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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

St. Lucie 8th Graders Dive into Career Exploration



Lincoln Park Academy students explore future career possibilities at the first-ever 8th Grade Experience on Nov. 12.
Photos by Maureen Saltzer

Port St. Lucie/Nov. 17, 2025 – Hands-on demonstrations of exciting careers in healthcare, construction, logistics, communications, technology, public service and much more were on display for 760 St. Lucie Public Schools eighth graders on Nov. 12 at the school district offices in Port St. Lucie.

School buses filled with groups of 100 curious eighth graders started arriving at 8:30 a.m. from across St. Lucie County. Thirty local businesses and organizations spent the day interacting with the students, showcasing the careers available to them in St. Lucie County after graduation from high school or college.

The 8th Grade Experience was coordinated by the Treasure Coast Center for Economic and Educational Development (TCCEED) in collaboration with St. Lucie Public Schools. The Nov. 12 event was a pilot program modeled on a successful annual event in Bowling Green, Kentucky. School district and TCCEED leadership visited Bowling Green several times in 2024 while planning for their own 8th Grade Experience.

“TCCEED is igniting opportunity for tomorrow’s workforce on the Treasure Coast, working in partnership with St. Lucie Public Schools to drive youth empowerment and career readiness in ways our community has never experienced before,” said TCCEED Chair Azlina Goldstein.

“The 8th Grade Experience was incredibly successful. This year we also offered a pilot program with paid summer internships for high school juniors and seniors, coordinated student career fairs, toured school counselors through local businesses and introduced business leaders to our high schools’ career and technical programs – and we are just getting started,” Goldstein added.

“The TCCEED and St. Lucie Public Schools 8th Grade Experience was absolutely incredible. Nearly 800 students and 30+ local businesses came together for hands-on, engaging activities that opened doors, sparked curiosity, and empowered our future workforce, said TCCEED Executive Director Anita Fischer.

“It was amazing to be able to bring this vision to life — but it was our business community that really showed up and poured enthusiasm and encouragement into these students. And, the students, they were phenomenal. Their eagerness, teamwork, and excitement made every moment unforgettable,” Fischer said.

“The 8th Grade Experience was a huge success, with over 700 St. Lucie Public Schools students meeting with local business leaders and learning about future opportunities in the local workforce,” said Superintendent of Schools Jon Prince. “As part of our Classrooms2Careers initiative, students were able to engage, experience and begin relationships with their future employers. We want to thank the TCCEED board and the EDC for their partnership and commitment to building our future with and through our schools.”

“I was truly impressed by the collaboration, the energy, and the commitment from everyone involved. Congratulations to the entire team who brought this vision to life—your hard work is making a real difference in the lives of our students and families,” said St. Lucie County

Commissioner Cathy Townsend. “Our community thrives when we invest in education, workforce development, and future opportunities. I am proud to support programs like this that strengthen St. Lucie County.”

“This morning’s tour of the 8th Grade Experience was inspiring. Local employers are showing eighth graders that great opportunities exist right here at home,” said Port St. Lucie Councilman Anthony Bonna Sr. “As a dad, it’s encouraging to see schools and businesses working together to give our kids a bright future.”

“TMx Aero had an amazing time at the 8th Grade Experience. As a proud sponsor, we brought out tools and real aircraft parts to show students what a future in aviation maintenance could look like,” said Michelle Oakley, TMx Aero’s director of sales. “We loved seeing their excitement and curiosity — the next generation of technicians is already looking bright.”

TCCEED is a new 501(c)3 charitable organization created by the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County. Its mission is to connect the region’s businesses, educators and workforce leaders to build a strong talent pipeline and assist with aligning education with local career opportunities. The nonprofit previously coordinated a paid summer internship program and hosts regular programs that educate local businesses about the school district’s many career and technical education programs and helps familiarize St. Lucie Public Schools CTE educators and guidance counselors with the abundant career opportunities available locally.

The organization is already making a significant difference. On Nov. 13, TCCEED’s work was recognized with a Community Impact Award from the Treasure Coast Chapter of the Association of American Fundraising Professionals at the regional organization’s National Philanthropy Day Lunch.

About TCCEED

The Treasure Coast Center for Economic and Educational Development is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization that connects the region’s businesses, educators and workforce leaders to build a stronger, more competitive talent pipeline in St. Lucie County and beyond. TCCEED helps align education with community needs, helping businesses grow while providing career opportunities for individuals. Contact TCCEED at 772.324.2014 ext. 204 or visit www.tcceed.org.

About the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County

The Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County (EDC) is a private, not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting economic vitality in St. Lucie County through the attraction, retention and expansion of businesses in the community. The EDC works in partnership with local governments and the private sector to advance its goals of creating more and better-paying jobs for residents, broadening the tax base and improving St. Lucie County's economic quality of life. Contact the EDC at 772.324.2014, contact@youredc.com or www.youredc.com.