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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## High School Fire Leadership Academy ignites other programs

**October 3, 2017** – Flagler County’s Fire Leadership Academy is making a statewide name for itself as a career path alternative for students interested in becoming firefighter-paramedics.

The program operates as a cooperative between Flagler County Fire Rescue and Flagler County Schools, specifically Flagler Palm Coast High School, to provide students with the potential to certify as “Firefighter 2” under Florida State Standards.

Members of the Clay County School Board and Clay County Fire Rescue recently visited Flagler Palm Coast High School with Fire Rescue Chief Don Petito and classroom instructor Fire Lt. Andy Keppler and left with nothing but praise.

“You have all participated in creating a program that benefits your community on so many levels,” Karen McMillan, Coordinator of School Choice and Charter Schools for Clay County, wrote in an email to Petito and Flagler Palm Coast principal and vice principal Dustin Sims and Kerri Sands.

“It starts students on a career path that is an alternative to college,” McMillan continued. “It builds a hiring pool for those who have lived in and contributed to your community. Lastly, it supports developing a long term Fire/Rescue Employee.”

Clay County Deputy Fire Rescue Chief Jason Boree and Battalion Chief Gary O’Conor joined McMillan during her tour. The trio also met with Sims.

“Flagler County’s desire to create true classroom-to-career opportunities is shared by our neighboring counties, as we share similarities in the need to prepare our students to live work and raise families right where they live,” Sims said “I look forward to assisting Clay County to do what right and good for Clay and their students.”

The Fire Leadership Academy coursework has been granted approvals through the Florida State Bureau of Standards and Training, as well as through the Florida State Fire College and the Florida State Department of Education.

**Charles Ericksen, Jr.**  
District 1

**Greg Hansen**  
District 2

**David Sullivan**  
District 3

**Nate McLaughlin**  
District 4

**Donald O’Brien Jr.**  
District 5

“Fire departments and educators around the state are starting to hear about our academy,” Petito said. “Clay County contacted me and we were able get them into the classroom so they could see how students interact with instructors. They were able to find out about the logistics from Principal Sims, so I think it was valuable to Clay County.”

McMillan concurred.

“Having each of you share your part and purpose and seeing your students in the classroom supplied us with actionable steps,” she wrote. “We are looking forward to valuable conversation and decision making here in Clay County.”

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