

# IMPACT REPORT

FSU Panama City's ASCENT Program: Building the future workforce through education, certification, and community outreach across Northwest Florida.



# ASCENT Program **Mission**

FSU Panama City's ASCENT Program has been expanded into a 10-year, \$23 million initiative, partly funded by Triumph Gulf Coast Inc. Its goal is to build a strong regional workforce in cybersecurity and innovative technologies.

Originally a 6-year project, the program continues to focus on providing education and training to help students and professionals in the 8 coastal counties in Northwest Florida earn industry-specific certifications, positioning them for career growth.

ASCENT's K-12 outreach emphasizes STEM, sparking interest in engineering, computer science, IT, and cybersecurity. The program also expands FSU Panama City's offerings with a new IT degree focused on cybersecurity and provides customized, non-credit training to address local workforce needs.



# Our Impact Journey: A Look Ahead

Explore the various initiatives and achievements of the ASCENT Program in empowering individuals and communities across Northwest Florida.

01	02
<div><b>Youth &amp; K-12 STEM Initiatives</b></div> <div>Discover how our summer camps and educational partnerships are inspiring the next generation in science, technology, engineering, and math.</div>	<div><b>Key Programs &amp; Outreach</b></div> <div>Highlighting the Tech Expo, teacher training, and special events that foster innovation and community engagement.</div>
03	04
<div><b>Workforce Development &amp; Certifications</b></div> <div>Examining the impact of our skills academies and certification programs in building a skilled regional workforce.</div>	<div><b>Partnerships &amp; Community Support</b></div> <div>Acknowledging the vital collaborations and supporters who make our mission possible.</div>

# Tech Expo 2025

## Event Highlights

The Tech Expo drew approximately 400 visitors, supported by over 60 volunteers from the ASCENT team, FSU Panama City's engineering departments, FSU PC's eSports team, Challenger Learning Center in Tallahassee, FSU PC's Collegiate School, and many of ASCENT's Integrated Technology Clubs (ITCs).

## Activities Included:

- Building and launching bottle rockets
- Programming Sphero bots
- Designing Saturn 5 LEGO rockets
- Indoor planetarium
- Robot demonstrations
- Minecraft Scavenger hunts
- eSports mini-tournaments





## Summer **Camps** Overview

These camps empowered students through immersive, project-based learning in art, history, science, and technology. By exploring a range of career paths, young scholars built essential skills in teamwork, embraced the value of diversity, and deepened their sense of community.

### **Hands-On Learning**

Students engaged directly with professionals, participated in hands-on activities, and applied their learning in real-world contexts.

### **Digital Certification**

Many students were trained and certified in Google Docs, Google Slides, and digital competency, equipping them with critical tools for academic and professional success.

### **STEM Exploration**

Camps featured exciting activities like building rockets, creating solar ovens, programming, and other engaging STEM projects.



# Kukua Institute



## TOSA Certification Exams

Students that attended Kukua summer camp were trained and certified in Google Docs and Digital Competency, providing them with valuable skills for their academic and future professional careers.

20

Students

Enrolled in Google Docs Digital  
Tools training and DigComp  
certification program

20

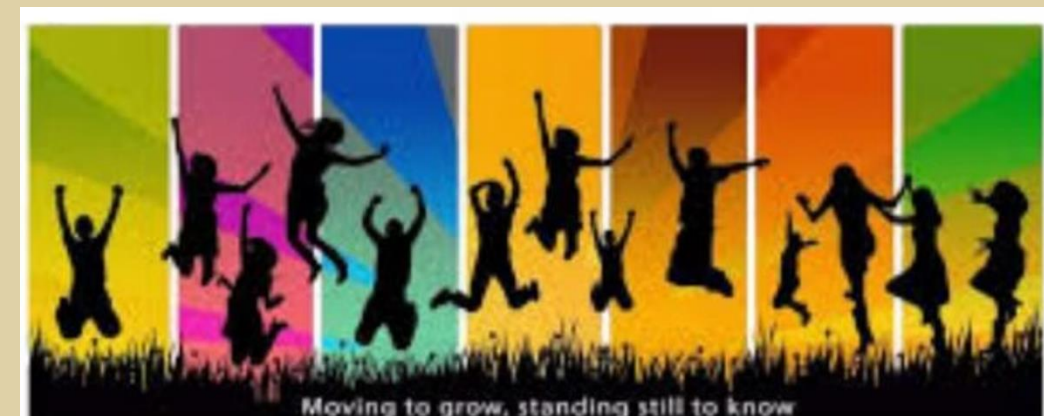
Certifications

TOSA Digital Competency and  
TOSA Google Docs

# MEI - Moving Education Institute

Through workshops and camps rooted in movement, meditation, and yoga, participants strengthen their communication and connection with others in ways that foster curiosity and mutual support.

They also earned technology certifications, including training in tools like Google Slides, which not only built digital confidence but also supported their ability to create, collaborate, and bring their ideas to life on stage and beyond.



## TOSA Certifications

Ten students proudly earned Google Slides Certifications, gaining real-world digital skills and the confidence to turn their ideas into powerful presentations, creative projects, and stories brought to life on stage.

# Walton Summer **STEM** Camp

This hands-on STEM camp brought science, technology, engineering, and math to life for middle school students! Through exciting, project-based activities like rockets, solar ovens, and real-world problem-solving challenges, students explored the power of innovation in a fun, supportive environment.



## Solar Ovens

Creating functional solar ovens taught students about renewable energy and thermal principles.



## Building Rockets

Students designed and launched their own rocket models, learning about aerodynamics and physics.



## Engineering Challenges

Marble runs and straw rockets helped develop problem-solving and design thinking skills.



# Summer STEM Camps **Impact**

Summer STEM Camp 2025: Where Curiosity Met Confidence! This summer, our STEM-based camps didn't just keep kids busy, they launched them into the future. Over the course of several high-energy, hands-on weeks, campers became coders, engineers, creators, and innovators.

From building robots and designing apps to cracking cybersecurity puzzles and launching virtual and physical rockets, every day was packed with discovery and excitement.



But it wasn't just fun and games, our campers earned real-world, industry-relevant tech certifications, giving them a head start in today's fast-paced digital world.

Led by trained, certified instructors, each child walked away with more than new skills, they left empowered, confident, and inspired to dream big.

The impact? Tangible. Transformative. Totally unforgettable. The future is bright, and it looks a lot like our campers.





# T3 Academy Teacher Training

38

Gulf County Teachers

Trained at Port St. Joe High School

127

Certifications

Earned by Gulf District Schools teachers

88

Bay County

Certifications earned during two-week training

Teachers were certified in Google Docs, Sheets, Slides, Digital Competencies, Adobe Illustrator, WordPress Web Design, Python Institute's PCAP certification, and Knowledge Pillars' PCA and PCS certifications.





# Special **Events** & Partnerships

1

**April 26, 2025**

Tech Expo 2025 at FSU Panama City with 400 visitors and 60+ volunteers

2

**May 9, 2025**

eSports tournament sponsored by ASCENT at Merritt Brown Middle School with Port St. Joe Middle/High School

3

**May 24, 2025**

ASCENT hosted a First Lego League exhibition competition and informational session at FSU PC

4

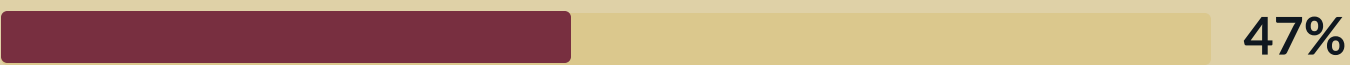
**June 11, 2025**

The ASCENT K12 team assisted a TRiO camp at FSU Panama City by building and launching bottle rockets with 36 students



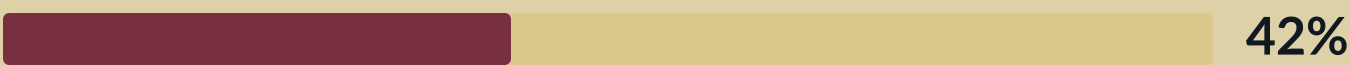
# Certification Report Summary

This report provides an overview of certifications earned across four counties through various educational programs and training camps.



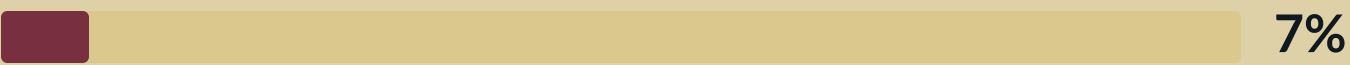
## Gulf County

127 certifications through T3 Teacher Training



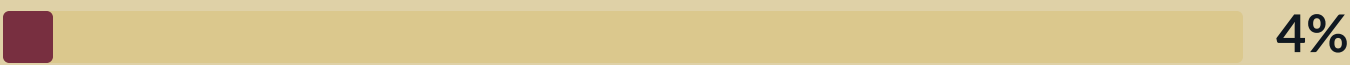
## Bay County

113 certifications across multiple programs



## Escambia County

20 certifications through Kukua Institute



## Franklin County

10 certifications through MEI Summer STEAM Camp

Walton County STEM Camp participants are not included in the certification graph as no certifications were earned, though valuable STEM education was provided to 18 students.



# Types of **Certifications** Earned

## Technical Certifications

- Python Institute PCAP
- Python Coding Apprentice
- Python Coding Specialist
- CyberCitizen
- Word 19

## Digital Tools

- Digital Competency
- Google Docs
- Google Slides
- Google Sheets
- Adobe Illustrator
- WordPress

Participants across all counties earned a diverse range of certifications, preparing them for future academic and career success in technology fields.



# Introducing the **OPEL** Initiative

The Office of Professional Engagement and Learning (OPEL), a key unit within the ASCENT program at FSU Panama City, is dedicated to bridging the gap between education and employment. Launched to address the growing demand for skilled professionals, OPEL equips students, adult learners, and community members with industry-recognized certifications and micro-credentials.



## Courses & Certifications Offered

OPEL's diverse catalog covers high-demand fields, ensuring participants gain practical, job-ready skills. Examples include:

- Python Coding Apprentice (PCA)
- Python Coding Specialist (PCS)
- TOSA Digital Competency (Google Suite, Excel)
- Adobe Certified Professional (Illustrator)
- Project Management Professional (PMP) Prep
- CompTIA A+, Security+, Network+

## Current Focus & Future Vision

Currently, OPEL is actively delivering training in various IT and digital literacy certifications, empowering participants with in-demand technical skills. This robust framework is laying the groundwork for exciting future developments:

- Developing non-credit to credit pathways for certifications
- Integrating certifications directly into new degree programs
- Establishing FSU Panama City as a leader in workforce development

# Entrepreneurship at **Walton Correctional Institution**

## Inaugural ESB Cohort

A collaboration between FFCE, FDC, and FSU, the Entrepreneurship/Small Business program at Walton Correctional Institution provides residents with foundational knowledge and practical skills needed to succeed in business.

## Graduates Recognized:

The program recognized 5 graduates in this cohort, all of whom successfully passed the certification.

## Participants Recognized:

In addition to the graduates, 5 other participants were recognized for their involvement in the program.

The program demonstrates how volunteer efforts and resources can greatly enhance initiatives within the FDC, providing valuable skills for residents planning for their transitions.





# ASCENT | Skills Academy

## Bridging the Gap Between Traditional Education and Real-World Readiness

### Program Overview

Skills Academy is a flexible, skills-focused learning model delivered through Core Sessions (themed mentorships) and Skill Labs (intensive workshops) with personalized guidance throughout the experience.

### Who It Serves

High school students seeking direction, recent graduates unsure about paths, adults considering career changes, and individuals building confidence before committing to traditional education or job training.

### What Sets It Apart

Mentorship-centered approach, non-subscription session-based model, bridges education and employment, and supports both youth and adults through various life transitions.



# Meet the ASCENT Team

Our dedicated team is committed to empowering individuals through education and skills development. Meet the passionate professionals driving our mission forward:



**Dr. Duriel Crittenden**  
Director



**Suzanne Remedies, PhD**  
Assistant Director



**Heidi Gentry**  
OPEL Program Manager



**Brianne Biddle**  
K-12 Program Manager



**Holly Radican**  
K-12 Program Specialist



**Ebe Randeree**  
Project Manager



**Jan Volpi**  
Testing Center Program Manager



**Heidi Hernandez**  
Testing Administrator



**Kevin Kinney**  
Testing Administrator



**Christopher Jenkins**  
IT Support Specialist



**Beverly Nelson**  
Program Manager, Skills Academy



**Casey Nelson**  
TRiO Site Coordinator

Thank You



FSU

ASCENT  
JOIN THE "IT" CROWD AT FSU PANAMA CITY

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