

# MSSH Logistics class as popular as ever

By **BILL DALEY**  
Editor

Waiting lines are everywhere these days. Wherever you go – McDonalds, the bank, the post office, you name it, you’ve got to wait.

But a high school class?

Yep, believe it or not folks, in a day in age where it can be a challenge just to get kids to actually “go” to school, there is a class at Miami Springs Senior High School that is so popular, kids have their name on a waiting list to get in.

What used to be (former teacher) Dave Ryan’s Woodshop class in Room 188 was transformed four years ago into the Proligis Trade and Logistics Lab. The Gazette did a front page story in June, 2019 when the ribbon was cut during a grand opening ceremony when the program first got off the ground.

Nearly four-and-a-half years later? Never mind the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic virtually shut things down entirely when it came to school attendance, it did nothing to slow down the popularity of this class. A total of 150 students signed up for the course initially (the max they could handle at the time) and it never wavered, even during the shutdown.

Nick Acosta has headed up the program since its inception and of course had to “field a bad-hop ground ball” to use a baseball analogy when the pandemic hit. He himself (for health reasons) was forced to do the class virtually but the class was so popular, interest never wavered.

“We kept it going,” said Acosta, but then we had to do it like everything else, virtually. This class is fun because there’s always a lot of hands-on stuff going on and I’ll be honest, it wasn’t as engaging. No physical appearance, with being done *everything virtually*. Any kids that came in would be in the auditorium.”

And now? Having come out the other side of the pandemic? This thing has exploded.

“We’ve got things cranked and going in a big way now,” said Acosta who himself is a true-blue Golden Hawk, having graduated from MSSH in 2009. “We’ve got 230 kids now and a waiting list of 200. We could actually have as many as 400, we just need another teacher which I’m working on and hoping to have in place by next school year.”

So what is the Proligis Trade and Logistics Program? And why has it taken a group of teens between the ages of 14 and 18 by storm?

It’s a lot of things and goes in different stages but to put it in a nutshell, it’s a program that doesn’t just teach kids about the entire distribution process of goods but is an actual hands-on operation. Students learn not only the inner workings of how life at Amazon is, but everything from how to drive a forklift to work a simulator and dozens of things in between.

“What this program does is it gives you an entry level perspective,” said Acosta. “If you wanted to get a job in a warehouse or any logistics field, they know that you already have that entry level knowledge and don’t have to train you from scratch. You already come in with a leg up. It then helps open the door for more higher level positions and higher level pay. So instead of just coming in as a warehouse worker, you come in as a supervisor.”

The Industry certification that the students get in the class is the MSSC (Manufacturing Skill Standards Council) and then the two certifications they get are Certified Logistics Associate and Certified Logistics Technician.

“The first year, they work towards the Associate and second year, work toward Technician,” said Acosta who, before arriving to launch this program, spent nine years

in the industry, working for companies like Atlas Air and Southern Glazers Wine & Spirits. “They love the program because again, it just goes back to that core principle, they know that I care about them, I try to get to know them, you have to get to know people, know their story, what they’re trying to achieve and help them along that line.”

By the third year, it comes time for Forklift Certification, before the fourth year when students earn their CDL-A, Commercial Drivers License to drive 18 Wheelers and CDL-B, Commercial Drivers License, to drive school busses, coach busses, etc.

The regular weekly curriculum for Acosta usually involves Mondays and Tuesdays, where he teaches theory and Wednesdays and Thursdays where he teaches the practical side, where the kids go in the warehouse, the simulators and even do deliveries around the school. Fridays are usually reserved for either guest speakers or field trips.

Oh yes, Acosta makes sure he creates time for the kids to get out and experience real-life stuff whether it be a trip to Home Depot to learn the Forklift operation or MIA where they get to experience first-hand how the airlines handle distribution.

On the day we visited Acosta, he was busy tutoring a couple of his students, seniors Lucas Pedrianes and Fiorella Rodriguez.

“This program, it makes school fun, yes but it shows you a different side of school,” said Pedrianes. “It sets you up for real-world application instead of theoretical things you learn in other classes like English, Biology or Mathematics, that you might not ever use in your professional life. Because at the end of the day, there’s only so many jobs they have for doctors and lawyers. It makes school, for lack of a better word, cool. It shows you how the world works. When you walk into a Wal-Mart and

see a bottle of ketchup on the shelf, you’ll know exactly what it took to get there and how it got there.”

“It’s probably the best example of hands-on learning in terms of the classroom,” said Rodriguez. “Because even though my career choice isn’t particularly aligned to Logistics, it still allows you to network and build your communication skills. You see real people in the field, you attend a press confer at MIA and to see these people do their job is really cool. You hear about it, read about it in a text book, but then you see them doing this job and this is their life.”

To know Acosta is to know the man simply does not slow down when it comes to getting out there and promoting his Academy.

Last week he hosted the NAF AOF Board Meeting at in the Logistics Classroom at the high school where there were over 20 schools with Finance and Logistics/Aerospace related programs represented and various industry partners present.

Two weeks ago he was invited to do an interview with RadioNemo on their Education Station segment. RadioNemo is a radio station on SiriusXM Radio with over 1.4 million daily listeners.

The latest news? Acosta was at the Miami Springs City Council Chambers on Sept. 25 to go in front of the council doing a PowerPoint Presentation regarding the newest ambitious project, a new Aerospace Program at Miami Springs Senior High School in partnership with the Embry-Riddle Gaetz Aerospace Institute.

“I don’t know how to slow down,” quipped Acosta. “Having a new Aerospace program at the school will open even more doors for these kids and it’s all about trying to create as many options for them as possible. I love what I do and I want everything to keep growing.”