

Plans unveiled for charter laboratory school in St. Lucie West

By Margot Susca
staff writer
June 23, 2005

PORT ST. LUCIE — Local and state leaders on Wednesday unveiled plans for an innovative charter laboratory school at Tradition in St. Lucie West to "oohs" and "aahs" from the crowd at the Town Hall inside the development.

Speaking of partnerships and their dreams for future graduates of the school, Florida Atlantic University President Frank Brogan, State Sen. Ken Pruitt and St. Lucie County Schools Superintendent Michael Lannon talked about the charter laboratory concept and what it will mean at the school, the county and the state.

"This partnership is a real model of stepping out of the box," Lannon said. "This is a groundbreaking time."

Other community schools also will benefit from the research and teaching methods, Pruitt said. But he hopes to also have more students trained to spearhead what he sees as a major research evolution on the Treasure Coast.

"They are the future biologists and scientists," said Pruitt, a Port St. Lucie Republican. "Are we going to import them or are we going to home grow them? You have to start it here."

The still unnamed school is scheduled to open for the 2007-2008 school year on 45 acres pledged by Tradition developer Core Communities.

Local taxpayers will get the benefit of a 1,600-seat kindergarten through eighth-grade school without fronting the entire \$35 million cost of construction and land. Pruitt secured \$15 million in state funding for the project.

The first architectural plans show it will look much like the new kindergarten through eighth-grade school scheduled to open in western Port St. Lucie in August.

The school will serve a diverse community — required to mirror the state racial, economic and ethnic demographics — and act as a spot where FAU professors can test special research.

A charter laboratory school must be anchored by a state university — in this case, FAU — and could have professors conducting research and using state-of-the-art education philosophies.

Students will be assigned via a lottery and oversight will come from FAU but day-to-day operations will be run by the local school district.

- margot.susca@scripps.com



Image provided: St. Lucie County School District
 According to an artist's rendition of the planned charter laboratory school planned with Florida Atlantic University in the Tradition development, the school largely will be based on the new kindergarten scheduled to open in August in western Port St. Lucie.

Lab of learning

Some facts about the new charter school planned for St. Lucie:

ANCHORING UNIVERSITY: Florida Atlantic University headed by President Frank Brogan.

GRADES: Kindergarten through eighth.

NUMBER OF STUDENTS: 1,600

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT: By countywide lottery.

COST: \$35 million total for building and land. \$15 million in state funding; land donated by Core Communities.

PLANNED OPENING:

2007-2008 school year



ALISON SIDLO
 staff photographer

Sen. Ken Pruitt, R-Port St. Lucie, facing from left, and Core Communities president Pete Hegener talk to Core Communities director of construction Andrew Favata shortly after the drawings for the new Florida Atlantic University charter lab school were unveiled on Wednesday.

