

Orlando Science Schools cited for taking kids to the best jobs

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The Ultimate I-4 project is now in the earliest stages of its six-year construction schedule, John Thrasher noted, but it represents something more than just a widening of Interstate 4, he added.

The project, he said, will require skilled engineers and those with an education and background in fields like science and technology, said Thrasher, the president of [Florida State University](#).

And it will be schools like the Orlando Science Schools in College Park, he added, that help prepare students for those very high skill, and high paying, careers.

“That’s why this school is so important,” Thrasher said. “If you’re not starting in the stream of math and science courses, you’re not going to be prepared enough for those fields.”

On Thursday, Thrasher and FSU physics professor Paul Cottle visited OSS, the school at 2427 Lynx Lane, which gives local students an education in the STEM fields: science, technology, engineering and math.

Thrasher and Cottle met with Dr. Yalcin Akin, the founder and executive director of OSS, while also providing science demonstrations to middle and high school students.

“I’ve heard so much about this school from Paul, and I wanted to see it personally,” Thrasher said. “Hopefully, we can recruit some of the fine students here to FSU.”

In addition to providing students with a much-needed emphasis on STEM learning – which Thrasher said is leading to some of the hottest career fields in fast-growing Florida – he’s also impressed that OSS has an emphasis on the arts as well.

“There are many kids who come here who are interested in the arts, and we have a very good arts program at FUS, in music and theater,” Thrasher said.

Thrasher said schools like OSS are doing a great public service by providing students with an education that can lead them into highly in-demand fields like engineering.

“The rigors they’re going through today,” Thrasher said, “prepares them to get the best jobs tomorrow.”

Cottle agreed, saying “This is an extraordinary place. There are some fantastic students here. They are being prepared for any career they want to go into.”

Cottle noted that recent studies of the top ten fields with the highest salaries show that “eight of the top ten salaried positions have the word ‘engineer’ in them. These fields also offer the best opportunities for economic advancement for students.”

Thrasher, who previously served as the speaker of the Florida [House of Representatives](#) and in the state Senate, said OSS is also a good example of the success of privately-run charter schools.

OSS is a charter school with a campus in College Park, and they just opened a second campus in Seminole County. “Now we’re at the point where more and more people understand the value of charter schools – and that is not to denigrate the public schools,” Thrasher said. “Parents need choices. If they want to get their kids into a school that emphasizes science, they should be able to.”

Cottle said their next challenge will be getting more girls and minority students into STEM programs.

“The thing to keep in mind,” Cottle said, “is these fields can take kids who are economically disadvantaged, and get them into the middle class.”

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