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Recruitment begins for Teacher Quest Tampa Bay pilot program

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The **Technological Research and Development Authority** is recruiting businesses in Tampa Bay to participate in the Teacher **Quest Tampa Bay** pilot program, a professional development initiative.

The effort aims to employ Florida certified teachers in grades 6-8 in science, math and technology-based positions during the summers of 2009, 2010 and 2011. The program is designed so that teachers working in Hillsborough, Pinellas, Polk and Manatee counties will take their work experience back to the classroom to enrich student awareness of careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The program is made possible through a \$300,000 grant from the Helios Education Foundation, which is based in Tampa.

The program is slated to help strengthen teacher professional development in the math and sciences and potentially impact 6,000 students, said Helios Education Foundation President and chief executive officer Paul Luna. The hope, he said, is that student interest will be sparked in the science, technology, engineering and math fields by connecting classroom experiences to real world applications.

The program will provide a link between school and work, where teachers serve as a conduit for middle school students, exposing them to career and academic pathways, as well as connecting the math and science they are learning in the classroom to the skills they will need in the workforce, a release said. Teachers will also receive training to develop lessons based on inquiry, problem solving and real-world relevance that makes math, science and technology more exciting and challenging for students.

This is a call to action for businesses looking for a turn-key solution to link to education and impact the future workforce," said Chester Straub, TRDA executive director.

Targeted businesses for summer of 2009 include the following sectors: agri-technology, biotechnology, energy, finance, high-tech manufacturing, and information technology. Participating businesses will benefit by integrating motivated professionals into their workforce in a cost-effective manner, full-time, for

six weeks. Teachers will be screened, hired, and paid as temporary employees of TRDA, alleviating any hands-on administration for businesses.

Launched in 1987 as an independent special district of Florida, TRDA leverages federal, state and private resources to develop and implement technology-based programs in four target areas: education, business incubation, energy and technology transfer. By infusing new technology into businesses and schools, the TRDA helps to strengthen the economy and education throughout the state and nation, a release said.

The Helios Education Foundation is the largest nonprofit organization serving Arizona and Florida focused solely on education, and is dedicated to enriching the lives of individuals by creating opportunities for success in postsecondary education. The Foundation's community investments are made across three impact areas: Early Childhood Education, the Transition Years (grades 5-12) and Postsecondary Scholarships. Since inception in 2004, the Foundation has invested over \$51 million in education-related programs and initiatives across both states.

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