



# PRESS RELEASE

## **Governor Bush Visits the Commonwealth of the Bahamas**

**Governor Bush launches "Global Florida - Classroom Connections"**

**February 20, 2006**

TALLAHASSEE –Governor Jeb Bush today traveled to the Commonwealth of the Bahamas to launch "Global Florida – Classroom Connections", an educational exchange program between Florida and the Bahamas. During the visit, Governor Bush highlighted Florida's strong ties to the Caribbean Basin and stressed the importance of continued economic, cultural and educational partnerships.

"The Commonwealth of the Bahamas is one of Florida's most vital trade partners and a great asset to our growing economy." said Governor Bush. "However, our state's relationship with the Bahamas is not limited to trade. Through Classroom Connections, we will link students in Florida with students in the Bahamas and nations around the globe, providing an interesting and interactive opportunity to learn more about the geography, history and customs of other countries."

Governor Bush met with Prime Minister Perry Gladstone Christie and officials at the Bahamian Ministry of Education to announce this historic partnership between schools in Florida and the Bahamas. "Global Florida – Classroom Connections" is an international exchange program that uses technology to increase reading proficiency, raise awareness about the culture and history of Florida and the Bahamas and assist the Ministry of Education in developing teacher training programs.

In the program's early stages, three Florida schools will pair with three Bahamian schools. Each pair will form sister classrooms, sharing culture, educational concepts and technological innovation and strengthening reading skills. To start the process, the classes are swapping books and will connect online in the spring.

While in the Bahamas, Governor Bush also attended a luncheon co-hosted by the Bahamas Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club of Nassau to encourage greater economic partnerships between businesses in Florida and the Bahamas. The Bahamas is a significant international trade partner with two-way trade valued at \$1.1 billion in 2004, an increase of 13.2 percent over the previous year. The Bahamas is the state's 14th-largest export destination. Florida's total merchandise trade with the Caribbean amounted to \$9.4 billion in 2004.

Florida's most important international market is the Western Hemisphere, with

two-way trade totaling more than \$51 billion in 2004, and the Latin America/Caribbean region representing more than 62 percent of Florida's total international trade. Governor Bush remains an advocate for free and fair trade and has made the promotion of international business one of the pillars of his administration. Since 1999, the Governor has led business and humanitarian development missions to various international destinations, including Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Germany, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Israel, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Spain, the United Kingdom and Uruguay. Nearly 1,700 business leaders from across Florida have participated in these missions, netting nearly \$704 million collectively in new business for the state.

For more information, please visit [www.myflorida.com](http://www.myflorida.com) or [www.globalflorida.org](http://www.globalflorida.org).

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