



## MEDIA RELEASE

June 2, 2021

### GOVERNOR SIGNS BUDGET Hernando Schools Receive Major Funding

Today, Governor Ron DeSantis signed the 2021 Florida Leads state budget. Within the \$101.5 billion budget are two projects that will bring a significant investment to Hernando Schools. Two projects, totaling \$9.7 million, will expand workforce training opportunities for high school and adult education students in Hernando.

Hernando is the only county in the Tampa Bay region without a stand-alone vocational school. Currently, the district's SunTech Educational Center operates at several high school campuses prompting school board members and district leaders to champion the effort to bring a stand-alone facility to Hernando. With the Governor's signature, the district will receive and use funds from the \$9.35 million appropriation to build and operate a new career and technical college on property adjacent to Brooksville - Tampa Bay Regional Airport.

"We have had a vision for Hernando County for the better part of 8 years. Today, Gov. Desantis and Sen. Simpson have made our vision possible," Hernando School Board Member, Jimmy Lodato said. "Never before has the community come together for a project like it has now. The future of economic development in Hernando County hinges on the training and preparation of our students. A stand-alone technical college will ensure we move into our future, ready."

Also included in the budget is \$350,000 to expand the Criminal Justice Program at Nature Coast Technical High School. Appropriation funds will go toward program needs including a P/T training area, lab space for forensic instruction as well as the purchase of a law enforcement simulator.

"This is an amazing achievement for our students and for our community. Many people worked tirelessly to bring what is certainly going to be a strong community asset to Hernando. We are truly appreciative for their dedication and resolve," Superintendent John Stratton said.

The district plans to break ground for the new center in the fall. A design committee will be developed by the school district in order to collect input and recommendations from the greater Hernando community. Those interested in being part of the design committee should complete an application that will be posted to the school district's website Friday, June 4th.

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