school goals. Whether your focus is on preparing students for local construction jobs, entry-level manufacturing positions, or IT roles, FTA offers flexible training options that make career pathways accessible and impactful for students.

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## **Slide 7: How FTA's Programs Align with Your Goals**

### **Supporting Career Seekers:**

Today, only 60% of high school students choose to attend college, and of those, just 41% complete a degree. For those who do graduate, the average student loan debt ranges from \$31,000 to \$47,000. Even more, over half—52%—of bachelor's degree holders end up underemployed within a year, working in jobs that don't require a college degree. Florida Trade Academy offers a different path, preparing students with valuable skills and certifications that lead directly to high-paying careers without the burden of debt or the risk of underemployment.

### **Benefits for Schools:**

By partnering with FTA, your school can offer students more than just a diploma; you can provide a direct path to a successful career. FTA's programs equip students with industry-recognized credentials, making them valuable candidates in high-demand fields. This not only supports student success after graduation but also strengthens your school's reputation as a forward-thinking leader in career-focused education.

### **Why CTE Programs Matter:**

Career and technical education (CTE) programs like those offered by FTA close the skills gap in industries such as construction, manufacturing, and technology. These programs teach practical, job-ready skills that meet employer needs, empowering students to enter the workforce directly or continue training with a strong foundation.

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## **Slide 8: Real-World Impact Story**

### **Meet John – A Path to Success:**

John is a high school senior from a busy, under-involved family. He's a good student but not necessarily college-bound, and while he's dedicated, he's looking for a path that feels practical and attainable. John aspires to build a fulfilling life and career, but he needs guidance and a clear pathway to get there.

### **How FTA Helps John Prepare for the Workforce:**

Through FTA's Certified Training Program, John starts specialized training in the construction trade during his 12th-grade year. He gains hands-on experience and earns an industry-recognized certification by the time he graduates, making him job-ready in a high-demand field. Instead of facing the uncertainties and debt of college, John is prepared to step directly into a well-paying career.

### **Why John is a Great Hire for His Community:**

John's certification gives him a strong advantage in the job market. With practical skills and industry knowledge, he's an asset to employers from day one, requiring less on-the-job training. By staying in his community and filling a local industry need, he not only secures his own future but also contributes to the local economy.

### **Creating Real Opportunities:**

For students like John, FTA's programs open doors that might have otherwise been closed. By providing a pathway to a meaningful career, we help students like him achieve their aspirations and strengthen their communities, all without the burden of college debt.

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## **Slide 9: Cost Breakdown and Support Provided**

### **Flexible, Customizable Investment:**

Partnering with FTA involves a clear, adaptable investment tailored to fit your school's unique needs. Our cost structure is flexible, allowing schools to select services based on the specific program being facilitated and the number of students enrolled. This ensures that your investment is efficient and directly aligned with your goals.

### **Initial Setup and Onboarding:**

FTA provides all essential materials and resources to support a smooth program launch. Initial setup options include:

- **Curriculum and Instructional Materials:** Customized for the selected industry and certification track.
- **Toolkits and Training Supplies:** Hands-on resources that prepare students for practical, real-world applications.
- **Technology Access:** Digital resources, certification platforms, and technical support, tailored to program size.

### **Training and Ongoing Support:**

FTA's commitment extends beyond initial setup. We provide continuous support to help schools achieve and maintain program success, including:

- **Staff Training:** Onboarding and training for school staff to deliver programs effectively while meeting all regulatory requirements.
- **Compliance and Reporting:** Assistance with maintaining compliance and fulfilling reporting standards for various regulatory bodies, including the Department of Education (DOE), Department of Labor (DOL), and any accrediting bodies overseeing the programs.
- **Dedicated Support Team:** Access to FTA's team for guidance, troubleshooting, and regular program evaluations.

### **Building a Lasting Partnership:**

With FTA's flexible investment model, schools can choose the specific tools and support they need to build a sustainable, impactful career training program. By partnering with us, your school can empower students with career-ready skills, backed by FTA's commitment to program quality, compliance, and continuous improvement.

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## **Slide 10: Suggested Timeline and Resources**

### **Example Program Timeline:**

A standard FTA program span starts at one semester but can be as long as a full school year depending on the desired outcomes and certifications, with clear milestones and structured phases to keep students on track. Here's an example timeline for a certified training program:

- **Phase 1: Initial Onboarding (Weeks 1–2):** Introduction to program structure, goals, and foundational skills.
- **Phase 2: Core Training (Weeks 3–12):** In-depth technical instruction, hands-on training, and assessments.
- **Phase 3: Certification Prep and Review (Weeks 13–16):** Final training modules, practice exams, and review sessions leading to certification.

### **Resources Provided by FTA:**

FTA equips each program with comprehensive resources to ensure student and staff success, including:

- **Tools and Equipment:** Ready-to-use toolkits aligned with the specific trade or industry focus of the program.
- **Digital Learning Resources:** Access to online curriculum, industry platforms, and certification testing.
- **Compliance and Reporting Tools:** Documentation and tools to streamline reporting and meet regulatory requirements.

### **Support and Sponsorship Opportunities:**

FTA offers additional support to enhance program accessibility and success:

- **Corporate Sponsorship Options:** Schools have the opportunity to partner with local businesses and industry leaders for financial sponsorship, helping to offset program costs and providing students with real-world connections.
- **Dedicated FTA Support:** Our team is available for ongoing assistance, including program adjustments, compliance support, and resource replenishment.

### **The FTA Difference:**

With a structured timeline, dedicated resources, and support options, FTA ensures that your school can implement a successful career training program that prepares students for sustainable careers.

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## **Slide 11: Q&A and Next Steps**

### **Questions?**

We're here to answer any questions you may have about FTA's programs, customization options, and how we can support your school in creating impactful career pathways for students. Please feel free to ask about specific program details, partnership opportunities, or anything else on your mind.

### **Next Steps – How to Get Started with FTA:**

For schools interested in partnering with Florida Trade Academy, here's how to take the next step:

1. **Schedule a Follow-Up Meeting:** We'll work with you to discuss your school's unique goals and needs, helping to identify the right program and support options.
2. **Select Program Options:** Choose from our flexible, a la carte offerings to build a program tailored to your school and students.
3. **Plan for Launch:** Our team will guide you through the onboarding process, training staff, setting up resources, and preparing students for their new career pathways.

### **Empowering Students, Strengthening Communities**

By partnering with FTA, your school can empower students with industry-recognized skills, open doors to meaningful careers, and make a lasting impact on the community. Together, we can build brighter futures through education and workforce development.