

# A Look Ahead — Florida Education in the Next Decade

Fred Schultz



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There is no doubt in my mind that Florida is heading for a position of leadership in the United States in the next decade. The indicators are all around us — population growth estimates put Florida in the number one or two position among all the states; our major cities continue to expand and attract increasingly sophisticated industry; the business of business in Florida takes on ever greater international flavor; and the diversity of cultures who make up our populace forces us as a state to broaden our horizons, sharpen our ability to tolerate differences of opinion, and to recognize the unique contributions each of us makes to our society as a whole. Florida is taking over from California as the bellwether state.

While I am convinced that Florida's future is a bright one, I am not unaware of the challenges greatness places before us. We can view these challenges as insurmountable obstacles or as opportunities to enhance an already promising future. I choose the latter, and the vehicle that can make it possible is education — for our youth, certainly, but also as a lifelong adventure for us all.

It excites me to consider how education will look in the next decade because I have had some exposure to the painful process of analyzing where we are, how close we have come to reaching our goals in the past and why public education has attracted such negative publicity. Through my association with the Advisory Board of the Florida Institute of Education for the past five years, I have become even more aware of the commitment that exists among Florida's leadership to achieve national distinction in education. This desire has gained such momentum that virtually every facet of the educational process has now been examined and targeted for improvement.

## Projecting Florida Education in the 90's

By the end of the next decade, I expect to see an educational system in full partnership with business and industry. Already corporate involvement in education is reshaping attitudes about the content of our curricula, and the quality of instruction. The high-tech society has not only brought with it distinct ideas about what ought to be taught young people in preparation for a lifetime of work but how it should be taught. Whereas the computer only a short time ago was a strange piece of equipment understood by only a few, it has become an integral part of the world of our children and will demand an even larger place of importance in classrooms of the future.

For years corporations have spent great amounts of money to provide specialized training for their employees and management. More recently we have been surprised to see this role expand so that some corporations now make it possible for employees to earn baccalaureate degrees at corporate universities. Whether corporate sponsored education occurs through typical continuing education opportunities (e.g., inservice classes, tuition credits, release time, and salary or status increases based on advanced instruction) or through a formalized four-year corporate university, it is clear that business is and must continue to be involved in education.

In the next decade I expect to see greater access to education and more successful participation in education by students typically referred to as disadvantaged. Early educational practice in the United States reserved instruction for the brightest — or at least the wealthiest — and the majority of people received only meager training.