

Tradition charter lab heralded as school of future

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PORT ST. LUCIE — If you want to see what a future school in Florida should look like and how it will be created, take a look at the research-based charter lab school that will open in the middle of a sprawling master-planned community west of Port St. Lucie, local leaders said Wednesday.

"Everyone is searching for answers on how to reach children of the 21st century," FAU President Frank Brogan told a luncheon crowd of economic leaders and educators in Tradition, an 8,500-acre development west of Interstate 95.

The answers, Brogan said, will be found within the classrooms of the lab school, which is to open in 2007 with the help of \$15 million in state dollars and a partnership between the St. Lucie County School District and Core Communities, Tradition's developer.

"That's what makes this more than just another school," he said. "We think we can create something of national significance here."

Sen. Ken Pruitt, R-Port St. Lucie, who called the project "the talk of Tallahassee," helped push the \$15 million appropriation through the legislature last year.

"With so much growth going on across Florida, we at the state level cannot keep up with the construction and costs for new schools," Pruitt said.

Partnerships such as this one will become increasingly important to fill the demand, he said.

The school district will manage the day-to-day operations of the school. Staff and students will be part of the school district. FAU will provide research support and resources, turning classrooms into educational laboratories. Core Communities donated the 47 acres of land on which the school will be built.

St. Lucie Schools Superintendent Michael Lannon called the school another piece of the district's effort to reform itself.

"This school will serve residents all over St. Lucie County," he said.

Brogan said the new school also is part of efforts to raise the profile of FAU, which is aggressively positioning itself into a premier research institution, on the Treasure Coast.



Excitement over charter school David Spencer / Post
St. Lucie County Schools Superintendent Michael Lannon (from left), FAU President Frank Brogan and state Sen. Ken Pruitt chat during a luncheon on an experimental charter lab school planned for the Tradition community.