

Introduction and Acknowledgements

This monograph is the culmination of over a year's work to distill the myriad changes occurring in Florida education into just a few descriptive pages. What follows is more than just the evidence that Florida is making great strides toward achieving its goal of educational excellence; it also represents the yearning for quality, the optimism that refuses to be dampened despite numerous obstacles, and the spirit of expectation that are embodied in the authors, who through their positions of leadership in business or education promote the good news of Florida education.

When the Florida Institute of Education approached Florida Power and Light Corporation (FPL) about sponsoring a monograph on the state of education in Florida, we were delighted that they responded so positively. They have worked with us in setting the tone for the monograph, identifying authors and taking care of the mechanics of manuscript preparation, editing, and printing.

This collaborative effort between FPL and the Institute served two purposes. First, it contributed to the Institute's achievement of its purpose to foster collaboration between and among the various levels of education in Florida by involving representatives of the kindergarten through college systems as contributors. Second, it moved the Institute toward a statewide approach to the continuing challenge of educational excellence and enabled the production of a piece which we hope will be useful in attracting talent to Florida — corporate talent as well as student and potential teacher talent.

Throughout the monograph, two concepts are emphasized. One is that quality of education should always be in first place, and even when quality is not at the optimum level, we must keep the optimum standards ahead of us as guiding sights. In addition is the reminder that a successful education system is a continuous system. Each year builds on the preceding year or years in a logical, coordinated and coherent way so that the cycle which is developed fosters continuing progress, rather than perpetuating mediocrity. Simply stated, we believe that good education results from high quality instruction. Such instruction must be accomplished by well trained teachers who nurture students to perform at their highest level, to apply themselves diligently, and to respect their mentors as irreplaceable elements in our society.

The following chapters highlight developments in Florida education over the past few years as the result of specific initiatives put into place by state and local leaders in education and in the private sector. We are convinced that Florida business and industry have a vital stake in the achievement of the quality goals set for our educational system. We are also convinced that Florida cannot achieve its educational goals without the strong support of Florida business and industry.

We have chosen Mr. Thomas E. Bronson to set the stage for the monograph by summarizing industry's involvement in educational change. As the former president of one of Florida's leading industries, Florida Mining and Materials Corporation, Mr. Bronson has first-hand knowledge of the value of an educated work force. He also knows the challenges we face in maintaining our world economic position in a rapidly changing technological environment, and he has been active and forceful in pressing for meaningful improvements in Florida education.

The four chapters following Mr. Bronson's are summaries of Florida initiatives to achieve a national ranking in elementary and secondary schools in our community colleges and in the State University System.

